

## Avatar 1291

### Chapter 1291: Firing Line

Thus, Jiang Botao lost the first individual match.

19!

It seemed like Happy's fans had already prepared for this. After Ye Xiu won, the stadium was immediately filled with innumerable flashing signs.

Another match was added to this record and even Team Samsara weren't able to stop Ye Xiu's consecutive victories.

"10-0!!!" Someone very daringly yelled. Last time Happy had been crushed by Samsara ten to zero, but this time? At the very least, Samsara wouldn't have a chance like that anymore, but the possibility of Happy winning ten to zero was still there.

"That'll be rather difficult, won't it?" Commentator Pan Lin wondered aloud with a smile.

"Haha..." Li Yibo chuckled but didn't dare agree. In the individual match that had just end, he hadn't commentated much. He had been a little scared. As the match started, he had wanted to note that Jiang Botao's playstyle was somewhat of a counter to Ye Xiu's playstyle, but due to how small the map was, the two sides soon met and engaged, not giving him much of a chance.

At first he had thought it was a shame, but now, he was glad that he hadn't managed to get that chance.

The results of the match gave a very clear message. Jiang Botao's meticulous style had fallen apart in trying to keep up with Ye Xiu's unspecialized barrage.

He had almost gotten his face slapped... When he realized this, Li Yibo had subconsciously stroked his own face. It was a good thing he hadn't spoken up; after this realization, he immediately commented on how Ye Xiu's style countered Jiang Botao's.

Li Yibo, having managed to get to safety, finally got the chance to accurately display his ability as a commentator, and during Happy's match too. Even Pan Lin was impressed, but Li Yibo was cheering for his good fortune.

It seemed like reserving judgement had its benefits.

Li Yibo had finally grown some wisdom. In the past, he loved to rush to express his opinion first, then prove it through the match, thus showing off his analytical wisdom. However, he had recently found that more and more often, his analytical wisdom would head in the complete opposite direction. In the future, he'd have to be more patient, Li Yibo concluded from these experiences.

The second individual match soon began.

On Happy's side, Su Mucheng rose to the challenge while Samsara sent out Wu Qi. He was the Assassin player of the team and a member of their main roster during the two consecutive championships. But after Sun Xiang transferred in, he mostly appeared as the sixth player.

Launcher against Assassin, one with a very far range, one with a very close range. Both sides played cautiously. Su Mucheng kept a close eye on the distance between them, while Wu Qi didn't dare approach without an opportune moment.

"What a troublesome Assassin. Team Samsara surely has raised many very talented members! After Yang Cong, I'd say that he'd be a good choice for the Alliance's Number One Assassin." At the player stands, Ye Xiu commented on Wu Qi as he watched the match.

"True. He's patient and merciless. He's mastered all the characteristics an Assassin should have." Wei Chen nodded in agreement.

"Could it be that... Team Samsara will soon have a five All-Star line up?" Chen Guo wondered aloud at the side.

Ye Xiu and Wei Chen glanced at each other, their gazes considering.

"We'll have to see how popular their team is. If even after the votes are split up between the five players, all five are sent into the All-Stars, then that'd be terrifying," Fang Rui commented. He had analysed the situation objectively. All-Star voting was all up to the fans, so many of the votes were given blindly. Those fans loyal to their team would unhesitantly give the players their vote even if said players had yet to reach that level.

If all five of Samsara's got into the All-Stars, all supported by their fans, then that could only mean that their fanbase was large enough completely crush the fanbases of other teams. Otherwise, they'd have to gain the votes of unaffiliated fans. For Wu Qi, this was something he truly had no advantage in, a player who was so close to entering the All-Stars getting relegated to sixth player in the team competition due to Samsara's extremely grand line-up. And, with Samsara's strength, the sixth player had very little room to perform. Without a chance to display their talents, how would they gain popularity? What Ye Xiu was commenting on was, in the end, only strength. If you wanted to talk about popularity, there were too many subjective variables.

"Who knows? Maybe by the end of this season he'll be making a fuss about leaving Samsara!" Fang Rui laid this misfortune upon Samsara, head resting on his hands.

However, his logic wasn't faulty. If the other had the ability but no chance to show it, who knows what thoughts would spawn? More importantly, WU Qi had already won two championships as a member of Samsara's main roster. He might have higher pursuits now, such as a place in the team competition line up...

As Happy discussed Wu Qi's future with interest offstage, the two onstage were still testing the waters. The two were using movement and position to circle each other, trying to find an opening. Though Su Mucheng could maintain an offense with her range advantage, Wu Qi didn't give her much of a chance to launch an effective one.

As time ticked by, the match seemed like a game of tag. Su Mucheng kept chasing after Wu Qi, throwing all sorts of bombs at him.

"That's a little hasty," Wei Chen suddenly commented. His tone was concerned, clearly talking about Su Mucheng.

"Her attack efficiency is really low. If this continues, she'll have problems with her mana," Fang Rui also spoke up.

"Her opponent is baiting her into it," Ye Xiu noted.

It was the three of them who typically had more to say on matches. The rookies would sit around them and listen to learn something from it.

"Purposefully circling the boundaries of the map, baiting Su Mucheng into attacking, he's trying to deplete Dancing Rain's mana and wait for a chance to strike back." Since there were rookies listening in, Ye Xiu would often explain in more detail to help them understand.

"What if she just stops attacking altogether?" Luo Ji asked.

"She has to retract her offense carefully, pace it well. Her opponent planned this and isn't just attacking her mana, but her skill cooldowns too. If you abruptly stop an offensive and your skill tree isn't complete, then you'll usually leave many openings which the opponent can grasp. Thus, Su Mucheng generally paces her attacks well to suppress her opponents, but now she's losing her pace a little. If this continues, her Firing Line might expose an opening."

Firing Lines were a term unique to Launchers. A Launcher's offensive relied on depth and layering. The further away a target was, the lower the accuracy of attacks; the closer they were, the riskier it would be for the Launcher. Every Launcher had a Firing Line of optimal distance unique to them which depended on their skill level and playstyle, as well as their mastery of different skills. This was the distance at which a Launcher could maintain the strongest offensive, termed the Firing Line. If you wanted to break through a Launcher's offensive suppression, then breaking past their Firing Line was crucial. To do this, one had to understand how each Launcher maintained and operated their Firing Line - which skills they preferred to use, how they arranged these skills, what methods and pacing they were used to - and think of a way to break through.

This was relatively basic theoretical knowledge in Glory, and after playing Glory for so long, there was no need for Ye Xiu to explain these basic ideas to Happy's rookies anymore. He just had to make sure they understood that what Wu Qi was currently doing was aimed at throwing Su Mucheng's Firing Line into chaos. To do this, he had displayed admirable patience, forcing Su Mucheng to mess up the rhythm she had been maintaining so well.

Boom boom boom!

Onstage, Dancing Rain sent another round of cannonfire. Her attacks were converging more and more. Under this dense firepower, Wu Qi didn't seem to be holding up very well. However, he didn't let his Assassin character Cruel Silence hide completely, continuing to expose himself to Dancing Rain's line of sight, baiting the other into attack.

Boom boom boom!

The attacks continued without pause, but offstage, the frowns of Wei Chen, Fang Rui and the others continued to get deeper.

"This isn't good!" Fang Rui exclaimed.

Just as he said this, Wu Qi's Cruel Silence, who had been jumping around and dodging for so long, suddenly grew bold and shot forwards like an arrow.

"See! There was an opening, he's gotten past the Firing Line!" Fang Rui exclaimed. In the past, they had been opponents and now they were teammates, so he understood Su Mucheng's Firing Line rather well. After considering things from Wu Qi's perspective, he could even figure out approximately what the other planned to do next.

Of course, Wu Qi's thoughts wouldn't mirror Fang Rui's exactly, but they had caught more or less the same opening. Su Mucheng's Firing Line was getting rather patchy. She had been unable to execute her original fearsome offense to perfection due to the lack of a few certain skills.

I can get past!

In that moment, that was Wu Qi's only thought. Cruel Silence, went full speed, not wanting to waste a single moment of this opportunity, and charged towards Dancing Rain in an attempt to break through her Firing Line in one go.

"Haha..." Just as everyone in Happy was on the edge of their seats in worry for Su Mucheng, Ye Xiu chuckled.

"What are you laughing at?" Chen Guo asked.

"A cunning rabbit has three burrows\*, have you ever heard of that?" Ye Xiu asked.

"Of course, what about it?" Chen Guo couldn't understand.

"Who said that you could only have one Firing Line?" Ye Xiu chuckled.

Never mind those old and young pro players, even Chen Guo immediately understood with that.

Onstage, the cannonfire didn't stop. Su Mucheng naturally wouldn't stay there like a sitting duck and let her opponent close in. She had Dancing Rain continue to hinder her opponent's momentum. However, Wu Qi had already judged Su Mucheng's Firing Line to be messed up and incapable of blocking his momentum.

He got through!

Just as Cruel Silence took another step forwards, Wu Qi let out a breath of relief. He had already broken through Su Mucheng's Firing Line, so the firepower at the following distances would only get weaker. In addition, the other might make mistakes in her panic as he closed in.

It was all coming to an end!

As Wu Qi thought this, boom boom boom, with three bangs, three Anti-Tank Missiles came soaring over.

