

48 Hours 771

Chapter 771: I Will Listen To It

“Don’t you think you guys care too much?” asked Zhang Heng.

“No. Imagine us doing minor repairs on a building that is already there. We will not go against the trend of events, and neither do we seek fame or profit. We are people who live in the shadow of history. The vast majority don’t know of our existence. This is also the reason why the Balance Blade can be passed on for thousands of years. In fact, most of the time, we are just bystanders, and within the organization, we prefer to call ourselves tinkers.”

The old trainer continued, “Speaking of the Balance Blade, it comprises two parts. The first part is the organization’s core members, the six most powerful assassins from the Balance Blade’s first generation. There are a total of seven of them. The second part is the people who have a partnership with the assassins or rely on the assassins to earn their living. This includes intelligence dealers, a small number of nobles, many civilians and slaves at society bottom rung, and weapon merchants and doctors. They are considered the peripheral members of Balance Blade.

“However, with the growth of the Balance Blade, the numbers of these two groups of people have changed. Although the organization has encountered several severe crises, it is still growing in terms of the Balance Blade’s peripheral members. On the other hand, the number of core members has been relatively stable. And it has only experienced a few expansions. About 400 years ago, we began to open up our organization to other assassins, allowing for an exchange of intelligence and resources. To us, they were considered peripheral members too. The responsibilities that came with it were relatively limited. In their eyes, the Balance Blade is just an organization that provides services to the assassins in exchange for rewards.”

“What about your core members? How many of them are there now.”

Dadatis did not answer the questions this time. “This is a higher-level secret. You will know when you pass the test and take my place as a core member of the organization.” After a pause, Dadatis continued, “You asked what you need to do after joining us. That, I can answer now.

“Just like how the original convener answered the six assassins... Becoming a Balance Blade member will not affect your daily life most of the time. Usually, only when the priest receives Kreis’s oracle would the Balance Blade summon its core members and intervene.”

“So all your actions are basically based on this so-called oracle obtained by a priest? Congratulations, this sounds reliable. Then can I ask how often she gets an oracle?”

“Mortals like us can never guess the will of the gods. Hence, no one can predict when the oracles will come,” Dadatis pondered for a moment, then added, “but if you are asking about the past, six oracles were received by the priest in a month, at most. And there was once; the oracle was received more than forty years apart. Some members did not even get to receive an oracle until they retired.”

“I kind of like the second scenario.” Zhang Heng said, “But I guess I don’t have such good luck. Since you appeared in the gladiator school and are looking for a potential assassin, it means that a new oracle has appeared.”

“That’s right.” Dadatis nodded.

“Your target is Mark Reuss? No, if it is him, you can eliminate him by yourself. You don’t need to work together with Habitus. The gladiators can get in touch with quite a lot of people... I think the only people that are hard for you to kill are individuals with high authority,” Zhang Heng analyzed.

“Unfortunately, I can’t tell you the name of the target at this stage, but what I can tell you is that the test for you is indeed related to this oracle. Do you want to be one of us?” asked Dadatis.

Zhang Heng shrugged upon hearing the words, “After I have heard so many secrets about you, do I have a second choice?”

“I know that you still have a lot of questions, and you cannot fully understand our belief. But as long as you are willing to open your eyes and carefully observe the world around you, you will feel that balance is everywhere. And I, as your Teacher, can teach you the quintessence of balance.”

“Uh...I don’t think you need to teach me about balance. What you said before is quite straightforward,” Zhang Heng said, “I clearly understand your philosophy and way of doing things.”

“I’m talking about combat skills.”

“Oh. I still need to learn from you.”

“...”

Dadatis was speechless. He could see that Zhang Heng disagreed with the Balance Blade’s idealism, not to mention how he did not seem to have much respect for Kreis. This might have something to do with him coming from the East, which made him different from most Romans. In Rome, everyone worshiped their gods wholeheartedly to the point of having high tolerance towards foreign gods. Zhang Heng was willing to join the Balance Blade because he wanted to learn their combat skills.

But now, Dadatis could not find a better replacement after Habitus rejected him. To Dadatis, Zhang Heng was born to be an assassin. Unlike a defective product like Habitus, it was as if Zhang Heng was the perfect assassin template created by Kreis. He was calm, low-key, had excellent observation skills and analytical abilities. Judging from his previous three moves, his physical fitness and reaction ability were also top-notch. And he did not even need to be refined. He just needed a little polish, and he would shine like a diamond.

If such a talented young man could not be absorbed into the Balance Blade, it would only be at the Balance Blade’s loss.

Dadatis had a selfish thought as well. As he grew older, he could feel that he was not as good as before. That was when he started to look for his successor. The previous three strikes that he landed on Zhang Heng had failed. He was disappointed and frustrated at himself. Though he lost the battle, he could feel joy surging through him.

Even though he had now confirmed that Zhang Heng was the person he was looking for, he was disappointed to see that the Asian man was not as excited as he expected. He was now like a man who fell into unrequited love. So, he told himself that he would need time to make Zhang Heng understand

the Balance Blade's idealism. It did not matter how Zhang Heng thought about Balance Blade and Kreis. For now, he just needed to make sure that Zhang Heng agreed to join the Balance Blade.

So he coughed and said, "According to the plan, I should first teach you our combat skills. But since they are already powerful, let's not rush it first. I can teach you the assassin's combat skills later. You seem to be very interested in Habitus's footwork. So let me teach you stealth moves first. This is also one of the basic skills of an assassin."

Chapter 772: Be Prepared

Since this was Dadatis's first lesson with Zhang Heng, it lasted a long time. When it was almost dawn, some of the more hardworking slaves had already gotten up and began preparing breakfast. And Dadatis had to end the training here.

The two of them wished that the training could last a little longer.

Not only did Dadatis teach Zhang Heng stealth movements as promised, but he also introduced other assassin's combat skills to him. In this regard, the Balance Blade did an excellent job. All those that joined the Balance Blade were top-tier assassins. Everyone had a unique skill. When they were young, they would keep their unique skill a secret, but when a top-tier assassin like Dadatis started to age, he would wish that he could leave something to this world.

The assassin was a person who stayed hidden in the shadow of history. The more successful the assassin was, the less likely his name would be passed down and known by others. That was why they wanted to leave something behind to prove that they were once lived in this world. Although this idea was not promoted since the beginning of the Balance Blade's establishment, it played a significant role in preserving and developing assassin skills.

Dadatis knew what Zhang Heng was thinking about. So, he took the initiative to tell the latter that there was a library in the Balance Blade's secret base. Only its core members were allowed to enter it. And in those books were many ancient assassin skills and related deeds. Not even Dadatis had seen or read most of them because everyone had limited energy. But if one person could learn all the skills in it, the old man knew it would have to be Zhang Heng.

When it came to learning and grasping concepts, Dadatis had never seen someone as good as Zhang Heng.

Zhang Heng had Lv 4 swordsmanship and the combat experience he accumulated from different quests, especially after challenging all of Kyoto during the Bakumatsu quest. He managed to learn all the signature moves from all those sects. And it improved his adaptability and learning speed when he learned a new combat skill. Rarely anyone could compare.

To Zhang Heng, Dadatis was equivalent to the door leading to a new world, allowing him to strengthen his arsenal further. At the same time, he had his first glimpse at another combat style, and indeed, he benefited a lot from it.

Understanding combat style was different from putting it into practice. Take the stealth skills that Dadatis taught him as an example. From understanding, putting it into practice, and mastering it; Zhang Heng would need a long time to do all that.

Fortunately, he had all the time in the world.

