

## All R. Artist 40

### Chapter 40: Sliced Serve

Writing about tennis?

Sports competition?

YangFeng could swear, he's certainly not one to coast by, but seeing a novel focused on competitive tennis laid before him, he couldn't help but instinctively frown—

It's unique, no doubt.

But isn't it a bit too unique?

A novel centered around sports competition, even if you wrote about football or basketball or even table tennis would be fine. At least most people have some experience with these types of sports, and a considerable number enjoy them. So why pick tennis, which relatively has a higher barrier to entry?

Unique is an understatement.

The readership would be very niche indeed.

However, as a professional editor, YangFeng has many considerations. But that doesn't mean he'd reject this submission outright. If the author shows promise, he would still be delighted to establish a rapport.

This is quite normal in the field of fiction writing.

When they come across a promising author, even if the submissions don't pass muster, editors will make attempts to nurture them. Many novelists have found success this way under an editor's tutelage, even though the process most likely involved numerous rejections from the editor.

YangFeng opens the document on his computer and begins to review the manuscript.

Apart from the story itself, he has a good impression of this author who dared to write about tennis. YangFeng admires such a spirit which refuses to concede to market forces. If most authors had such spirit, the publishing industry wouldn't be in such a state of homogeneity.

The story begins.

On a tram heading to Youth Academy, a hotshot from a school tennis team is pompously instructing his new teammate, continuously brandishing his tennis racket while illustrating how to grip it, inadvertently hitting a girl in the face.

“Sorry.”

The young man glanced at the little girl, then kept instructing his new team member. However, while he was heatedly swinging his racket, a cold voice interrupted him, “You’re pretty noisy, aren’t you?”

The speaker was a young boy.

Just as the young man was about to explode with anger, the boy put his bags of tennis gear on his back. On his way out of the tram, nonchalantly, he pointed out, “The correct way to use the Western grip is holding the racket flat from above; to use the traditional Eastern grip, hold it vertically as if you were shaking hands.”

“You...”

Scolded by a young boy, the young man’s face reddened. He glared at the correcting boy, but by the time he thought of a retort, the boy had already exited the tram.

“The protagonist?”

YangFeng nodded in approval.

The story seemed to have a decent start. Even if he didn't understand tennis, he could still grasp the basics about tennis explained here. Also, it seemed the protagonist corrected the young man not just for the sake of it, but also to vent some anger on behalf of the injured little girl.

The scene transitions.

A few boys are discussing a roster. One of them says, "There's a newbie who has just joined the school tennis team this year, and he doesn't even need to be a substitute, he's on the starting lineup."

"Can't be serious."

"How is that possible?"

"Must be a registration error."

One of his companions was skeptical, "A freshman has just finished high school, how could he qualify to join the school's tennis team directly, and even as a starting member. You should know that our school's tennis team serves as reserves for professional players!"

In the roster.

The freshman who qualifies to join the tennis team is called Long Ma. He's sixteen this year, even younger than the average age of the school's tennis team, given that the youngest starting player was at least a sophomore.

While a few were discussing about it.

Long Ma appeared on the scene, with tennis racket slung on his back.

The boys he had met on the tram earlier also appeared, immediately attracting the attention of the students upon arrival. It turned out they came to the school to have a challenge match. But, seeing Long Ma, the team leader from earlier couldn't contain his anger. He pointed his tennis racket at Long Ma and sneered, "Do you realize who you had been teaching about tennis earlier? A key member of the Lanton College's tennis team!"

Long Ma quietly looked at him.

The gaze made the young man uncomfortable all over. He swung his tennis racket towards Long Ma's head—he was just doing this to scare Long Ma, of course, not intending to actually hit him. But to everyone's surprise, Long Ma didn't flinch or dodge, as if he was certain that the racket wouldn't hit him.

Let's go, we've got a match."

One of the young man's teammates laughed and urged him on.

With a cold huff, the young man prepared to leave. But then, Long Ma flicked the empty bottle that the young man had just finished drinking from into the trash can using his racket, then turned and asked him, "Have you learned how to grip the racket? Or would you like me to teach you how to play tennis?"

Shocked gasps echoed all around.

The young man and his gang had the credentials to challenge the Youth Academy, proving their skills were indeed solid. But a seemingly innocuous boy dared to say such words, leaving many dumbfounded.

"Has he lost his mind?"

All eyes were on Long Ma.

Meanwhile, in front of his computer, YangFeng was flipping through the pages with interest. He had expected tennis to be a niche subject, but he didn't find it boring or abstruse at all. Instead, he was quite eager to continue.

The young man took up the challenge.