It was just a low level skill so Wu Qi didn't think much of it, easily having Cruel Silence pass through the missiles.

Continue forward!

This was the only thought on his mind.

But...

What was happening? The firepower didn't seem to be weakening?

Wu Qi, darting in and out of cannonfire, realized that his charge was very unsuccessful and didn't achieve the results he had hoped for at all. He couldn't help but turn his head and look back. There wasn't anything wrong, Su Mucheng's Firing Line should've been left in the dust behind him! Yet this offensive...

Chapter 1292: Composed Samsara

"Not just one Firing Line..."

Spectators often had a clearer view of the overall situation, and Samsara's players had realized the crux of the problem at this point, too. Wu Qi hadn't managed to break through, but instead had fallen into an attack arrangement that Su Mucheng had set up for him.

But... Su Mucheng wasn't a new player! The Golden Generation, joining the alliance in Season 4, had become well-known very early on and gained fame rapidly, meaning that they had long since been researched by the other teams. The Firing Line wasn't something new. From the very beginning, finding the Firing Line was the heart of researching a Launcher. Su Mucheng's Firing Line was no secret, hadn't been for a long time, and wouldn't have remained one for long anyways.

Because this was a competition, everyone would give it their all on the field, and the Firing Line was each Launcher's DPS limit. In competitions, players often felt that their best wasn't enough, so who would hold anything back? Unless, of course, you were bullying someone with skill far inferior to yours, then you wouldn't need to give it your all. Even so, there wouldn't be a disparity of skill so big between anyone who had the ability to get into the Alliance, at least to the extent that one could bully the other.

Samsara's members exchanged looks. Happy wasn't an opponent they would underestimate, and Su Mucheng wasn't an easy opponent to fight. Even if they had crushed Happy 10 to 0 in the previous match, this round they would only be more prepared. However, they really hadn't thought that Su Mucheng had more than one Firing Line. She hadn't even hinted at such a talent in the previous matches.

"She's gotten better," Zhou Zekai suddenly said.

The others frowned, continuing to watch the match. Under Dancing Rain's cannonfire, Wu Qi's Cruel Silence didn't have any success closing in. Dancing Rain casually pulled away further as she blasted him. The distance between them slowly grew until...

"The Firing Line!" Jiang Botao called out. This distance was where the Firing Line they were familiar with was at. Cruel Silence had been suppressed by the attacks, Su Mucheng had Dancing Rain slowly pull away, and just like that, Cruel Silence, who had already broken through Su Mucheng's first Firing Line, was pushed back into it again.

Cannonfire poured down like a storm and this offensive was clearly a step above the previous one. This was Su Mucheng's true Firing Line, the one Wu Qi had originally broken through. Yet, he hadn't

imagined that there would be another Firing Line hidden behind this one which disrupted his charge and sent him back.

That unknown Firing Line had already caused Wu Qi huge problems in his advance, and the current one he was caught in was what everyone knew to be Su Mucheng's true, strongest Firing Line.

Under the blasts, Cruel Silence's health dropped at an alarming rate. What experienced player wouldn't know what would happen when you were in a Launcher's Firing Line? Launchers wouldn't stand there like an idiot and just DPS but adjust themselves according to the opponent's response to ensure their target remained in their Firing Line. It was easy to get into a Firing Line, but much harder to get out of one.

Samsara's players all turned to look at Sun Xiang simultaneously. He had been teammates with her for half a year, after all.

"Did you know she had this level of skill?" Lu Boyuan nudged Sun Xiang, asking.

Sun Xiang shook his head, face filled with confusion. In reality, when he had arrived in Excellent Era, the Spear and Cannon Duo that had been established in Season 2 met an untimely death. Though One Autumn Leaf and Dancing Rain had both still been in the team, they had lost the sense of partnership they had in the past. Sun Xiang was rather depressed at this, but Su Mucheng's professionalism was flawless; they just didn't have that sort of chemistry. Partnerships did somewhat depend on fate. It wasn't uncommon for forced partnerships to end in an absolute mess in the Alliance.

However, even as teammates, Sun Xiang really didn't know that Su Mucheng had all these tricks with her Firing Line.

"With her skill, I think she can probably maintain her Firing Line at a wider range. What do you think, Little Zhou?" Jiang Botao said.

"Yeah," Zhou Zekai nodded.

"However, she purposefully controlled her skill use, focusing on the range of her Firing Line. But because it was so focused, she could combine and use the skills that were freed up interchangeably to split off a second Firing Line..." Jiang Botao analyzed.

The Samsara players around them all nodded. They weren't like Happy, full of rookies. Samsara's line-up was the most stable in years. This group of players had grown together, gained experience together. They understood and complemented one another very well. Communication was simple and convenient for them. Samsara's two consecutive championships was a result of these players growing to their peak. Luck would always play a factor in who became the champions, but this luck could only be grasped if you had enough power.

Now, this championship team managed to analyze Su Mucheng's current playstyle completely with just a few sentences.

"How cunning," Jiang Botao continued to comment.

"Yeah... If needed, I believe she could increase the range of her Firing Line, instead of splitting it into two like this," Lu Boyuan agreed.

"However, she didn't do that. She held back, making her choices seem more varied. She's managed to maintain great control over this," Jiang Botao sighed.

"It's not looking good for Wu Qi!" Blade Master player Du Ming exclaimed.

Everyone fell silent. It was a shame that the person they had admiring was their opponent. If their opponent performed well, then it meant trouble for them. However, the confidence of a championship team wasn't anything to scoff at. Faced with an impending loss, their mood seemed very calm, not at all panicking because of two consecutive losses.

In the end, it was Su Mucheng who claimed victory. The cheering in Xiao Shan Stadium drew on for a good while.

This was Samsara, after all! That immensely powerful Samsara, and yet, Team Happy was currently leading 2 to 0!

Wu Qi returned to the player bench. He was naturally in a rather bad mood due to his loss.

"That really was too sly of her!" Accepting the towel his teammates handed over, Wu Qi wiped his hands before throwing the towel onto his seat dispiritedly. It was clear that, in the end, he had figured out what was going on with Su Mucheng's Launcher.

"We'll watch out next time," his teammates consoled him.

"Watch this, I'll avenge you!" Lu Boyuan said.

"It's not a group arena, avenge my ass." Wu Qi glared.

"You can avenge yourself later in the team competition," Jiang Botao told him.

"Am I in the starting line-up for the team competition?" Wu Qi's eyes shone.

"Ahem!" Jiang Botao cleared his throat. "Next time, next time."

Wu Qi returned to his dispirited state. In reality, they had already gone over the line-up before in the prep room prior to the match. It was exceedingly rare for a team to wait until the match itself to announce their line-up to the players. Wu Qi already knew that he would still be the sixth player for the team competition. He was just expressing his desire to be a part of the starting line-up. Seeing his state, his other team members started laughing. Getting into the team competition starting line-up for Samsara was very difficult nowadays. However, Samsara was a team with a truly impressive atmosphere, able to discuss this rather sensitive topic freely.

"Well, I'm off," Lu Boyuan said to his teammates before he headed off. On Happy's side, their third player was also a Fighter class player, Steamed Bun.

"Aiya, it's this guy. If I lose, you can't blame me, okay? That guy's hella weird!" Seeing Happy's next player, Lu Boyuan hurriedly turned back to speak with his teammates.

"If you lose, you can hand your place in the starting line-up to me!" Du Ming hollered.

"Hand it to me!"

"Me me me!"

All the players on rotation joined in. Lu Boyuan smiled, already walking towards the stage.

"As expected of a championship team..." Happy's members were also paying attention to the situation with Samsara.

After two consecutive losses in the individual round, the team wasn't at all panicked. This team didn't have any very experienced veterans, but they were all very composed players. This might be the result of the confidence gained in these two years as two-time consecutive champions. Even opening with two losses wouldn't impact their confidence. The psychological advantage that taking a lead had was completely lost when faced with Samsara. On the contrary, their confidence, their composure, their leisurely attitude would destabilize their opponents.

However... considering that Happy's third player was Steamed Bun, there was no such setting that would make him feel unnerved. Chest puffed out and head held high, Steamed Bun got onto the stage with several long strides. He gained quite a lot of cheers.

Compared to the rest of the Alliance, Team Happy's line-up was one of the least stable. Steamed Bun didn't have all that many opportunities to perform but he was quite popular amongst the Happy supporters since he could always bring surprises to the match. A match with Steamed Bun was never boring.

"Samsara's third player is Lu Boyuan. This player is a model competitive player. He has great mental fortitude and his forte is performing at his peak under pressure, turning the tables on his opponent. After falling behind by two points, he's the third to come up, but this is exactly the type of situation which he performs well in!" Pan Lin commented on the two players in the live television broadcast.

"As for Happy, they've sent out Bao Rongxing. Eh, this player... He's a very... well, no matter where he is, he's a player who has a very inconsistent performance. Do you agree, advisor Li?" Pan Lin asked.

"Ahem!" Li Yibo coughed.

"Ahem ahem!" Li Yibo coughed more.

"Bao Rongxing is the one player that can bring the most unexpected of situations to a match," Li Yibo concluded. A player that was so unpredictable really wasn't one he dared to predict anything about.

"Alright, now the match will start," Pan Lin announced.

On the field, the characters were loaded into the maps. For Happy, Brawler Steamed Bun Invasion; for Samsara, Glory's current Number One Grappler, Chaotic Cloudy Mountains.