Dadatis did not leave in a hurry when he was done teaching today's lesson. "With your skill and mind, I can't figure out how you were forced to enroll into this gladiator school, but judging from your previous performance, I can probably guess what you are thinking. You want to make use of the gladiator performance to regain your freedom quietly and leave this place. And you know that if you perform badly or too well, Mark Reuss will not let you off his hook easily. You are smart enough to conceal your true strength. But what if I ask you to show all your strength?"

"Huh?" Zhang Heng raised his eyebrows.

"Don't worry about not being able to leave the gladiator school. We can help you and your friends to get out of here right away when the thing is over."

"Do you want me to become famous?"

"Yes, because I want to send you to the gladiatorial show at the Flavian Amphitheater two months later."

"Flavian Amphitheater will be holding a performance in two months? How did you know about it?"

"As I said before, the Balanced Blade has its own intelligence network. Not to mention that this matter is no longer a secret now. The Roman senate was discussing this matter some time ago. They have already received the intel that the Roman Empire will end the war with those Germanic. And the new emperor is returning to Rome with his army. The first batch of the troops should be back in Rome as early as a month and a half's time, and the crowning ceremony should come with it. By that time, the Flavian Amphitheater will host a grand gladiator show. Other than the royal gladiators, some of the chosen gladiators from the various gladiator schools will be sent to participate in the grand gladiator show."

Dadatis paused and said, "Although the government will probably not pay the gladiator school enough money, it is related to the honor of each school. For the sake of the Roman Senate's new emperor, all the school would send out their best gladiators to fight in the Flavian Amphitheater. In other words, all the best gladiators from Rome will be getting together and compete in the same arena, showing their skills in front of ninety-thousand spectators. Not only will the winner bring good reputation to himself and his school, but he will also receive a reward from the emperor."

"I'm just a new gladiator. I'm pretty sure Victor Arena will not choose me. Even if Gaby doesn't want Bach to fight so early, veteran gladiators like Habitus and other famous gladiators are more qualified than me."

Zhang Heng went to talk to other gladiators in the afternoon, and he now understood the industry a little better than before. He knew that the new gladiators might have to wait for several months before they were given a chance to perform on stage for the first time. Of course, a new rising-star like Bach was an exception.

To start making money from them, the gladiator school would push them out as early as possible, treating them as cash cows. And they had to participate in performances more frequently than ordinary gladiators.

"Don't worry about this. If you are fine with it, we will arrange for you," Dadatis said.

“I’m fine with it. You teach me how to fight, and I help you guys complete the task given to me. Sounds fair,” Zhang Heng said.

Dadatis sighed secretly when he heard what Zhang Heng said. He hoped that Zhang Heng would have a sense of belonging to the Balance Blade, instead of seeing it as a form of transaction. However, he knew that he could never rush this kind of thing. In the end, he said, “Be prepared. Your first battle will come soon.”

...

Zhang Heng then quickly went back to his residence before Varo and the other two gladiators woke up. Except for Dadatis and him, there was no third person who knew what happened last night. After that, Zhang Heng also devoted himself to training every day like the other newcomers.

In addition to the basic training that every gladiator needed to complete, Zhang Heng had to complete the training session given to him by Dadatis.

One week had passed in a blink of an eye.

Zhang Heng had gotten better at moving stealthily. He could now reduce the sound of him moving by half anytime he wanted. He tried to sneak into the kitchen with what he learned and stole some bread. And the cook that was busy cooking with his back facing Zhang Heng did not realize that someone had entered the kitchen to steal food.

On the other hand, the first batch of battle arrangements was set in stone. In the end, Gaby failed to persuade the money-minded Mark Reuss to put a hold on Bach’s battle first. So, Bach was forced to participate in the next gladiatorial show. Fortunately, Gaby persuaded Mark Reuss not to arrange the quasi-ace level players to fight against Bach. This would undoubtedly cause some audience to lose interest in Bach but in exchange for a greater chance of winning. According to the usual practice, Gaby also needed to select some fodder from the newcomer group to perform in the arena.

Chapter 773: First Fight Arrangement

“Bach versus Rufus.”

As soon as Gaby finished speaking, a look of surprise flashed across the faces of each new gladiator. And they could not help but start whispering to each other.

No one expected Gaby to have come here today. Although everyone here had passed the final assessment and became gladiators, it was illogical to send anyone to fight in the arena right now. They were supposed to go through months of training before they had their first battle in the Victor Arena. However, some unfortunate ones who did not do well in training would be sent to fight with other gladiators. And usually, they would die fighting in the arena.

However, Bach was the strongest among the rookie gladiators this year. It would be impossible that Mark Reuss gave up on him so early.

And this time, he was asked to fight Rufus, also known as the Black Sickle.

Rufus was a protector by profession. Falling under the category of retiarius, it was a relatively rare profession. His weapons of choice usually consisted of a trident and a fishing net. As for armor, he had a

pair of metal sleeves and full body armor. The metal sleeves would cover the entire arm, used as a shield to block damage with the full-body armor. It would make up for the weak defense of the retiarius. Simultaneously, the metal sleeves would also be equipped with a sickle-shaped blade, which could be used as a weapon when necessary.

Unlike the retiarius, the protector was a profession that everyone did not want to encounter.

Besides, Rufus was considered one of the best protectors. Although not as famous as Habitus, his popularity was close to that of Garba. If one were to choose one of them as an opponent, any sane person with the right mind would pick Garba.

Garba's age and the years he spent fighting for Victor Arena had earned him a lot of fame. On the other hand, Rufus, the Black Sickle, gained his fame mainly from winning battles. And he was twenty-six years old this year. It was the golden age of a gladiator. With a total of three years of gladiator experience and coupled with his career in the military, his body and mind were at their pinnacle.

As compared to Rufus, Bach was just a rookie that was going to fight in the arena for the first time. No matter how talented he was, no matter how high of hope Mark Reuss had on him, it was still not right to make him face an opponent like Black Sickle in his first battle.

If it were not because Gaby customized a lot of individual training for Bach earlier, all the newcomers would have thought that Bach had offended the gladiator school head. And that was why they made him face such a powerful opponent.

However, Bach showed no fear when he heard the name of his opponent. Instead, he snorted and harrumphed, "Who the hell is Black Sickle. He is unlucky that I'm about to fight him in the arena."

Seeing how Gaby changed the final assessment's format and made them fight formal gladiators, some friction had erupted between the newcomers and veteran gladiators. As a representative of the newcomers, Bach would not act all polite and pleasant towards his opponent. Besides, the Germanic were not the kind of people who practiced politeness.

Black Sickle, on the other hand, was calmer. He showed no provocative actions nor said any offensive words to Bach. However, when he heard the arrangement of the battle, a smile appeared on his face. And the gladiators around him also congratulated him one after another. To them, Black Sickle was lucky that he was not going to face a challenging and tricky opponent.

Although they had also heard some rumors about Bach, including how Mark Reuss valued him and wanted him to be the successor of Sethnets, it didn't change the fact that Bach was a rookie in the arena. If Black Sickle failed to defeat a rookie like Bach, all the fame that he gained so far would be in vain.

On the other side, Gaby had ignored the reactions of the people below him entirely and continued to think about the battle arrangement.

After a bunch of unfamiliar names was called, two more familiar names entered the rookies' ears.

"Zhang Heng, Varo, Nasica, Sulpicius... twelve people, mixed fight."

The newcomers were surprised that they heard Bach's name in the battle arrangement. Now, they were looking at Zhang Heng and Varo with sympathy.

A twelve-man-mixed-fight was a veteran show in the Victor Arena, and it was also one of the most popular performances.

The reason was very simple. The twelve-man mixed fight was often brutal and exciting.

The rules were simple. Twelve of them would form a team and fight with another group of people. The winning team would have to search for their next target. At the same time, two or more teams were not allowed to attack the same team. In the end, the last team left standing would be the winner.