And so, to the shock of the numerous onlooking students of Youth Academy, this seemingly naive boy utterly dominated the young man—who claimed to be a key member of a certain school’s lead team—in a match, with a massive score difference!

The young man became furious.

He had initially dismissed Long Ma, but losing points one after the other was deeply humiliating. Thus, he was forced to use his secret weapon—a move planned for the key player of Youth Academy’s tennis department—against a mere teenager.

He finally managed to claw back a point.

The Youth Academy’s coach also appeared at this moment, and immediately spotted Long Ma on the tennis court, even allowing a smile to creep onto his face: “He’s here earlier than I expected.”

“Does Grandma know him?”

The girl who had been accidentally injured by the young man on the tram was also there, and it turned out, she was the coach’s granddaughter. However, the coach did not clarify anything, and just continued to leisurely watch the match.

Clack. Clack. Clack.

Long Ma started losing some points again.

The match became increasingly intense with the players trading points back and forth.

YangFeng frowned. The story had always emphasized Long Ma’s prodigious talent, but Long Ma’s current performance wasn’t living up to the hype. Tennis really was a difficult topic to write about.

He shook his head and continued to read.

But what happened next filled him with adrenaline. Under everyone’s astonished gaze, Long Ma actually moved his tennis racket from his right hand to his left hand!

He's a left-hander."

The tennis coach grinned like a fox.

YangFeng never expected Long Ma to be left-handed. This was like a person who had eaten with their right hand all their life forcibly holding chopsticks with their left. The difference between the two concepts was striking. Yet, Long Ma could keep an opponent of considerable strength at bay using just his right hand! What could he achieve with his preferred left hand?

He was looking forward to this.

The plot didn't disappoint. If before, Long Ma could merely restrain the opponent with his right hand, now having switched to his left hand, he was completely toying with his rival. Not only did trading blows back and forth become a thing of the past, but the opponent also couldn't even respond to Long Ma's serves.

The score again turned brutal.

Within the gasps of surprise from the surroundings, the tennis coach from Youth Academy squinted his eyes: "Within just one year, he has won all the youth championships in Qin Continent, clinched all the singles titles, triumphed in eighteen consecutive large-margin victories. He's the tennis genius, Long Ma, specially admitted to the academy by the principal himself, only sixteen years old!"

"Long Ma!"

"Sixteen!"

The crowd around came back to their senses.

Immediately, there was an uproar. This teenager was actually Long Ma, the one who made it into the main team of the tennis department right after enrolling. His achievements were this astounding.

"Interesting."

YangFeng's eyes lit up.

He was captivated by the story, ignoring even the notification to leave work from the company, and continued reading.

The match wasn't over yet.

Long Ma's biggest disadvantage was that he was just sixteen years old, and thus, considerably shorter than his opponent. The young man changed tactics and decided to use his height advantage. Unfortunately, this wasn't a very effective change; Long Ma still dominated the match with his frightening pressure.

"Haha."

There were jeers from around.

The young man was provoked into a frenzied rage, unbelievably throwing his racket with full force at Long Ma, a brutal move that left everyone in shock. It hit Long Ma square in the face, making him bleed.

YangFeng was furious.

There were likewise condemnations from all around.

The young man just laughed crudely, claiming he accidentally lost his grip on the racket. But when everyone thought Long Ma could not continue, he just wiped off the blood and said, "It seems like you still haven't learned how to hold a racket properly."

"You!"

The match continued.

This was Long Ma's counterattack. Each of his balls was incredibly fast and tricky, with high levels of skill involved. He managed to hit the opponent's face several times, causing the latter to yell in pain. YangFeng was laughing uproariously, slapping his thigh in satisfaction. It was so satisfying!

Euphoric, fiercely satisfying.

How dare you lack sportsmanship!

This pace of mocking and face-slapping resonated well with the young readers. With every ball Long Ma hit back, he would ruthlessly call out the scores: “Fifteen-zero—Thirty-zero—Forty-zero —”

“What kind of ball is this?

The teammates of the young man were all dumbfounded.

The coach of Youth Academy casually remarked, “The sliced serve—the ball spins as it rubs against the rubberized court, bouncing off with unexpected trajectories rather than in a straight line when it hits the racket. That’s one of the techniques Long Ma used to sweep the junior group in Qin Continent within one year. You’re not on his level yet.”

The young man was completely frightened.

On the last ball, he didn’t even put up a fight. In fact, Long Ma’s last serve was just a light swing, causing the ball to merely bounce and land next to the young man. The scene was hilariously comical.

The first chapter concluded.

YangFeng took a deep breath.

He never expected that he, who knew nothing about tennis, would be drawn into a tennis-themed novel..