"Alright, let the match start! Both characters are running directly for the center," Pan Lin called out.

"Lu Boyuan struck first! Don't Grapplers usually wait for the opponent to make a move and then counter, Advisor Li?" Pan Lin asked.

"Yes, because grabs are the highest priority skills in Glory, so Grapplers have the ability to break through an opponent's offense. Using grabs during an opponent's offense is usually harder for the opponent to deal with," Li Yibo said.



"But Lu Boyuan is really taking the initiative here!"

"Samsara has, after all, lost two matches in succession. They need to be fierce in order to raise their morale!" Li Yibo explained.

Just as he finished speaking, Lu Boyuan sent a message. "I'm not gonna give you a chance to mess things up, man!"

"Advisor Li?" Pan Lin turned his head towards Li Yibo.

Li Yibo had a bitter expression. What was up with people today; how come even Team Samsara decided to start slapping the faces of commentators?

Chapter 1293: Being Too Skilled Can Become An Opening Too

"Too messy!" Steamed Bun sent a head-shaking sighing emoji like a teacher lecturing a student. Then, Steamed Bun Invasion faced Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's attack directly.

Circle Sweep Kick!

Chaotic Cloudy Mountains leaped into the air and looked as if he were trying to step on Steamed Bun Invasion. However, everyone knew that Grapplers had all sorts of grab skills. Getting kicked wasn't the scary part. It was the sweep following the kick that was terrifying. The sweep had grab priority, and it knocked the target to the ground.

Steamed Bun looked like he knew about the threat of this skill. He didn't use a skill to fight force with force. Instead, he rushed forward aggressively and then dodged to the side.

Lu Boyuan was watching Steamed Bun Invasion's movements closely. If Steamed Bun didn't move too far away, he would still be able to hook onto the target if he adjusted his Circle Sweep Kick. But when Steamed Bun Invasion dodged, he strode three steps. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's legs weren't that long. His attack was dodged cleanly. But Lu Boyuan still had his Chaotic Cloudy Mountain finish the sweep in the air. Even though it didn't hit a target, it stopped his character's aerial momentum.

Whoosh!

Steamed Bun Invasion threw a Brick. His prediction was off, and the Brick whistled by Chaotic Cloud Mountain.

"Oh! You've got some skill!" Steamed Bun Invasion praised his opponent. At this moment, Steamed Bun Invasion slid forward, wanting to attack with a Tiger Flips the Mountain when Chaotic Cloudy Mountain fell.

Lu Boyuan saw everything clearly and didn't say a word. Just when his character was about to touch the ground and the instant Steamed Bun Invasion's arm smashed towards him, Chaotic Cloudy Mountain suddenly raised his two legs, twisting onto Steamed Bun Invasion's shoulders.

Aerial Twist!

Chaotic Cloudy Mountain twisted in the air, and his two legs, wrapped around Steamed Bun Invasion's shoulder, threw him onto the ground.

Lu Boyuan used this grab skill for a dismantle effect. Being able to stop Tiger Flips the Mountains using such precise manipulation of a skill required incredible perception.

Samsara's fans fired up. Even though it was just a skill hitting, it was a brilliant play.

The attacks weren't over yet though.

Chaotic Cloudy Mountain had wrapped around Steamed Bun Invasion's shoulders and flipped him towards the ground, but the throw wasn't aimed directly downwards. Midway, Chaotic Cloudy Mountain loosened his legs and landed on the ground first. He then stepped forward and reached out with his hands, catching the tumbling Steamed Bun Invasion.

Overhead Toss!

Nothing skill was released. Steamed Bun Invasion was grabbed by Chaotic Cloudy Mountain and thrown towards the ground. A huge rumble exploded. Just the sound alone told how heavy this throw was. It still wasn't over yet though.

Ground Toss!

While one arm threw Steamed Bun Invasion onto the ground, the other hand stretched forward and grabbed him again, not leaving Steamed Bun Invasion any time to roll away. His arm hoisted him up and threw him back into the air.

Chaotic Cloudy Mountain jumped up high. This time, he used both hands to grab Steamed Bun Invasion and then: Slam Dunk!

With matchless strength, Steamed Bun Invasion was thrown fiercely towards the ground. This high-level skill's power was no small matter. Steamed Bun Invasion smashed into the ground, forming a crater. From the way his body was bent, it looked like his back had snapped.

With just this brief combo, Steamed Bun Invasion had lost a fifth of his health. It hadn't even been ten seconds since the two characters had met. Luo Boyuan's efficiency made everyone gasp in awe. The Samsara fans were already going crazy. Happy's fans couldn't help but start to sweat for Steamed Bun.

Lu Boyuan didn't get distracted by the previous combo. After Slam Dunk, he immediately pounced on Steamed Bun Invasion.

Brick!

Steamed Bun Invasion leaped out from that crater, while also throwing a Brick. His attack had been quite sudden. However, after a season of competitive play, Steamed Bun's crazed love for Brick, which was often used as soon as it went off cooldown whether or not it made any sense, had become a signature move for him. How could pro players not catch onto this and fall for it again and again?

Chaotic Cloudy Mountain sidestepped it, dodging the Brick, and continued to press closer.

Sand Toss, Poison Needle, Molotov Cocktail.

Steamed Bun looked like he was panicked and was throwing whatever he could at his opponent. How could such a brainless offensive stump Lu Boyuan? Chaotic Cloudy Mountain continued to press closer and closer.

Brick!

Another Brick!

After a few more skills, the Brick came off cooldown again and Steamed Bun Invasion immediately used it without any hesitation.

Lu Boyuan didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Had this guy been thrown silly? What the heck was this?

"Has Bao Rongxing lost it?" On the broadcast, Pan Lin was dumbfounded. There didn't seem to be any hints of thought behind Steamed Bun's moves. He just looked to be throwing things randomly. He looked completely powerless. An extra being helpless against the hero was common in movies, but this was the Pro Alliance. It was said that there were no weak players in the pro circle, but this ridiculous performance seemed to show otherwise!

Li Boyi also thought the same, but he resisted opening his mouth. This Bao Rongxing always pulled out the biggest surprises. Casually declaring a verdict wouldn't be good. It would be better to keep watching. Maybe he was currently trying something crazy. What if it takes effect immediately afterwards?

Li Yibo thought in this way. Lu Boyuan didn't dare be careless either. They had studied Steamed Bun's matches in particular, but apart from his love for Bricks, he didn't seem to follow any other rules. There wasn't much that could be done for pre-planning against this sort of opponent. He just had to perform well when the time came. Focus! Focus was important because Steamed Bun could suddenly pull out a trick from nowhere. Sometimes Steamed Bun's plays would be brilliant, other times his plays would be stupid. If he didn't focus, maybe the stupid play might work out. Quite a few players had fallen against this rookie. And after they lost, they would complain to the reporters incessantly and looked as if they could go on for three days and three nights.

Lu Boyuan didn't want to capsize like them, so even if Steamed Bun looked like he was lost, he didn't let down his guard. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain once again pressed towards Steamed Bun Invasion. Lu Boyuan didn't force his way through. He used a low-level Fling as a probe for the start of his next round of attacks.

Lu Boyuan stared closely at Steamed Bun Invasion's movements. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's two hands reached out, but then he saw Steamed Bun Invasion suddenly crouch down. His right knee lifted up, while his left foot pushed off the ground.

Powerful Knee Strike!

This skill name flashed through Lu Boyuan's mind. Which attack was faster, Fling or Powerful Knee Strike? The answer was clear in an instant.

Powerful Knee Strike would arrive first, but Fling could be saved through some adjustments. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain crouched down, while his two hands reached upwards. He was planning to Fling his opponent once the Powerful Knee Strike passed. Lu Boyuan once again displayed his precise judgement,

but this time, Chaotic Cloudy Mountain did all this for nothing. The Powerful Knee Strike he had been anticipating didn't appear.

All of the viewers saw what had happened.

Steamed Bun Invasion had lifted his right knee and his left foot pushed against the ground, but he didn't soar through the air. This attack wasn't a Powerful Knee Strike. It was just a normal one. But the problem was that for a normal knee strike, this distance was too long; it didn't even reach Chaotic Cloudy Mountain. It was a complete miss.

Steamed Bun Invasion raised his knee, minding his own business, and didn't hit the target. However, not hitting the target seemed to have the same effect. When Steamed Bun Invasion was two steps away, Chaotic Cloudy appeared to have been hit by the knee strike. His body crumbled and bent, his two arms went up into the air as if he were surrendering.

Everyone was dumbfounded at this strange scene.

When Lu Boyuan saw that he had predicted wrong, he knew that the situation wasn't good. But when he tried to adjust Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's position, crack!

The crisp clear sound of bones shattering could be heard by everyone. After Steamed Bun Invasion feinted a knee strike, he suddenly used a real Powerful Knee Strike. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain was still crouched down. Right when he was about to retreat, this Powerful Knee Strike hit Chaotic Cloudy Mountain square in the chest.

Everyone's hearts turned cold at the sound of this crackling. It was as if they could feel the pain from this attack themselves. Chaotic Cloudy Mountain fell backwards, and Lu Boyuan immediately Quick Recovered. Steamed Bun Invasion's Powerful Knee Strike had been extremely fast though. He landed on the ground and followed with a Tyrannical Chain Punch, beating on the fallen Chaotic Cloudy Mountain.