Other than testing their combat skills, the team members were required to have a tacit understanding of the other team members. Besides, for support, the tag-team fighting also required sufficient stamina.

The two teams that lasted the end of the battle would usually have bodies marred by wounds. And that was what made the fight even more exciting.

There were myriad skills involved in the twelve-man-mixed-fight. The gladiator school, for instance, would arrange a strong team to attract the attention of the audience. After that, they would toss in a couple of less famous but relatively good teams to fight with the strong team. Lastly, to ensure the audience enjoyed watching the duel and reducing the star gladiators' costs and casualties, some newcomers and ordinary gladiator teams would be included in the mixed-fight.

Zhang Heng and Varo were obviously playing the last role.

Among them, hearing Varo's name was not that surprising to others. During his fight with Habitus, everyone thought that he would lose the fight in a matter of seconds. Out of sheer luck, he managed to pass the assessment with the sudden burst of a dazzling performance. It was understandable why Gaby would include him in the twelve-man mixed fight. It was going to be impossible for him to win in this battle. However, if he managed to put up a good show again, the audience would ask the arena to spare his life. On the other hand, Zhang Heng getting selected surprised all the rookies.

That was because Zhang Heng performed extremely well in his final assessment, and he defeated the well-known Garba. Besides, he was also one of the few rookies that passed the assessment by defeating his opponent. Coupled with his identity as an Oriental man, he should be valuable for the arena. Hence, no one could figure out why he was included.

And among the opponents they had to face was Nasika. The latter was more famous than Rufus and possessed a combat style far more brutal. His nickname, Bone Shatterer, should tell his opponents that he was not one to be trifled with. Besides, he was also a frequent fighter in the twelve-man mix fight. His brutal attacks would always result in blood and flesh splattered on the arena's ground. Hence, that was why he was so popular among the audience. He was one of the few gladiators that earned a lot of money for the arena.

Varo felt a little nervous when he heard his name, especially when Nasika glared at him and made a thumbs-down gesture, which meant that he would destroy him in the arena.

On the other hand, when Varo heard Gaby calling out Zhang Heng's name, he quickly looked at Zhang Heng and saw no change in his expression. He still looked calm. He then remembered Zhang Heng was the one that taught him how to mess with Habitus, and it made Varo calmed down a lot.

Anyway, this was not the worst-case scenario for him. At least compared to the others, Zhang Heng and he were close, meaning they would have better teamwork when partnered up. However, when compared to the other groups, they were undoubtedly at a disadvantage. Varo even wanted to go to a temple and ask about his recent stroke of bad luck.

Chapter 774: Promotion and Pray

Rome opened her eyes as the first ray of sunlight fell on the Boston Ivy on the apartment's balcony.

More and more people emerged from their residences, especially slaves and civilians with relatively low social status. They were the ones who woke up the earliest and started to work hard in the morning to make a living.

One could hear the tinkering coming from the workshop. It was the coppersmith hammering the bottom of the pan. The deafening noise had also awakened the neighbors next door. However, everyone was used to a lifestyle like this. They would wake up and scold the coppersmith at the same time.

The slave girl walked down from the apartment with a clay pot, came to the enormous pot beside the wall, and poured her master's urine into the larger pot. Not too long after that, someone would send the collected urine to the laundry and dump it into a large tank filled with dirty clothes.

There, the laundromat slaves who had been waiting for a long time would jump into the tank and step on the dirty clothes that were soaked in urine. The laundromat's business was so good that even the emperor wanted to tax urine.

After the slave girl finished pouring the urine, she rubbed her eyes and turned around to go upstairs. However, the next moment, she ran into a teenager who had been squatting by the wall earlier. And the slave girl did not notice him. So, she quickly apologized.

However, the young man did not respond. At that time, he focussed his attention on drawing two little people on the wall. Judging by the weapons and armor on them, they were murmillo and retatrius. And the boy wrote down their names under his drawing—Bach and Rufus.

In just a few strokes, Bach and Rufus's image were drawn onto the wall.

A short paragraph accompanied the drawing:

[From June 17th to 19th, Victor Arena will be presenting you with wonderful duel performances for three consecutive days. In addition to the gladiators you are familiar with, Habitus, Nasica the Bone Shatterer, and Rufus the Black Sickle would fight the newcomer Bach. There will also be exciting duels between beasts. Equipped with awnings, the lower stands are sprayed with perfume, and everyone present will be given a small gift. This is going to be your first choice for cooling off and relaxing.]

After finishing the last stroke, the boy took two steps back to admire his masterpiece. There was a smile on his face. And he finally noticed the slave girl that was standing beside him and looking at his drawing. When the sunlight fell on the latter's eyebrows, it became golden.

The boy then stretched out his hand and caressed the slave girl's face. Seeing that the latter showing a shy look, he whistled, laughed, and ran down the apartment while holding the dye and paintbrush.

...

He was not the only painter who was promoting the new performance of the Victor Arena. In fact, many similar advertisements were being painted on almost every wall in Rome. Other than gladiator performance advertisements, there were also women who promoted themselves and claimed that they could help lonely men solve their problems. Lovey-dovey words were exchanged between young couples, ruthless words from the creditors, and accusations dedicated to men who broke women's hearts...

The walls of these houses, public buildings, and even the tombstones in the cemetery were the billboards of that era. The information on them was complex and complicated. Other than that, there were also some men who walked around the streets and alleys to distribute the program list. With the advertisements painted on the wall and the program list distribution, the gladiatorial show's promotion was considered done.

The people interested in going to watch the show could get all the information about it in advance. All that left was whether they were willing to pay for the entrance fees. Since entertainment was lacking in Roman, a gladiatorial show was as attractive as \$9.

On the other hand, gladiators selected to join the battle were also making their final preparations.

Varo and Zhang Heng were doing some coordinated training as well. The previous fifty-day special training was aimed at preparing them for individual battles. As for the tag-team battle, training a little would prove beneficial.

This was why all the newcomers felt that they were getting unlucky. Except for the Nasika group, even the less powerful groups were trained for a battle like this as well. And Zhang Heng and Varo had to start from scratch.

Varo saw Nasika on the training ground. The latter looked stronger than Bach, his arms were almost as thick as Varo's thighs, and his body was extremely muscular. His profession was a secutor. This was a profession similar to the murmillio, falling under the heavy-duty gladiator category. Usually, they were equipped with a sword, a huge rectangular shield, and half-body armor.

Varo saw that Nasika had used his rectangular shield to knock out his training partner at the training ground, causing the latter to break two of his ribs.

"Now I finally know how he gets his nickname... I don't want to face this guy in the arena," said Varo to Zhang Heng beside him.

However, Nasika did not seem to think so. When training on the same grounds, he would always make one or two provocative moves against Varo and Zhang Heng from time to time. When Varo saw that someone was provoking Bach as well, his mood finally improved a little bit.

This was actually a kind of tradition in the gladiator school. The veteran gladiator would always provoke the newcomers before their first battle, and the gladiators would usually pray the night before the battle. Although gladiator schools did not mandate that gladiators believe in a certain god, most

gladiators would choose to believe in Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance. A small number of people also worshipped Victoria, the goddess of victory, or Mars, the god of war. As for the Germanic like Bach, they believed in their tribal gods.

Varo noticed that Zhang Heng did not pray. So, he asked curiously, "In your county...Is there no god for you to worship?"

"Yes, there is. But I don't think I need to pray," Zhang Heng told the truth. In fact, he did not mind worshipping Nemesis, the goddess of revenge. However, he was not a potential core member of the Balance Blade. Even if he was a little unimpressed with the Balance Blade's idealism, he still had to pay his respects to their god Kreis, the goddess of murder and assassination. It would be inappropriate if he worshipped other gods.

"..."

"I like your sense of humor. I don't feel nervous when I am with you," Varo said, putting the amulet engraved with Nemesis in his pocket respectfully, "During the battle tomorrow, I will do my best to protect your back."

"You just need to protect your front." Zhang Heng said.

"We will live," replied Varo in a firm voice to cheer himself up.

"Don't worry. We will win."

Chapter 775: Beastmaster

The retirement of Sethnets significantly impacted Victor Arena, where nowadays, it was hard to see it being filled. However, one could not deny that the Victor Arena was built on a rock-solid foundation. Mark Reuss was, after all, managing the second biggest arena in Rome.

Other than Sethnets, there were several less popular gladiators, including Habitus, Nasica, and Rufus. Coupled with many mid-tier gladiators, Victor Arena was still able to attract the people to watch their gladiatorial performances.

As of the day of the performance, two-thirds of the seats in the arena's stands were sold. Mark Reuss, however, was still displeased. After he greeted the nobles and their family members, he returned to his seat and began to frown again.

Other than the audience's loss, Mark Reuss was frustrated by the gladiator show that would be held by the royal family in a month.

Aside from the possible monetary loss, he knew that other troubles were waiting for him. The gladiator school he ran was currently the second largest in Rome, but it was now going downhill. Several competitors were waiting to devour him.

Therefore, the performance in a month could have a more severe impact on Victor Arena. Not only was the new Emperor going to announce the arrival of his reign, but all the gladiator schools might also undergo enormous changes. Although Mark Reuss had many cards for him to play in his hand, he was still missing the most crucial card.

It was the biggest trump card.

According to the information he obtained, a lot of gladiator schools had recruited some very powerful newcomers. The retirement of Sethnets also meant that the gladiators had now entered a new era of heroes. Usually, everyone would be active in their gladiator school. It was rare for the gladiators from different gladiator schools to gather together. If any gladiator could stand out from the crowd and take the final crown, a new king would be born.

And the school behind that gladiator would also become the biggest winner.

That was why Mark Reuss had been rushing Gaby to look for a successor for Sethnets. And because of that, Mark Reuss did not mind risking Bach's life. He knew that Bach would be safer if he could train a little longer before letting him fight with other gladiators. Unfortunately, the imminent crisis was getting closer.

As a courageous businessman, he knew that it was time for him to make a move. But in his heart, he did not know whether Bach was powerful enough to defeat the other gladiators from other schools. Maybe he should talk to Habitus again and take a few steps back.

Just when Mark Reuss was lost in thought, the gladiatorial performance had begun. A small orchestra was invited to play as a prelude to the battle. They stood on a slowly rising platform in the middle of the arena and started to play their instruments.

After that, a group of antelopes suddenly ran out from the gate on the side of the arena. The cheers from the auditorium spooked them, and they started to run frantically around in the arena. One of them wanted to jump towards the audience stage, but the arena had prepared the corresponding measures to make sure that it would not happen.

A wall with a height of three meters was built at the lowest level of the audience stand. Other than that, large nets were being fixed on each pillar. These nets could block the wild beasts from entering the stands, and at the same time, enable the audience to keep their eyes on their favorite gladiators. Hence, no one was afraid when they saw the jumping antelope. And there were even ladies who stood up to look at the antelopes curiously.

From the time of Caesars, the wild animal performance had been part of gladiatorial shows. Usually, it would be conducted before the gladiator battles. Unlike what was shown in most films and television series, the gladiators would not be asked to fight with those wild animals. That was the beastmaster's task. A while ago, Zhang Heng and Varo saw how the wild animals were used to execute the prisoners. Other than that, the arena would also offer beast hunting and taming performances and some battles between wild beasts to entertain the audience.

What everyone saw now was a hunting performance between a hunter and an antelope. Later, they would make a lion fight with a bear. In the end, the winner among the wild animals would face the beastmaster.

The arrangement of the whole performance was getting more and more exciting. It elevated the audience's mood and made them extremely nervous, especially when the beastmaster walked towards the stage. Both men and women shouted the name of the beastmaster together as they watched him fight the ferocious beast. And the beastmaster had to pay attention and dodge the beast's sharp claws.

During the fight, he managed to leave a couple of slash wounds on the beast with the weapon in his hand.

At the same time, the beast was only becoming more irritated.

There was nothing more charming than looking into Death's eyes, constantly mocking Death and escaping his grasp. Some women screamed frantically for him, willing to dedicate themselves to him. One had to admit they were comparable to the most ardent fans of the later generations. The face hidden beneath the helmet was not that handsome; some might even consider him ugly. That was because of the three long scars on the left of his face, and it almost disfigured him. Those scars were left by a cunning cheetah that he had fought with a while ago.

However, in those women's eyes, there was no better love medicine in this world than those scars. At least, in the arena at this moment, he was the dream lover of all those women. As Juvena, the poet, said, what girls loved the most was not his face but his sword.

Finally, the experienced beastmaster successfully killed the beast in front of him.

He then stuck his sword into the ground in front of him, took off his armor, and enjoyed the cheers and triumphs of his victory.

And after him, it was the gladiator's turn to fight.

Zhang Heng and Varo were not among them. Their performance was slotted on the third day. The two did not even go to the arena. However, a much-anticipated battle would be held in the afternoon.

It was the battle between Bach and Rufus.

Black Sickle was a Victor Arena celebrity. The audience, on the other hand, knew nothing about Bach. All they knew was that he was a rookie.

However, this time, Victor Arena broke the rules and included him in the advertisement. Clearly, he was extremely valuable to them.

The audience was obviously more willing to believe in Black Sickle, seeing how he would win battle after battle in front of the audience. And it could be seen on the odds of their bets.

Gambling had always been inseparable from the arena since ancient times. In the arena, not only could the audience enjoy the gladiatorial performances, but they could also bet on their favorite gladiators.

On the other side, Varo asked Zhang Heng, who was training with him, "Who do you think will win the battle?"

"I have never seen Rufus the Black Sickle's combat skills. However, since Gaby made such an arrangement, it meant that he is optimistic about Bach. So if I were to bet, I would bet on Bach." Zhang Heng said.

"So Rufus will surely lose in the battle?"

"If Bach successfully completes all the training, Rufus will be defeated by Bach. However, that is not the case. It means Rufus still stands a chance to defeat Bach." Zhang Heng said. Ever since Dadatis told him

about the grand gladiatorial performance held at the Flavian Amphitheatrum, he now knew why Mark Reuss wanted to make Bach his trump card as soon as possible.

But this gladiatorial performance might be different from what he imagined.

Chapter 776: Turning The Tide Around

The two people in the center of the arena were panting violently.

The battle had been going on for quite some time, and judging from the audience's enthusiastic reaction in the stands, it was apparent they were delighted with the battle.

After a few simple tests, Bach and Rufus immediately started to fight.

Muscle to muscle, slashing to cleaving, the sound of weapons and shields colliding, splatters of blood and sweat on the ground; male hormones filled the whole arena.

Rufus had to admit that he had underestimated the newcomer in front of him. Bach's combat skills might need a little polishing, but this was a newcomer's common problem. On the other hand, Rufus could sense that Bach was born with an instinct to detect threats.

Every time he set a trap, Bach would always detect it at the final moment. And the cunning Bach would make use of his trap to go against him. The wound on Rufus's waist was the best proof of that.

Bach's sword hit so hard that it almost chopped off his bones. After the judge paused the battle and inspected the wound, he ruled that the battle could continue.

Rufus was used to a situation like this.

Such was the fate of a gladiator. Unless he was severely injured or the other party surrendered, the battle would continue no matter what.

Hence, Rufus had gotten used to fighting with different kinds of injuries on him. However, the wound on his waist did affect his next move, especially his dodge action. Fortunately, Bach was no better than Rufus. The latter's calf was stabbed by Rufus.