Lu Boyuan was depressed!

Focus, focus! He had been so focused, yet he had still fallen for a trick. That hadn't been a Powerful Knee Strike previously, but a regular knee strike. Using a regular knee strike made absolutely no sense. It wouldn't be able to hit anything. It wouldn't be able to block anything. If Chaotic Cloudy Mountain hadn't dodged it and continued forward, Steamed Bun would be in the grasp of his hands. But the problem was that not a single brain cell of his thought that this would be a regular knee strike. Had he baited himself?

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but think about what had happened previously as Steamed Bun Invasion pummeled him. If that had been a trap, then Steamed Bun was truly bold. It was because he was skilled enough that he could react in that instant. If it hadn't been him, if it had been a random player from the game, Lu Boyuan was certain that Steamed Bun Invasion would instead be the one pressed to the ground.

An opening had appeared because he had been too skilled?

Luo Boyuan couldn't accept it.

Tyrannical Chain Punch ended, and Steamed Bun Invasion leaped back. Lu Boyuan recovered and had Chaotic Cloudy Mountain get up. As soon as looked up, he saw Steamed Bun Invasion's knee rise up again.

Powerful Knee Strike!

Lu Boyuan was just about to have Chaotic Cloudy Mountain dodge to the side, but then he saw that Steamed Bun Invasion didn't fly forward. It was another empty knee strike. Lu Boyuan only then remembered, Powerful Knee Strike had just been used. That wasn't a low-level skill. It couldn't be off cooldown yet.

"You're crazy!!" Lu Boyuan lost his cool. Using a normal knee strike at that distance? Apart from crazy, there was no other explanation. Just when he blurted this out, Steamed Bun Invasion raised his arms and threw a Brick.

"A Brick again? Is that all you know?" Lu Boyuan shouted as Chaotic Cloudy Mountain dodged. He wasn't the type of person who liked to talk a lot during a match, but facing this opponent, Lu Boyuan felt like if he didn't vent, he would choke to death.

Chapter 1294: Thought Process Off Target

The audience members looked at one another.

As Lu Boyuan had thought, it was precisely because he was too skilled that he was hit by the Powerful Knee Strike. If it were a normal player, then they would've already used a Fling to throw Steamed Bun Invasion to the ground.

The viewers definitely comprised of normal players, so they didn't understand why Chaotic Cloudy Mountains had ducked down low before straightening up with his arms in air like he was surrendering. As Lu Boyuan cursed, wondering what the hell Steamed Bun was trying to do, the viewers, who had no idea what was actually going on, were trying to figure out what the hell Lu Boyuan was trying to do.

Right now, Lu Boyuan, someone who usually didn't speak much during matches, was yelling in the channel. Words like "are you fucking crazy" and the such could probably count as personal attacks, if pressed.

Lu Boyuan had completely lost it!

It wasn't just the audience who thought so; even the live commentator Pan Lin was commenting on this. Lu Boyuan's current state was just too far from his usual self.

"Calm down!" No one would've expected that, onstage, Lu Boyuan's opponent Steamed Bun would send a message admonishing him.

"Panicking like that isn't proper." Another followed. Where had Steamed Bun learned all this from?

"Fuck!" Lu Boyuan exclaimed. Why the hell was this guy suddenly scolding him?! They were opponents, okay? What the hell does my panic have anything to do with you?! And plus, I'm not panicking!

As Steamed Bun scolded the other, his actions didn't stop. With his Brick a miss, he did a Sand Toss.

Lu Boyuan wasn't in the calmest of states right now, but he wasn't panicking either. Chaotic Cloudy Mountains dodged perfectly. After Sand Toss, Steamed Bun Invasion continued to close, but Lu Boyuan's Chaotic Cloudy Mountain wasn't a ranged class, so there was nothing he wanted more than for his opponent to be close. As Steamed Bun Invasion closed in, he naturally wouldn't retreat and just observed the other's motions. Lu Boyuan decided to forgo taking the initiative and returned to the usual style of Grapplers, waiting for his opponent to make the first move and countering. He'd see what tricks this guy had up his sleeves.

Thus, Steamed Bun Invasion arrived in front of Chaotic Cloudy Mountains as the latter slowed down his pace on purpose.

Brick!

Lu Boyuan was close to tears.

Was this really the legendary use-immediately-after-cooldown style?

To be honest, if you really wanted to calculate this kind of pacing, it would be very troublesome. Although Brick wasn't a low-level skill, it wasn't very high either. It was a skill Brawlers learned very soon after advancing classes and had a short cooldown. Considering the frequency at which Steamed Bun used the skill, calculating the cooldown of this skill would be very distracting.

This was probably the real motive behind his frequent usage...

A skill like Brick didn't deal much damage, but because of its crowd control, you had to be wary of it. Steamed Bun, using this skill so frequently and making it so that his opponent's had to stay on guard against it was very distracting for his opponents. In addition, this guy often used his skills in a chaotic mess, suddenly throwing in some troublesome skill; it really was quite hard to guard against!

Lu Boyuan felt like he had discovered something; he felt like he was close to figuring out his opponent's thought process.

However, this seemingly random and completely mindless use of Brick Throw wouldn't just distract the opponent, it would also disrupt your own rhythm! After all, skill usage needed to be paced. Sometimes a different skill would evidently work better in this scenario, but Steamed Bun just always chose Brick. Wasn't that a little wasteful?

Lu Boyuan, who had thought he was beginning to understand, realized that his logic didn't work out after considering it a little more.

Lu Boyuan's thoughts, very unfortunately, went down an erroneous path. He had started trying to figure out Steamed Bun's thought process and rationalizing the other's actions from a theoretical perspective. And this was something that even Ye Xiu, who had far more experience and time with Steamed Bun, had failed to accomplish in two years.

As for why Steamed Bun liked Bricks, that was something Ye Xiu could explain to Lu Boyuan. It was because Bricks were easy to come by and unsuspecting. After you used them, you could just toss them aside to get rid of the weapon.

Trying to use Glory theories to figure out this problem would only get further and further away from the truth of the matter. Lu Boyuan was thinking himself into a mess. It was true that counterattacking was a Grappler's primary style. However, this style required you to have a precise understanding of your opponent's style, a decisive judgement, quick eyes, and steady hands.

Yet right now, the one Lu Boyuan was trying to figure out was Steamed Bun. Steamed Bun, the mystery that even Ye Xiu had failed to figure out after two years.

And so he lost.

He lost without knowing how he lost in a complete mess. It was only when Chaotic Cloudy Mountains fell that Lu Boyuan woke up from his stupor of trying to figure out Steamed Bun.

He lost just like that?

Lu Boyuan was shocked. He had been under this strange impression that there was plenty of time, and he had plenty of health. Trying to figure out Steamed Bun was like losing yourself in an abyss.

After leaving the booth, Lu Boyuan was still scratching his head. As he walked back to the bench, he kept looking up at the playback on the big screen. It wasn't until he was back at the bench that he smacked himself on the forehead, "Fuck, I'm so dumb!"

When he had gone up there, it was with the decision to take the initiative more and not give this weird player any chances to play tricks. Why did he end up trying to figure out his opponent as he fought?

"My willpower wasn't strong enough!" Lu Boyuan bemoaned.

"I don't know why, but there was a moment where I thought to myself, I can't play like this, I have to figure him out," Lu Boyuan explained.

"And somehow as you were trying to figure him out, you lost, right?" Wu Qi said.

"Yeah," Lu Boyuan nodded.

"It's 3 to 0 now, hey!" Jiang Botao reminded everyone. Right now they really were falling behind. Happy's fans were screaming and cheering, yelling thunderously about a flawless victory. As for Samsara's accompanying fanclub, they were much more subdued. They had actually lost every round in the individual competition. That really was a hit to their morale.

"Hey, did you guys actually fight seriously?" Du Ming asked the three individual competition players.

The three looked at one another.

"It's competition, there'll always be losses every now and then," Cleric player Fang Minghua comforted everyone.

"We'll take back two points in the group arena!" Sun Xiang stood. He was the first player for the group arena.

"Good luck!" His teammates encouraged.

"One versus three!" Someone said.

"No, don't, I wanna go up. I want to fight that sister in Happy," Du Ming hurriedly disagreed.

"You want to take revenge?" Everyone mocked him. They all naturally remembered how Du Ming had fought Tang Rou at the All-Stars Weekend. Back then, Tang Rou hadn't even been a pro player, just a noob, but her ferocious and relentless attitude left a deep impression. It was also then that Du Ming had lost face, getting humiliated by Tang Rou before being annihilated by Ye Xiu. He had been depressed for quite some time after that.

"I remember Ye Xiu also fought you back then, how come you don't go looking for him for revenge?" A teammate immediately asked.

"What revenge? I just want to spar," Du Ming said.

"Is it because she's pretty?" Wu Qi grinned, an arm around his shoulders, "I mean, she really is quite pretty."

"Fuck off," Du Ming pushed him away.

After falling behind 0 to 3, the atmosphere around Samsara was still as natural as ever. No one jumped up yelling something like "we have to win the next round" or anything. However, none of them lacked this determination.