Now, the two were back on the starting line.

In the next battle, both sides deliberately took advantage of each other's injuries. Rufus forced Bach to put more weight on his injured leg, while Bach forced Rufus to twist his waist more often.

The blood flowed down from Rufus's and Bach's thighs to their ankle, where it would finally land on the arena's grounds. The whole thing was a brutal and bloody affair, hyping up the thousands of spectators at the stands.

However, this intense atmosphere did not affect Rufus. He was still trying his best to focus on his opponent. The expression on Bach's face frustrated Rufus. Bach, as a newcomer, was not nervous about the battle. And the most important thing was that he showed no emotion as he stared. It was as if he was staring at a dead person.

Rufus could not figure out why Bach would hate him so much. It was common that the gladiators would fight with each other in the school for various reasons. To attract more audience, the arena would

deliberately cook up some drama among the gladiators. However, Bach had just entered the gladiator school not too long ago, and he had been focusing on his training. Rufus could not remember when he had offended Bach.

No matter what, he had to win this battle.

Rufus rushed to Bach, "Game's over, kid. I'm going to fight seriously now. If you don't want to die, remember to kneel and surrender to me."

Bach grinned. "So these are your last words?"

Immediately, Rufus struck at Bach with his trident, exerting all his strength to press Bach down. His astonishing willpower had helped him to overcome the pain from his waist injury. When both sides had reached their physical limits, he forcibly pushed himself back to his perfect state.

It was then that the battle began to lean towards Rufus. It did not take long for Rufus to stab Bach in his left arm, forcing Bach to drop his buckler.

Upon seeing that, Rufus's supporters immediately stood up and cheered for him.

At the audience seat, Mark Reuss's face was dark. He looked at Gaby angrily and asked, "What's the matter? Didn't you tell me that Rufus is the most suitable person for Bach to fight against in the opening match? All I see is Rufus beating him up. With this kind of combat skills and strength, how are we going to make him the successor of Sethnets? I have spent so much money to buy him. Is it going to be a failed investment?"

Gaby was surprised by Bach's performance as well. He had been in charge of Bach's training, and Rufus had also been trained by him back then. In other words, Gaby knew both of them quite well. He had gone through careful consideration before he made this arrangement. He was not saying that Bach would definitely win the battle. It was that Bach shouldn't have been beaten up by Rufus so badly.

"I... don't know what happened, but I can assure you that this is not all of Bach's strength. I don't know what's going on with him or what he is thinking. Losing this battle on purpose will not benefit him in any way."

When the two were talking, the battle was about to come to an end. The situation had become more and more unfavorable for Bach. He lost his shield, and his performance was going downhill. On the other hand, Rufus had only become braver, at the same time, prepared to attack Bach with his fishing net.

Finally, he waited for the moment when Bach's footsteps became utterly disorganized. Rufus caught Bach's weakness and threw the fishing net at him. The moment he did that, he had, for some reason, the sudden feeling that something terrible was going to happen to him. He saw Bach abandoning the "nowhere-to-escape look," turned into a cheetah, dodged the fishing net, and pounced at Rufus, directly hitting his arms.

Rufus wanted to raise his armguards to protect himself, but it was too late. The moment Bach charged towards him, he fiercely inserted the dagger in Rufus's neck and pierced through the latter's throat.

Those shouts of applause from the audience were silenced all of a sudden.

Everyone was stunned by this sudden change of outcome.

Blood gushed out of Rufus's mouth, and his eyes were filled with horror and surprise. He opened his mouth and tried to say something, but only unintelligible sounds came out of it.

But Bach knew what Rufus wanted to ask, and he moved closer to the latter's ear. "Aren't you curious about why I want to kill you? It's simple. I checked your resume. Five years ago, you participated in the war against us. Presumably, you must have slaughtered quite a few of my people. Consider your death as a debt payment. Even if I can't kill you on the battlefield, we can still meet in the arena. Am I right?"

Rufus's eyes were filled with regret. He did not regret joining the army but regretted not finding out more about Bach before the battle. Otherwise, even if he lost, he could get to keep his life as he conceded in time.

The audience on the stands could not hear the conversation between the two. After a short moment of silence, they immediately cheered for Bach.

Except for the people who placed their bets on Rufus, most of the audience watched the performance with great excitement. Upon Bach's brilliant play to claim the victory, the audience immediately gave a round of applause to Bach and cheered for him. As for Rufus, now lying in a pool of his own blood, he would be forgotten really soon.

In the stands, Mark Reuss also breathed a sigh of relief. He could now relax again. Although Rufus's accidental death caused him to lose a great gladiator, he still cared more about Bach since he was the future arena's trump card. Besides, this was an arena, and it was normal for someone to die here.

Only Gaby seemed to have thought of something and frowned. He probably knew why Bach's performance was so unbearable to watch earlier. He was trying to use his weak performance to confuse Rufus, seeking a perfect chance to kill him and wanting to prevent him from begging for mercy. For that, he deliberately let Rufus injure him.

After all, Gaby was the winner of this battle. So, Gaby only warned him about it with his eyes.

Chapter 777: Twelve-Man Mixed Fight

The duel between Bach and Rufus became the most exciting part of the first day of the performance. Many spectators continued discussing the battle even after it was over.

Blood splattering on the ground, muscle collisions, and an unexpected change of tide throughout the battle—in addition to a well-known gladiator's death, almost every other eye-catching element a grand performance should have been presented to the audience. Hence, Bach's name began to spread among the people of Rome.

[A very powerful newcomer has appeared in the Victor Arena!]

That was the phrase spread throughout every street in Rome.

The first phase of Mark Reuss's and Gaby's plan had been achieved. However, they could only see the result during Bach's second battle. With Bach and the dead Rufus's help, the arena's attendance rate in the next two days also saw a slight increase.

And soon, it was the third day.

Zhang Heng and Varo returned to the Victor Arena's underground.

In order to maximize dramatic effects, many arenas had similar designs. Its upper level was a wooden floor covered with sand, and the lower level looked like the backstage of a theater. Among others, there was a weapon storehouse, a cage, and a preparation room. At that time, a special elevator would be used to transport people or beasts to the surface, making them look like they had just emerged from the ground.

The two worked here before they were trained to be gladiators. Now, they were back to where it all began. Unfortunately, there were no mirrors in the preparation room. All the gladiators who were asked to participate in the twelve-man mixed fight were here, and the expressions on each of their faces were different.

Some were silently cleaning their weapons and adjusting their armor, some were doing some weird pre-war rituals, and of course, some were relaxed. And Nasika was one of them, talking and laughing with his partner next to him.

This was the ninth time he participated in a twelve-man mixed fight. And he had won seven out of the eight battles. The only reason he lost in that battle was that Sethnets was there to fight with him. Even though Sethnets was about to retire, he still managed to defeat Nasika after a tough battle.

But now that Sethnets was retired, not many people in the gladiator school were powerful enough to defeat Nasika. Especially when the roster for this twelve-man mixed fight came out, Nasika odds had significantly improved. If everything went well, he should be able to clinch his eighth win easily.

In contrast, on the other side, Varo suffered his old problems again, vomiting into a clay pot. He thought that he was ready, underestimating the tremendous pressure he felt when he walked into the arena for the first time as a gladiator. This was especially the case when he heard the constant cheers from above his head. It reminded him of the two death row prisoners right before they got eaten by wild beasts.

Seeing how he was crumbling under the pressure, the other gladiators looked at him in disdain.

Nasika teased him, "Hey, boy, how did they let you pass the assessment? Will your fear make you pee in your pants during the fight later?"

Varo did not answer him. Not only was he a little afraid of Nasika, but he could also feel another round of vomit coming up his guts.