In the live broadcast, Pan Lin was analyzing the line-ups the two teams might possibly have set, while Li Yibo felt like he was just waking from a dream. He was shocked to realize that he hadn't made a single comment throughout the past three matches. Pan Lin had thrown the discussion to him a couple of times but he had gotten by with just a few noncommittal noises. He had been ever so careful like that and ended up not giving any analysis whatsoever.

He had to make his presence more evident! Li Yibo, suddenly awake from his stupor, listened to Pan Lin's analysis, and hurriedly found a place to interrupt.

"Yes!" Li Yibo continued Pan Lin's train of thought. "Samsara's group arena line up has been constant with Sun Xiang first and Zhou Zekai as the last line of defense, with a few players on rotation in the middle. As for Happy, starting with Fang Rui and ending with Tang Rou is also a relatively consistent line up. From the line ups, Samsara seems to have a slight advantage. And the advantages in the group arena stack. I'm wondering if Happy will make adjustments to counter Samsara's line-up. In Happy's line-up..."

"Happy's player is coming onstage!" That was when Pan Lin suddenly announced.!

"Ah, yes, it's... Fang Rui..." Li Yibo felt rather helpless when he said the name. He had only just wondered aloud if Happy would make any adjustments or not, and then Happy had decided to use their usual line-up. Li Yibo felt depressed! He didn't dare finish his thought on Happy. He had been prepared to talk about this possibility and then emphasize the possibility of Happy's line-up remaining unchanged. But he hadn't even gotten halfway there when Happy's player entered the field! There was a small break between the individual competition and the group arena, could you not be so eager to fight? Do you all have something against me? Li Yibo was going to cry.

"Yes, Happy's Fang Rui seems to have decided to get into the player booth early. Let's see, as for Samsara, oh, Samsara's player has decided to get onto the field, too. It's Sun Xiang; seems like neither team has any intention of deviating from their usual arrangements," Pan Lin noted.



"Er, in this match, from the individual competition to the group arena now, it seems like neither team has decided to make any special arrangements to counter the other. They're treating the match as a normal match and haven't made special preparations in accordance to their opponent's identity," Li Yibo could only say.

"But Samsara is already behind by three points. They won't have a good time in the following games. Will they really be beaten ten to zero, like the audience is cheering for? Then Happy really would've taken their revenge," Pan Lin wondered. If this was like before, the idea of Happy winning a flawless victory against Samsara would probably make most people laugh their heads off, but now even the live broadcast was discussing this possibility in a serious fashion. The rise of Happy's position and power in people's minds was truly something terrifying to behold.

"We'll have to see how Samsara performs." Li Yibo didn't think Happy could do it. However, he didn't dare make any predictions. This was Happy, and even when he was being extremely cautious, they still managed to slap him in the face. It was better if he didn't make too many predictions like that!

"Both players have entered their booths, but it seems that the referee is going to wait for the break to finish. Coach Li, could you give us your view on this match between Fang Rui and Sun Xiang?" Pan Lin asked.

My view your ass! I don't want to do these pre-match predictions! Li Yibo cursed internally.

#### Chapter 1295: The Patient Sun Xiang

Despite being pushed beyond his ability, Li Yibo still had to say a few words. He didn't dare ascertain which side had the advantage though, so he just introduced the traits of each player. Meanwhile, Pan Lin was feeling down. He could do an introduction. The purpose of the guest commentator was to provide a deeper level of analysis! He could understand where Li Yibo was coming from though, so he didn't pursue it. The two chatted for the break period, and then the group arena officially began.

Happy - Fang Rui, Boundless Sea.

Samsara - Sun Xiang, One Autumn Leaf.

As for the map, since Fang Rui played dirty, he naturally wouldn't be like Ye Xiu and pick a wide open field. This particular group arena map had numerous holes and ditches. As soon as Boundless Sea loaded into the map, he immediately hid in one of the holes and vanished. This trench-filled map had many intersecting ditches. Players who wanted to move stealthily would have an easier time.

Boundless Sea leaped down into a trench and skillfully maneuvered around without needing to look up to figure out his position. Shortly afterwards, Boundless Sea made it to the center of the map and then headed towards a narrow ditch on the side. He quietly peeked his head above the ground but was blocked by a stone tablet. He carefully exposed half of his head and then looked outwards.

Fang Rui's familiarity with this map didn't need to be said, but unfortunately, Boundless Sea couldn't find anything in his field of view. To his surprise, One Autumn Leaf was not at the center of the map.

Fang Rui was astonished and checked who his opponent was again subconsciously. Correct, it was One Autumn Leaf, and the player was Sun Xiang, not Ye Xiu who had been as dirty as him in the past.

Sun Xiang... he didn't charge to the center of the stage? Sun Xiang also moved strategically?

This was truly outside of Fang Rui's expectations. From his understanding, like Tang Hao and Zhao Yuzhe, Sun Xiang looked down on this sort of playing. These new generation players preferred to happily battle it out at the center.

Sun Xiang maintained this same style this season with Samsara, but he suddenly switched it up this match. Was this because his opponent was the dirty Fang Rui?

Making changes because of the opponent. No one had thought Sun Xiang had it in him, but it was happening right in front of their eyes.

Fang Rui scratched his head. He suddenly realized that he had no idea what to do next.

What would a strategically moving Sun Xiang do? He couldn't understand at all because that punk had never played that way before!

Fang Rui didn't whether to be happy or sad that his opponent was giving him special treatment.

His current ambush position should still be good. Fang Rui carefully sized up his surroundings. If he were facing a different opponent, he could try to predict what his opponent would do next through the terrain, but against Sun Xiang... how could he make a prediction for someone who he had originally thought didn't know a thing about moving strategically?

Was he patiently waiting, or was he putting himself forward as bait?

Fang Rui pondered. In the meantime, he started trash talking Sun Xiang.

"Hey, where are you? You've been ruined by Samsara. You were never like this before!" Fang Rui acted like he was friends with Sun Xiang. In reality, the two had never interacted with each other before.

The chat was silent. Sun Xiang didn't respond.

"It's a match after all. Play how you like to play. Don't concern yourself over who your opponent is! Maybe my dirtiness is giving you a lot of pressure, but using a style you're not familiar with might not get the results you're expecting!" Fang Rui didn't mind the opponent not replying back as he continued to chatter.

As he talked, his Boundless Sea wasn't just standing there quietly. He was moving cautiously through the trenches, investigating the area around him.

Where was One Autumn Leaf?

The viewers obviously knew the answer. Sun Xiang's opening move had caught everyone off guard. He had done the same as Fang Rui. One Autumn Leaf had also moved stealthily through the trenches.

"Sun Xiang's choices today are quite surprising!" Pan Lin had been talking about it earlier.

"Yes, this isn't his usual style," said Li Yibo.

"It looks like he has some misgivings over Fang Rui's dirtiness," Pan Lin said.

"Yes... Fang Rui's Qi Master is similar to Ye Xiu's unspecialized in some sense. The opponent isn't familiar with this new playstyle or class. Most of his experience with Qi Masters isn't useful because Fang Rui's playstyle is entirely different from other people's," Li Yibo said.

"But do you think Sun Xiang might be overcompensating by changing his own playstyle?" Pan Lin said.

"Ah... this... let's take a look at their performances first. I believe Sun Xiang should have come prepared. Fang Rui is most likely surprised by Sun Xiang's actions." Li Yibo didn't provide a detailed analysis, instead giving a simple prediction.

Sure enough, Fang Rui was surprised by Sun Xiang's actions. Seeing the constant stream of trash talk, Li Yibo felt incredibly happy. He had made a correct prediction, even if it wasn't anything admirable.

"Sun Xiang is really keeping his composure today!" Pan Lin said.

From their omniscient view, they could clearly see that Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf had reached the center of the map too. However, he wasn't as active as Fang Rui. He picked a spot and then quietly stood there.

"Sun Xiang, this player..." Li Yibo wanted to say something, but he stopped himself. He was like a player who had been beaten again and again. His confidence had been slapped into nothingness.

"It's a very short section of the trench. The turns on both ends are within reach of a Battle Mage." Pan Lin introduced the features of this position.

"Yes..." Li Yibo was itching to say something! But the other voice in him was telling him to calm down.

Sun Xiang was waiting patiently, while Fang Rui searched for his opponent. Boundless Sea maneuvered through the trenches, while occasionally peeking his head up to check his surroundings above the ground. The trash talk in the public chat hadn't stopped yet, but none of his messages received a response.

Finally, Boundless Sea approached One Autumn Leaf's hiding spot. Boundless Sea was practically crawling as he moved silently. Not a single sound could be heard. Everyone's heart leapt to their throats. As soon as he turned and showed his head, One Autumn Leaf's Evil Annihilation would immediately pierce him.

But when he was two steps away, Boundless Sea's movements suddenly stopped. He leaned close to the side of the ditch as if trying to hear something.

The only thing separating the two characters was a corner. If you drew a straight line between them, it would only measure  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a unit. Neither side moved. Neither side uttered a peep. Only Fang Rui's chattering could be seen in the public chat.

Fang Rui wasn't really talking anymore. After saying a few key points at the start, he didn't have anything else to say. He had even started resorting to something as unrefined as copying and pasting his own words. The two stopped at this bend.

Nervous and anxious.

The crowd didn't know whether the two players had noticed each other. The tension made it hard for them to breathe.