Zhang Heng then handed Varo a bowl of water so he could rinse his mouth.

"I'm sorry." Varo took the bowl of water and apologized to Zhang Heng. He knew that he had just embarrassed him. All the other gladiators were now looking down on Zhang Heng as well. "I will adjust my state of mind before the fight later. I promise."

"Well, you can try to take a few deep breaths. Don't put too much pressure on yourself. Treat it as a training session," said Zhang Heng.

Varo nodded, but before he could even speak, Nasika spoke again. "This is different from training. Training will not kill you, but a real gladiatorial performance could cost you your life. And I guarantee

you that you will learn this cold hard truth from the battle later. This is a stage for heroes and warriors, while the bones of cowards and trash like you will be buried here.”

“Can you mind your own business?” Zhang Heng finally voiced out, “If you have nothing to do now, think about what pose you should make to beg for mercy later.”

“Interesting... it’s been a long time since a newcomer dared to speak to me in this tone.” Nasika turned and looked at Zhang Heng. “I am not like Garba. I don’t rely on my age to attract attention. Do you know why the gladiators didn’t dare to refute me? It is because they are afraid that I will target them later. Trust me. You don’t want to know how my nickname, Bone Shatterer, came about.”

“I really want to see what you can do to me.” Zhang Heng said lightly, “I’m afraid you won’t get to live up to your title.”

Nasika wanted to say something, but suddenly they heard a long applause. Everyone knew that it indicated that the previous performance had ended. Now, it was their turn to perform in the arena.

“Oriental man, you will regret what you said to me.” Nasika glared at Zhang Heng, put on his helmet, and stood up from where he was sitting.

Varo, on the other hand, had finally stopped vomiting. He rinsed his mouth with clean water, got up with everyone, hurriedly walked towards the elevator. On the way, he passed an emergency treatment room and saw a gladiator getting treated. His left arm was curved in an unnatural shape. It looked like his bone was broken.

Upon seeing that, Varo quickly looked away and wiped the sweat off his face.

The gladiator who performed earlier was bowing at the audience before he left the arena. Soon after that, the cheers died down. It meant that the gladiator had already left the arena. Hence, the slaves in charge of the elevator pulled the winch together, and the twelve gladiators standing on the platform ascended.

The yelling and stomping of thousands of spectators soon drowned the entire arena.

Perhaps only those literally surrounded by the deafening cheers could truly understand Varo’s tension and fear. He felt like his eardrums were about to burst.

As usual, the twelve gladiators walked around the arena so the audience could see their faces. After that, they conducted some one-to-one warm-up exercises to showcase their combat skills.

Nasika was the most famous gladiator among the twelve. When he appeared, at least half of the audience chanted his name. And Nasika also waved at the audience to thank them for their support. As for the two rookies, Zhang Heng and Varo, they did not receive much attention.

This calmed Varo’s nerves a lot, and he recalled the feeling when he trained under Zhang Heng.

As the three referees walked into the arena, everyone knew that the time for the decisive battle had arrived.

Varo noticed that Nasika seemed to be approaching them deliberately. He probably wanted to wait for the performance to start before getting rid of the newcomers first. However, the other gladiators seemed to have the same idea as him. To them, Zhang Heng and Varo were the easiest pair to get rid of.

When the fight began, Nasika failed to attack Zhang Heng and Varo first. According to the rules, he had to find another opponent.

Chapter 778: That's Considered A Win, Right?

Varo did not expect that he would become so popular.

When the referee signaled them to start the battle, at least four groups of gladiators were charging at them. Varo was almost scared to death. Fortunately, only the nearest group was able to earn the right to fight with them in the end.

Nasika was not too pleased by such an outcome. He predicted that Zhang Heng and Varo would not survive the first round of battles. In other words, he would not get a chance to teach the two of them a lesson in this twelve-man mixed fight.

However, the battle had already begun, and his partner reminded him to be prepared to fight the enemies that were charging at them. The opponents they were about to face had considerable strength, and if they were not careful, they might just lose. Hence, Nasika could only retract his gaze away from Zhang Heng and Varo.

There was a strategy to win in the twelve-man mixed fight. It was not necessarily better to defeat your opponent as fast as possible. That was because the strongest group would most likely go through more rounds of battle, and it would consume more of their stamina. On the contrary, if lucky, one could immediately compete in the final round after they completed the first.

If there were no opponents available in the final round, the winner would have more time to recuperate. Other than that, the losers could also regain their qualification by defeating other losers to challenge the final winner.

In short, this was not a fighting performance that focused solely on strength. Everyone had to formulate a corresponding method. It was crucial for the gladiators to look for their combat rhythm to make sure they could fight more effectively. If they wanted to win in the final battle, they might need some luck.

Like the gladiators who were fighting against Zhang Heng and Varo, they did not rush the battle. Instead, they kept a certain amount of pressure on the two of them to avoid being ruled by the referee as passive fighting. They had made up their minds to drag the battle as long as possible.

After all, Zhang Heng and Varo were regarded as the weakest group. The most important thing was that one of them was dimachaerus, and another one was retiarius, considered s lightweight gladiators. They did not even have a shield with them.

Therefore, the team fighting against them felt that they could end the battle at any time. Ideal opponents like this were not easy to find. If they were to end the battle too quickly, they might have to engage in a tougher battle with other teams.

Varo also felt that their opponents were taking their sweet time to fight with them, relieving him a little

Although Zhang Heng said that their goal was to win in this battle, Varo was not too convinced in the end. He felt that a more realistic goal would be to show as much of his combat skill as possible in the first round of the duel. And Varo would also try his best to claim the victory from the first round of battle. Though there was a high probability that they would lose the second battle, at least it would increase their odds of survival.

What Varo did not expect was that Zhang Heng had no intention to drag the fight. So, he charged at them with both his swords.

His movements weren't very swift at first. As if dashing, his steps got bigger and bigger, and his speed increased tremendously in a short time, just like drumbeats. The muscles of his body tightened as well.

The two gladiators on the opposite side were stunned by Zhang Heng's sudden attack. Like Varo, they did not understand why Zhang Heng would break the balance between them. Logically speaking, it would not do him any good. But as Zhang Heng approached, the two unanimously sensed a huge threat was about to land on them.

This was not supposed to happen. Varo was left stunned for a while before he finally reacted. Considered a relatively good and loyal partner, he immediately rushed towards the opponents with Zhang Heng. However, there was still a short distance between him and Zhang Heng, which meant Zhang Heng was now fighting two enemies simultaneously. And he was just a newcomer with no reputation. It stood to reason that he should not have such a strong presence.

And the next thing that happened stunned Varo even more.

The two gladiators on the opposite side had already sensed the danger and put on a defensive posture. However, it was quickly rendered useless. Zhang Heng knocked away one of their weapon with a sword. After that, he kicked his opponent so hard that he was forced to on the ground. When the second gladiator wanted to raise his weapon, Zhang Heng's sword was already on his neck. He was hoping that his partner would get up from the ground to help him, B=but the latter was in the same situation. When he wanted to get up, he could feel a chill running up his spine.

"Is that a win?" Zhang Heng asked the referee, who was left in shock.

In fact, focusing on Nasika's group, most of the spectators in the stands did not know what happened in the battle just now. After all, the Bone Shatterer was the most famous person in this battle. Hence, everyone hoped that he would win every fight.

Since it was a boring battle, and Zhang Heng wasn't a famous gladiator, few would naturally pay attention. No one thought that Zhang Heng and Varo would win the first round of the fight, not to mention how they ended the battle at such an astonishing speed. It happened in just a blink of an eye. For the people who were paying attention to Zhang Heng, all they saw was Zhang Heng charging towards his opponents, and the battle was over.