The first to move was Fang Rui. He carefully peeked his head up just the tiniest bit. After looking around above the ground, Boundless Sea retreated a bit. His two hands swiped against each other and a Qi Blade formed an arc, flying around the corner. He listened carefully to any noise.

He heard it... and saw it.

The instant the Qi Blade turned the corner, One Autumn Leaf stepped into view. Sun Xiang had been waiting patiently until now. His opponent was finally this close to him. He didn't hesitate or make any feints. His One Autumn Leaf rushed out. In the end, he chose a direct confrontation.

More importantly, because of the terrain, Fang Rui's only choice was a direct confrontation as well. With the distance between them and Sun Xiang's swift and decisive response, Fang Rui didn't have any time to make any dirty escapes. To his left and right were walls, while One Autumn Leaf's spear was in front.

Li Yibo felt very regretful.

Seeing Sun Xiang's position, he had guessed Sun Xiang's plan: wait until the opponent found him. This position was extremely good. Because of the outside surroundings, Fang Rui wouldn't dare easily leap out. Inside the trench, if Fang Rui was close enough, he could force a direct fight and not give Fang Rui any chance to escape.

However, with his dimming confidence, he was too afraid to say his guess. And now, it looked like Sun Xiang was doing exactly what he had thought. After determining that Boundless Sea was right next to him, he immediately began doing what he had always been good at.

The trenches used for stealth had become Fang Rui's cage. The dirty style wasn't just in tactics but in techniques too. But no matter what, all of them required a certain amount of space to maneuver around. However, with the left and right blocked by walls and a One Autumn Leaf attacking fiercely from the front, he wasn't given any chance to jump out. His only choice was to retreat backwards. Right now, the master of playing dirty was helpless. Even the cleverest housewife cannot cook without rice.

Sun Xiang had been waiting for this very moment.

Afterwards was his usual strong offense. However, his prior patience had helped him win this situation. Sun Xiang's offense seemed even more effective and made the opponent look even more helpless.

Sun Xiang's advantage wasn't just in technique, it was more tactical. The timing and terrain all stood on his side. His performance only looked more steady.

Boundless Sea eventually fell. No one had expected that Fang Rui's dirty style wouldn't be able to be displayed in a map suited for it. Fang Rui had been suppressed as soon as he ran into his opponent. Unable to display his dirty tactics or his techniques, he was killed in the trenches.

Yes, up until death, Fang Rui hadn't been able to get Boundless Sea out of the trenches.

In the group arena, Sun Xiang won the first round with a 72% health lead.

Chapter 1296: Mo Fan vs Sun Xiang

Finishing with 72% health left could be considered a massive advantage in the group arena.

Because this sort of advantage could stack in the group arena, the group arena was very different from individual matches, though it might seem that they were both 1v1s. In the individual competition, all you needed to do was beat your opponent first, but in the group arena, you had to consider how to use the least amount of HP possible to defeat your opponent.

Efficiency. The group arena valued the efficiency of your attacks far more. In the round that had just ended, Sun Xiang had doubtlessly managed to exhibit that excellently. Using positioning and patience, he had greatly diminished the space his opponent had to perform, winning very efficiently.

A player who usually depended on hand speed, mechanics and technique to win his opponents had suddenly decided to switch tactics and lure and trap his opponent, even managing to trick the Master of Dirty Play, Fang Rui.

"This is a very atypical victory for Sun Xiang!" Li Yibo was now confidently expressing his own opinion on the previous match. Before, when he was given the chance to make an accurate prediction, he was too careful and missed it. Li Yibo, frustrated, was frantically trying to make up for it by showing off how much he knew about Glory. For a moment, not even commentator Pan Lin had the chance to cut in and say anything. It was just good that there was a time limit to switch between players for the group arena. After Happy's Fang Rui returned to the bench, Happy's second player quickly headed off.

"How come this guy brought his brain with him today?" Fang Rui complained, returning to the bench. "This guy" naturally referred to Sun Xiang. It was clear that in his eyes, Sun Xiang was the kind of player who didn't use his brains to fight.

"You were rather impatient, too!" Ye Xiu replied.

"Yeah!" Fang Rui lamented. "I should've just stayed there and continued to stall, and see who snapped first!"

Ye Xiu didn't know if he should laugh or cry. "There's no way you didn't know about that ambush point. You should've been more careful."

"Didn't I say that I didn't know he brought his brain today?" Fang Rui retorted.

"..."

"Ok, I admit, I underestimated him," Fang Rui sighed.

"Sun Xiang's choice of action was truly rather unexpected." Ye Xiu gazed at the stage. Sun Xiang, once the overconfident captain of Excellent Era who thought himself more than good enough to replace Ye Xiu, had truly matured after being relegated and then defeated in the Challenger League.

Crafting such a plan, especially in the group arena, meant that he was starting to understand his position more, as well as what he should do on the field. He was no longer fighting for himself, but the entire team.

"Mo Fan... might not be able to do well against him either..." Fang Rui said, watching Happy's second player, Mo Fan, as he entered the booth.

"That'll depend on how he plays. The current Mo Fan isn't the Mo Fan of the past with his monotonous style anymore," Ye Xiu said.

After half a year of actual battle experience, everyone had grown. Mo Fan wasn't that same scrap-picker who would always lie in wait to ambush. He learned to judge the situation, and to use a wider variety of styles and techniques. Still, he had managed to preserve the habits and virtues he had gained from scrap-picking in-game. He had patience, he was careful, good at finding and grasping opportunities. These were the characteristics that suited a Class like Ninja, which focused on moving undetected.

Originally, Deception was a widely known and hated character in the online game. Before, many guilds had noticed him and his talents. However, his loner personality caused him to ignore the olive branches being extended his way from all over. It wasn't until he was pulled into the pro circle by Ye Xiu that his potential was realized, proving that the guilds hadn't misjudged him. It's just that Ye Xiu managed to brute force this talent, who no one else had been able to recruit, into his camp.

After Mo Fan went up, the second round soon began. In the beginning, Mo Fan didn't dart into the shadows and move carefully like usual, but instead had Deception run towards the center at full speed.

"Happy's Mo Fan is also one who's good at hiding and ambushing, but it seems like he's not planning on doing that this time!" Pan Lin noted, seeing Deception's movements.

"In reality, with so many gullies in this map, one can use them at any time so long as they aim well. In the last match, Fang Rui's playstyle was a little too dirty to work," Li Yibo commented. History was always on the side of the victors, so the losing Fang Rui immediately turned into a bad example.

"This time, it seems that Sun Xiang doesn't plan on using the same method as the last round," Pan Lin brought up. Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf had also quickly ran for the center after the match began, returning to his usual style.

"An ambush like that wouldn't work a second time," Li Yibo said.

"So this time he had One Autumn Leaf charge directly. This is the Sun Xiang we're all more familiar with. It seems like this match will be a direct clash between the two. Okay, their characters have now entered each other's field of vision. What will they do next? Huh?" Pan Lin was just getting rather excited over all this when Deception, who had been charging forward head on, suddenly rolled to the side and jumped into a gully after appearing in One Autumn Leaf's field of vision.

"Uh, it seems like Happy's Mo Fan still intends to use the terrain to cover his movements. However, he's already been seen, so Sun Xiang can probably make a relatively accurate judgement of his position, no? Huh?" Just as Pan Lin was saying this, Mo Fan's Deception then jumped out of the gully after moving around for a while.

"What is he doing? Advisor Li?" Pan Lin couldn't understand and immediately went to ask Li Yibo.

"He's probably trying to confuse the other using his pace!" Li Yibo answered rather weakly. He really wanted to append a "this is my personal opinion and might not be right" to the end of his words.

"Sun Xiang doesn't seem very affected. One Autumn Leaf is continuing forwards," Pan Lin exclaimed.

Shuriken!

In the end, the one to strike first was still Deception, who had a few mid-ranged skills.

Clang!

One Autumn Leaf didn't slow down, flicking his spear up and knocking the shuriken away in midair. Just from a technical perspective, Sun Xiang performed flawlessly.

The shuriken didn't do anything to his opponent. Deception flicked his hands again. Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, four shurikens flew out in rapid succession. This time, it was the improved version of Shuriken: Storm Shuriken.

The shurikens sliced through the air, all four of them approaching rapidly. This time, Sun Xiang could no longer block them all with pure mechanics alone.

Dragon Breaks the Ranks!

In the end, One Autumn Leaf forwent blocking and directly used a Dragon Breaks the Ranks to charge forward, ignoring the damage from the shurikens.

Under the effects of Dragon Breaks the Ranks, all Storm Shuriken did was deal damage. It didn't hinder One Autumn Leaf's advance at all. One Autumn Leaf arrived in front of Deception in the blink of an eye.

Poof!

The struck Deception exploded into smoke and his real body appeared behind One Autumn Leaf. Despite facing Dragon Breaks the Ranks at such a close range, he could still dodge so precisely. Mo Fan's mechanics were impressive.

Ninja Arts: Bird Fall!

Deception, who had appeared in midair with a Shadow Clone Technique, immediately stepped down with both feet at One Autumn Leaf's shoulders. Sun Xiang reacted extremely fast though. With the momentum of Dragon Breaks the Ranks still in effect, One Autumn Leaf had already jumped up and turned, throwing himself back with his own momentum. His spear Evil Annihilation struck with deadly precision.

Sky Strike!

The lowest level skill used at the best timing. Deception's Bird Fall couldn't hit One Autumn Leaf's shoulders anymore. In midair, Mo Fan adjusted himself swiftly, and Deception's Bird Fall ended up stepping right on the tip of One Autumn Leaf's Evil Annihilation.

Such precise mechanics! It was truly awe inspiring. The venue immediately exploded into applause.

Ninja Arts: Bird Fall might be a level 45 skill, but it didn't have very high priority. Meanwhile, Sky Strike might be the lowest level skill, but its knockup priority was very high.

Bird Fall couldn't stop Sky Strike's upwards momentum, and Deception was still thrown into the air. It was just that since he had used skill to step on the spear, he didn't take any damage. He was thrown into the air, but he didn't tumble out of control like he would have, if he had been hit directly by Sky Strike.

Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart!

Deception might not have been thrown too badly into the air, but Sun Xiang tried to rip that composure away. One Autumn Leaf's Evil Annihilation retracted and then struck lightning fast, a Level 60 skill thrown out, in pursuit of the airborne Deception.

Poof!

Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart hit, but after a bang, the airborne Deception was replaced with a straw dummy with a poof of smoke.

Ninja Arts: Hundred Streams!

Deception, having already landed, rapidly formed seals and his ninjato swung. Streams of water lunged towards One Autumn Leaf.

Sun Xiang had not noticed the sneak attack from behind, but since Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart had hit a straw dummy, he knew that an attack was imminent. He didn't even bother turning to look, having One Autumn Leaf dodge to one side immediately. As he dodged, he turned his camera to see the Hundred Streams flowing across the ground. If he had been just a little late in reacting, he would be inside a water prison right now.

"Mo Fan is competing with Sun Xiang in mechanics!" Pan Lin yelled in shock. As a newbie, this sort of courage was truly quite shocking. What was even more shocking was that after these exchanges, neither side had gotten the upperhand. It seemed like they were at a draw.

"His reactions are very fast, his mechanics precise!" Li Yibo noted. He was, obviously, commenting on Mo Fan. As for Sun Xiang, there was no need to use these general praises to comment on his performance anymore.

But after these evenly matched exchanges, Deception rolled to the side and jumped into a ditch. He had turned and hid after seeing that his attacks weren't working.

Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf rushed over, Evil Annihilation held in front of him and ready to strike.

However, Deception had disappeared. A short, small ditch just like the place Sun Xiang had hid last time. It had turns left and right. Where did Deception go?

Sun Xiang was trying to make a decision when, under One Autumn Leaf's feet, the ground suddenly loosened.

Underground Tunneling Technique!

Chapter 1297: Mo Fan's Characteristics



Deception hadn't left! After entering the gully, he had hid there and used an Underground Tunneling Technique.

Sun Xiang's view was focused on the two turns at the ends of the gully. He had been trying to figure out which way to go and hadn't thought to think of what was under his feet. By the time Deception's movements were large and close enough to be sensed, it was too late to react.

The ninjato struck One Autumn Leaf under his chin harshly, throwing him into the air. Mo Fan, Deception, was the first to land a hit!

Annihilate, Flame Cut, Neck Bind Technique, Ninja Arts: Flickering Charge.

Four skills landed on One Autumn Leaf in flawless succession. Even if it was Sun Xiang, he was helpless against it.

"Beautiful!" Fang Rui yelled from Happy's player bench.

Talented at timing, Mo Fan had a very solid grasp of landing combos. However, even if the system judged it as a combo, that didn't mean it was unbreakable. From a certain perspective, false combos were the real unbreakable combo. However, a consistent use of this sort of comboing, a characteristic of Ye Xiu's unspecialized, was extremely hard to master without experience. In this area, Mo Fan's talent wasn't outstanding.

However, for a system-determined combo, especially a combo of five or fewer skills, Mo Fan had such outstanding mastery that even Ye Xiu looked on with awe. This came from the habits he had developed in game. When scrap-picking, you weren't meant to entangle with targets, so he would always find a good opportunity to unleash a barrage of attacks, take what he needed and leave in the shortest time possible. This barrage had a max of five skills. More, and Mo Fan would judge it as an inappropriate time to strike.

After all this time, Mo Fan had developed a habit of using this monotonous battle style. His habits meant that anything coming after his barrage was lacking in comparison. After joining Happy and undergoing professional training, he was finally beginning to change. At first, Ye Xiu had hoped he would be able to completely change this style of fighting in short bursts, but he soon began to realize that this habit of Mo Fan's wasn't just a thing of mechanics, but also of his spirit.

Focus.

Mo Fan's focus would also fluctuate with this rhythm. When he unleashed his barrage, his focus would peak. His mechanics would be precise, efficient, comparable to a God. However, after this short burst, he experienced a clear slip. His mechanics after that would be nothing comparable to how well he had performed in that period.

This instantly condensed overpowered focus was the reason why Mo Fan could fight on par with a God for short bursts. This was almost like a skill of his that had a cooldown.

After realizing this, Ye Xiu also realized that this would probably become a characteristic of Mo Fan's style. His eventual style would probably also develop from this.

Thus, Ye Xiu stopped expecting Mo Fan to eventually get rid of his habit and instead helped him develop his talents, teaching him how to combine his skills to make sure he could endure throughout the battle.

In the past, Mo fan would run after getting what he wanted. After his barrage, he usually wouldn't have to fight any longer, and thus naturally didn't have to consider what skills to use after that. He would throw out whatever was convenient during his barrage. However, you couldn't fight that way in an actual match. The battle was far from over after a single barrage! It was unacceptable if he was sent into a panic at what to do after, or using two skills and being unable to follow up.

Mo Fan had completed this transformation. When his barrage wasn't indiscriminatory, his battle ability was vastly increased. Now, on the field, his focused barrage could match Sun Xiang strike for strike.

However, it wasn't unexpected to Ye Xiu that he still turned and ran after a few exchanges. At this point, his focus would scatter, and he definitely wasn't a match for Sun Xiang then.

However, not even Ye Xiu expected it when, after retreating for only a brief moment, Mo Fan came back with another barrage.

Underground Tunneling Technique, Annihilation, Flame Cut, Neck Bind, Ninjutsu: Flickering Charge.

Under the limit of Mo Fan's overpowered focus, not even Sun Xiang could match this combo of five skills.

But... wasn't a little too close together with the previous barrage?

In reality, Ye Xiu wasn't sure how many times Mo Fan could gear himself up into that focused state. He also didn't know how long it would take to enter that state after a previous barrage. Ye Xiu could only tell, by experience, that this sort of peak performance in short bursts was a sign that he was stretching his limits. That was why his focus would scatter after each barrage: it was a sign of mental strain. However, this time, Mo Fan had consecutively unleashed two barrages. How much strain was he putting on himself, doing this?

"This kid is really pushing himself!" Team Happy's members naturally all understood Mo Fan's characteristics. Seeing how he had unleashed a second barrage so soon, Wei Chen called out in surprise.

"How long can he last if he fights like this?" Qiao Yifan wondered aloud.

Everyone fell silent. Mo Fan was still quite a loner. His style had matured, but no one knew how he would use it and where his limits were.

His combo successful, Mo Fan once again had Deception hide.

"Huh? How come he doesn't continue his offensive?" Pan Lin couldn't really understand. Though his combo had ended there, it was perfectly feasible to strike fast and unleash a new barrage of attacks after this combo.

"He probably doesn't think he has a solid enough grasp of this opportunity..." Li Yibo theorized.

"Mo Fan very rarely performs long combos! With his mechanics, I think he can definitely do better. I think he's a little too cautious," Pan Lin commented.

"Heh, this is probably because of his background!" Li Yibo said.

"You mean, as a scrap-picker?" Pan Lin asked.

"Yes, the most important thing for scrap-pickers is to secure their own safety! If they can't even keep themselves safe, then how would they scrap-pick? Though, of course, Mo Fan is a pro player now, but he's been active in-game for a long time. Caution and care is probably a habit he's built up over all that time," Li Yibo replied.

These words made sense and Mo Fan did have this sort of habit from long-term scrap-picking but these two clearly hadn't noticed what was really going on with Mo Fan. You could say, that apart from his teammates in Team Happy, no one knew that Mo Fan's style came with a cooldown. After all, Mo Fan didn't regularly appear in matches and hadn't played many compared to the rest of Happy.

But in this match, against a strong opponent like Sun Xiang, Mo Fan's potential seemed to have been forced to appear in its entirety. The match had barely started and he had already unleashed two barrages of attacks, successfully depriving One Autumn Leaf of a good chunk of his health. This was something no one expected. From everyone else's view, after Sun Xiang had managed to get rid of Fang Rui so efficiently, wouldn't a rookie be easy to deal with?

Since Sun Xiang had finished his first opponent with a 72% health advantage, the Happy fans didn't dare to yell ten to zero anymore. Instead, the Samsara fans had gotten hyped, yelling one versus three and whatnot. One versus three was also something that held a rather terrible story for Happy. Samsara's fans yelling this was killing two birds with one stone: mockery amongst encouragement.

However after Mo Fan had managed to draw first blood like this, Samsara's fans shut up. They began to discuss how could this rookie be so strong?