What happened during the battle left many confused.

Mark Reuss was one of them. He and Gaby were discussing how to set the roster for the crucial gladiatorial performance that was going to be held after a month. Among them, one of the gladiators

was Bone Shatterer. Hence, they were focusing on Nasika's group. Mark Reuss did not even look at Zhang Heng and Varo's performance. Shocked, he asked Gaby, "What happened."

The latter was responsible for the management of the entire gladiator school. Of course, he would not just focus on a single gladiator. He was used to observing all the gladiators who were engaged in the fights simultaneously and had been paying attention to the situation on the battlefield. That was why he was staring at Zhang Heng right now. And Zhang Heng happened to be looking at him as well.

Gaby snorted, "I didn't expect that I would misjudge someone."

"What do you mean?" Mark Reuss frowned.

"This Easterner has hidden his strength during the previous training and assessment," Gaby explained. He was the kind of person that hated anomalies. During the fight between Bach and Rufus, Bach did kill Rufus even though he still won in the end. And now, what he discovered from Zhang Heng was obviously more shocking.

"Oh?" Mark Reuss was interested to hear what he had to say about Zhang Heng. After all, Zhang Heng never left a deep impression on him before. That was why he did not pay much attention to this oriental man in the first place. He even forgot how he passed the assessment. So, he went on and asked, "How much strength does he hide? Can he be included in the roster?"

Gaby pondered for a moment, "Although Julius and Askle are not well-known, they are considered to be very powerful. Even Habitus could not defeat them instantly. Of course, they are also unfamiliar with Zhang Heng and Varo. And they have underestimated them. I don't know. I can't say anything about them now. Let's continue to observe them. Since he decided to unleash all of his combat skills, he should be ready to claim the victory of this twelve-man mixed fight."

But Mark Reuss thought of another thing. He slapped his thigh and said in an annoyed manner, "I knew I should have promoted him."

"Who is better, Nasika or him?" he asked after a pause.

"I think we will know the answer soon."

Chapter 779: We Should Be The Winning Pair, Right?

Although the whole thing happened so abruptly and seemed incredibly unreal, the judge still had to rule that Zhang Heng and Varo won the battle.

The main reason was that the outcome was too obvious for anyone to refute. Two swords were placed in front of Julius's and Ascle's necks, and they looked extremely embarrassed by their current circumstance. They had lost their strength to fight back. Since Zhang Heng and Varo ended the fight too quickly, they had to wait for the others to finish their battle before they could get another pair of gladiators to fight with.

Judging by how the two looked right now, it seemed like they did not need too much rest. All Varo did was run two meters, and the battle was over. He did not even break a sweat. They had won the battle so quickly and easily that Varo felt that it was unreal. Until Zhang Heng put away both of his swords, Varo realized that everything was real.

“We won?”

“Yes, but it’s only the first round.” Zhang Heng replied, his expressions calm as if what had just happened was just something that did not matter to him.

On the other side, Julius and Ascle looked a little depressed. It was a terrible loss for them since they did not get to showcase any of their strength. This was definitely not a very pleasing scene for the audience, especially since the two had little to no reputation. After the battle was over, the audience would probably request for the two to be executed.

Fortunately, the losers were allowed to fight one more fight to redeem themselves. Due to the sudden defeat, they did not suffer any injuries nor consume any of their stamina. In other words, they had a better advantage in their next battle. Indeed, they would come up with all their strength to fight against their next opponents.

On the other side, Nasika had also started to showcase his combat skills. This was not the first time he fought with his current opponents. Hence, both sides knew each other rather well. The opponent’s group was not weaker than Nasika’s group, so he dared to take the initiative to strike at Nasika.

Nasika knew what his opponent’s plan was. Instead of picking the weakest team, they chose to tackle the most powerful team first. It was apparent that they did not plan to win the fight from the beginning. Their goal was to get into the loser category. Before they let Nasika and his partner defeat them, they would make sure to exhaust and injure them as much as possible.

It had to be admitted that this was indeed a good plan. If it went well, everyone’s favorite, Nasika, would pass the duel’s first round. He would suffer from a certain degree of injuries, which meant it was very likely that he would be eliminated in the next battle. After that, it was possible that they would reconquer each other in the losers bracket. By that time, the chances of defeating them would be significantly increased.

This strategy, however, was a rather risky one too. If they lost to Nasika, the spectators would no longer favor them, meaning their chances of getting executed would increase significantly. Therefore, the star gladiators would try their best not to lose in any battle. Secondly, they might not be able to get out of the loser group again.

The other most significant problem was that a plan did not constantly develop in the direction they expected. Nasika, for instance, was now going to go all out in this battle. He was different from the other gladiators. Due to his enormous strength, not only the large shield in his left hand could be used to block attacks, but it could also be used as an offensive weapon.

If he tackled his enemy with the shield, the person might fall or be sent flying. And if he exerted all of his strength in this attack, his shield would be able to break the bones of his enemies.

During the duel, the two opponents were focusing on guarding against Nasika’s attacks. However, they had underestimated their opponents. They forgot that Nasika still had a partner.

The latter was not as well-known as Nasika and was overshadowed by him. But this did not mean that one could underestimate him. He had always been Nasika’s best partner. The two made up for each others’ weaknesses. Nasika focused on offensive attacks, and his partner would focus on attacks that

harassed their opponents. With the two partnered up, the opponents would often find that they had no other options but to go against Nasika.

Now their opponents were facing what other opponents had faced in the past. When they wanted to retreat, one of them was stuck in the battle with Nasika's partner. When that happened, Nasika charged at them immediately. Seeing that his opponent would put up a defensive posture, Nasika cunningly put away the big shield and slashed the opponent's side body with his sword. Although his opponents managed to dodge this lethal attack, it also forced them to reveal their weaknesses.

Immediately, Nasika's partner slashed one of the opponent's arms with his sword.

The judge had no intention to stop the battle. That was because this scene was similar to what happened between Bach's and Rufus's battle. The cut on the opponent's arm was not as deep, and although blood gushed out from the wound, it was not fatal. Hence, there was no reason for the judge to stop the battle. It did not take long for another opponent to get hurt. However, it was only a minor injury. It was at that time the two opponents realized what Nasika wanted to do.

Nasika knew his opponents' plan from the very beginning. Now, he was using their plan to go against them. Not only did he want to defeat them, but he also wanted to drain all of their strength and stamina. They would not be able to win the next round when they would fight among the loser bracket. And they were about to face the worst possible outcome. The two remembered that Nasika was well-known for making his opponents pay for what they did to him. It was now too late for them to change the outcome. There was no way for them to get out of it unharmed now.

They could not defeat them, and they could not surrender just like that after suffering such slight injuries. The audience would not let them off the hook easily. Therefore, the two had to bite the bullet and carry on with the fight. In any case, they had to survive for a little longer before they surrendered.

However, at this moment, a cunning smile could be seen on Nasika's face. He dropped his current combat style and tackled one of his opponents' chests with his shield. This time, Nasika exerted all of his strength in this strike. The unfortunate opponent was sent flying away by the brutal attack. By now, some of the bones in his body must have been broken. When the other opponent saw that his partner could no longer fight, he put down his weapon and wanted to surrender. Unfortunately, it was too late for him to do so.

Nasika charged at him in that split second, raised the sword in his hand, and cut off his target's arm.

This cruel and bloody scene immediately made the audience cheered for him. The Bone Shatterer was famous for a reason. His brutal and violent combat style was considered art in that era.

However, when Nasika, now bathed in blood, raised his hands, he found out that he received fewer cheers from the audience. When he looked back, he saw that Varo was looking at his heroic posture like the audience in the stand.

Nasika frowned. He realized that he might have unintentionally helped Varo and Zhang Heng unintentionally by eliminating a pair of competitors in the loser group.

But the next moment, he saw the judge signaling him to walk towards Zhang Heng.

Nasika was a little puzzled by it. He then said, "We should be the winner group, right?"

The judge nodded and agreed, "You two are the ones that left in the winner group."

Nasika was shocked. He realized that he had spent quite some time making his opponents pay what they failed to do to him. However, it wouldn't be that long. At most, Zhang Heng and Varo could only fight one round of the battle. But according to the judge, Zhang Heng and Varo had completed two rounds of the battles, and they had won both rounds.

How was that possible? Nasika looked at Varo in confusion, only to find out that the doubt on the latter's face was no less than his.

Chapter 780: The Battle Everyone's Been Waiting For

Varo felt like a spectator in the arena's best seat.

Both battles were singlehandedly won by Zhang Heng singlehandedly. And at the same time, he managed to end the battle relatively quickly. Compared with the first round of the battle that ended almost instantly, the second rounds' opponents were more cautious when they found out Zhang Heng and Varo was the first team that claimed the victory in the first round of the fight.

However, the opponents still could not do anything about Zhang Heng even though they knew he was mighty. The gap of strength between the two parties was simply too broad. Staying cautious would not change the fact that they would lose. Zhang Heng even conserved some of his strength to let Varo participate in the battle. Otherwise, Varo was no different from another spectator.

Even so, the fight did not last long. Shortly after that, Varo found out that they had claimed two consecutive victories. On the other side, the most popular pair of gladiators were still fighting with their opponents.

After the unexpected victory in the first round, more and more audiences began to pay attention to Zhang Heng and Varo. However, technically, most paid their attention only to Zhang Heng. After discovering that they won the fight easily in the second round of the battle, the audience was left in shock, and they began to talk about Zhang Heng's origins.

Such an outcome had caused a lot of frustrations to Mark Reuss. The gladiator school did not anticipate that the audience would pay so much attention to Zhang Heng and were unprepared to handle the curiosity. In the end, the curious spectators found the answer that they were seeking from the previous battle schedule.

And the battle on Nasika's side had finally come to an end. The judge ruled that his opponent could no longer fight. For the first time, the audience understood why they lost the battle. Hence, they did not ask the arena to execute them. Instead, they were sent for treatment.

And the other reason was that everyone was eager to watch Nasika's team against Zhang Heng's team.

The former was the star of the Victor Arena and had many supporters, while the latter was the rookie that stood and fought in this arena for the first time. No one had seen his gladiatorial performance before. To the audience, he was a man shrouded with mystery.

Within five minutes, Zhang Heng managed to claim two consecutive victories. And he finally gained his first batch of fans. Among them, most of them were women, especially the noble ladies. They seemed to be very interested in this dark-haired, dark-eyed, exotic oriental man.

And now, these new “fans” of Zhang Heng had begun to cheer for him. And some of them were virtuous and gentle ladies that could be seen on the street and at home. But now, they had changed into completely different people. They rolled up their sleeves and started to ‘greet’ Zhang Heng’s opponent, Nasika, with vulgar words.

Zhang Heng now knew the importance of a gladiatorial show to the Romans. It was said that when Sethnets’s popularity reached its peak, the audience was a hundred times crazier than it was now. It was no wonder Mark Reuss was so desperate to seek out the next Sethnets.

And now, the owner of the gladiator school was also looking at Zhang Heng enthusiastically. He was different from Gaby. Many people said that he was a cruel and unrelenting man, but this was not true. Mark Reuss only treated the people that had no value to him cruelly. On the other hand, he was always good to the people that could earn him a lot of money.

Gaby might have felt unhappy by the fact that Zhang Heng concealed his strength earlier. Mark Reuss, however, did not share the same sentiments. Just like when he found out that his daughter had an affair with Sethnets, he pretended not to know instead of reprimanding the man.

Those that did not know him well would think that Mark Reuss was a forgiving person. But Gaby, who had worked for Mark Reuss for decades, knew many things that other people did not know. After Sethnets announced his plan to retire, the gladiator school started to plan his final battle. At that time, Mark Reuss asked Gaby privately whether to let Sethnets survive from the battle to preserve his legendary status or let him die on the battlefield where it could yield Victor Arena higher profit and popularity.

Gaby felt a chill climbed to his spine. Sethnets had made a lot of contributions to the Victor Arena in recent years and made a lot of money for Mark Reuss. But Mark Reuss disregarded all of his contributions. All he could think of was profit as always.

This was the true Mark Reuss, a man that placed profit about everything else.

That was why he was so pleased to see Zhang Heng fighting well. His mysterious origin could make him a lot of money later on.

So, why hadn’t Mark Reuss noticed it? The answer was simple. It was because the gladiatorial performance was just a packaging process for the gladiators. In the end, the gladiators’ strength was the one that determined everything. Without strength, there would be no packaging. With good packaging and strength, though, a star gladiator would be born.

When Mark Reuss was still thinking about how to package Zhang Heng, the battle on the other side had already begun.

When Nasika saw Varo and Zhang Heng, he was surprised and delighted. When he found out that he did not fight them in the first round of the battle, he thought that he would never have the chance to teach

the two new arrogant newcomers a good lesson. And now his chance was here. However, when he heard the judge saying that they were the only two winning teams left, he noticed something amiss.

Nasika was not stupid. He quickly realized that these two rookies might have concealed their true strengths. The ability to win two consecutive battles in such a short period of time had proven quite a few things. Not even he could achieve such an unbelievable feat. However, Nasika was not too worried because he was pretty confident in his strength.

The combat experience he accumulated over the years he fought in the Victor Arena was something they did not have.

Just when he was thinking about how to win this fight, he was surprised to hear Zhang Heng taking the initiative to speak to him. The latter asked, "Are you ready?"

"What do you mean by that?" Nasika asked subconsciously.

However, Zhang Heng did not answer him this time. He just said, "Don't worry, it will be over soon."

After speaking, Zhang Heng made the first move. On the other hand, Nasika did not mind checking Zhang Heng's strength and abilities first. So, he raised his big shield in his left hand to put on a defensive posture.

And this move would also become a decision he would regret the most in this battle.

He did not expect that this would also become the only decision he could make in this battle.

In a matter of seconds, Zhang Heng dashed forward and was already in front of Nasika. This time Zhang Heng used the Battōjutsu he learned in the Bakumatusu dungeon. He fused all his strength and aura into this strike. There was nothing fancy about it. When his sword came in contact with Nasika's shield, Nasika felt that he would not block this attack.

Nasika was horrified. One should know that his strength was excellent. Even Sethnets would not be able to defeat him at this point. However, Bach might be able to compete with him in terms of strength. Logically speaking, Zhang Heng should not be stronger than him. However, he did not know why he could not play this match to his advantage even though he had the upper hand in strength.

And all of this was just the beginning. Soon, Zhang Heng unleashed his second strike, followed by the third slash, the fourth slash... From the start to the end, Zhang Heng only did one thing in this battle.

And that was constantly slashing at Nasika's shield.

Nasika barely managed to protect himself from Zhang Heng's first strike. Having had to use all his strength to fight it off, he could not help but retreat. In the end, he was forced to toss away his short sword. He had to use both of his hands to hold the shield. But no matter what he did, he felt like he was sitting in a small boat in the stormy sea, unable to withstand the terrifying pressure that Zhang Heng exerted on him. All of his struggles were are useless.

Nasika even started to doubt the strength that he was once proud of.

After a while, his hands went numb, and his legs were weak. He could no longer hold the shield. So, he dropped it. And he saw a white light flashed in front of him. Nasika had already decided to close his eyes

and wait for his death. Suddenly, the unstoppable sword ceased its movement and stopped less than a centimeter from his nose.