Everyone was struck dumb by Mo Fan's barrage and even Sun Xiang didn't dare underestimate his opponent. It was rare that someone would be able to match him in technique and mechanics like that. Thus, Sun Xiang, looking for a trace of Deception, was more cautious. He had to look down every now and then, as if Deception might just pop out of the ground.

No!

Deception had disappeared completely this time. Sun Xiang couldn't find him no matter how he looked and was feeling a little helpless. He knew that this player had a terrifying amount of patience. This was a... a player who had waited so patiently that the referee had given him a red card. This was something only he could boast in the history of Glory.

Thinking of the red card last time, Sun Xiang decided to just stop moving. One Autumn Leaf just stood there in the open. You coming out, Deception? You want another red card?

However, was this Mo Fan still the Mo Fan of the past?

Before, Mo Fan had just stayed there, unmoving, being seen as passive and unsportsmanly. However, the current Mo Fan might not be prepared to strike just yet, but he was rather active. He kept having Deception reposition himself, trying to find a chance to attack. With One Autumn Leaf not moving, Deception immediately went behind him. It was just that after getting behind One Autumn Leaf in the

gully, he felt that the distance was too far to execute a sneak attack. It was unreliable. After checking it over, Deception left again.

Boos rose from the crowd. Naturally, all from Samsara's fans. Though Happy's fans didn't like this sort of wait, they were willing to give their players some leeway.

Deception had gone in a circle and not found a good opportunity. That was when the referee struck, unexpectedly giving Sun Xiang a yellow card.

Sun Xiang stared in shock. What the hell was this?

In reality, Sun Xiang didn't really understand the rule regarding passivity and sportsmanship well either. He didn't need to research something like that with his style. However, in the current situation, Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf was standing there, unmoving while Mo Fan's Deception was circling around, trying to find an opening. Who was passive and who was active was clear.

Sun Xiang, who could now curb his temper and impatience, really had improved greatly. Last match, his self-control had won him a beautiful victory. This time, however, it had brought him a yellow card.

It wasn't just Sun Xiang who was shocked, Happy's members were also exchanging looks!

The yellow card was a system message and Mo Fan, naturally, could see it. If it was Fang Rui, then he'd probably use this to spout a good load of trash talk. However, Mo fan probably spoke even less than Zhou Zekai. Trash talk was naturally a skill that wouldn't appear with him.

Sun Xiang, forced to move by the yellow card, could only have One Autumn Leaf start looking for Deception. The group arena was also a 1v1, so the map wasn't too big. One Autumn Leaf began moving along the gully, keeping a careful eye on interior and beginning to reduce Deception's room for movement. Deception also began to head towards the direction One Autumn Leaf was coming from.

Chapter 1298: Keep Calm

The two characters approached each other little by little, and the match seemed to have turned into the scene seen in the last match. Everyone's hearts jumped into their chests as they waited for that moment to arrive.

However, before any of the audience could react, the two characters suddenly accelerated.

"They've found each other!" Pan Lin yelled.

The crowd could see the overall situation better than the participants with their omniscient view. However, to gain a deeper understanding of what was occurring, they would need to rely on the player's perspectives. The broadcast and the big screen had both replayed the shot just now from the two character's perspective,

In that moment, a figure flashed through the views of Deception in the ditches and One Autumn Leaf next to it, and neither of them missed it. Their characters charged and clashed!

Boom!

An explosion of purple smoke.

They hadn't even engaged each other when Deception tossed a Smoke Bomb. Then, he darted out of the range of the smoke.

Did he want to run?

No!

Darting out, then in, Mo Fan had Deception play this sort of trick with Sun Xiang, but was this enough to shake Sun Xiang?

Shattering the Lands!

Sun Xiang responded in the most forceful way. In the purple smoke, he didn't know where Deception was so he directly used a level 75 ultimate.

Boom!

Evil Annihilation slammed into the ground and roaring magical energy buffeted the smoke, causing it to bubble like boiling water.

Deception once again ran out of the purple smoke, his figure swaying a little. Clearly, he had been hit by the shockwaves made by this skill, his health having been reduced. Sun Xiang had broken right through Mo Fan's trick in the most brutal way.

Dragon Rises from the Sea!

Evil Annihilation swung again and a wave of tide-like magical energy unfurled, breaking through the smoke. Through the break, Deception's figure was already exposed.

Charge!

Dragon Breaks the Ranks!

One Autumn Leaf raised his spear and charged out of the smoke, arriving in front of Deception in the blink of an eye. Sun Xiang didn't hope that this skill would hit his opponent; he was just using it as a movement skill.

Shining Cut!

Mo Fan once again overturned expectations, Deception advancing rather than retreating. With an Assassin skill Shining Cut, Deception's form flashed forwards, intending to slide right by Dragon Breaks the Ranks.

Sun Xiang was shocked, hurriedly adjusting himself. Evil Annihilation swerved, but it was too late. Deception had already flashed behind him.

In that moment, the two characters seemed to have completed a Switch, and just as they passed each other by, the two rapidly cancelled their skills, stopped, and turned.

Dragon Tooth! As One Autumn Leaf turned, Evil Annihilation stabbed forward.

A hit!

But, a puff of smoke rose; it was another Shadow Clone.

Sun Xiang didn't hesitate. As One Autumn Leaf turned, he swept his spear out and executed a Tyrant's Destruction, reaching a full 270 degrees around.

However...

Underground Tunneling Technique!

Another Underground Tunneling Technique, Deception darted out of the ground and, as One Autumn Leaf epically swept his spear across, hit the other's jaw in an uppercut.

Ninjutsu: Cicada Shell Double Slash!

Deception's follow-up came rapidly, executed in an unbreakable combo. Sun Xiang already knew it wasn't good when he was hit by the Underground Tunneling Technique and had prepared himself. However, the follow-up was so fast, so precise; there was no opening at all.

And then...

Annihilation, Storm Shuriken, Ninjutsu: Shadow Dance!

Again, the same five skill combo under Mo Fan's absolute focus had rendered Sun Xiang helpless. However, the last skill in the combo was the ultimate skill Shadow Dance. This was a skill that could be manually controlled and the mechanics required were far more demanding than other skills. For Mo Fan, whose limit was five skills, this skill would only be used in his five skill barrage if he planned to manually control it. The focus needed for the mechanics for this skill was comparable to two, three, even four other skills.

In a pro-level confrontation, Shadow Dance had to be manually controlled.

The audience didn't know that Mo Fan had this sort of limit. They just thought it was a climax to the match, their applause thunderous.

However, Happy's players knew that this choice of action meant that Mo Fan was challenging his limits. It wasn't just a small challenge either, but throwing himself directly in the deep end.

"That's too much of a stretch!" Wei Chen commented.

"But with this skill, he can at least retreat completely, right?" Fang Rui said.

"But he... doesn't seem to have such an intention." Su Mucheng was the only one in Happy who really communicated with Mo Fan, though it was only very little.

"No, he doesn't..." Watching the match, Ye Xiu could see that after the Shadow Dance, all ten shadow clones had lunged forwards to attack, not giving himself any escape route. By this point, his focus was at its limit. Could he still control this skill to the same high level?

Bang!

With a resounding noise, a Deception shadow clone flew out of the pile of people. One Autumn Leaf, not even fully out of Falling Flower Palm's pose yet, threw his Evil Annihilation forwards with his other hand, unleashing a fearsome magical energy.

Rising Dragon Soars the Sky!

The rapid follow-up of Rising Dragon Soars the Sky after Falling Flower Palm didn't even wait for this Deception to fly out much before catching up and clamping down, magical energy striking and devouring everything in its path. The other shadow clones were all turned to smoke one by one. Everyone knew that Sun Xiang offensive had struck the heart of Deception's Shadow Dance.

"It really was a bit of a stretch..." Ye Xiu sighed.

Mo Fan wanted to surpass his limits, but the step he had chosen to take was too big. His focus scattered, his Shadow Dance wasn't executed flawlessly, revealing an opening that Sun Xiang immediately caught and used.

The audience couldn't see the depth to this, only knowing that these two were exchanging blows, the battle was spectacular. The crowd went wild, and the commentators of the broadcast Pan Lin and Li Yibo were also going on about this unexpected performance from Mo Fan, how he was able to match Sun Xiang blow for blow.

"I hope so..." Ye Xiu was a little concerned. Mo Fan had unleashed several barrages in succession and continued to challenge his own limits. Wasn't he a little too excited? This... seemed like he was losing control.

Rising Dragon Soars the Sky had long ending lag, and it was hard to follow-up on this. Sun Xiang could only wait until the skill ended and have One Autumn Leaf charge over to launch a new round of attacks.

"Before it was Mo Fan who was on the offensive, but now it looks like it's Sun Xiang's turn. One Autumn Leaf is advancing, how will Mo Fan deal with this? Deception... Deception ran away... I..." Pan Lin swallowed a curse. This Mo Fan's style was really quite depressing! Such a spectacular exchange, wasn't it thrilling going head to head? Sun Xiang had such a spectacular response to Mo Fan's offensive, so can't you just respond in kind and think of the audience a little? When the opponent countered, you immediately ran without any hesitation. Where's your courage to face Sun Xiang head on? Where's your mechanics that can match him blow for blow?

"This... This Mo Fan is really keeping a clear head about him! He didn't let it get to his head," Li Yibo said.

"But in competition there's no need to adhere so strictly and monotonously to such an arrangement, right? Young people should be more passionate, more reckless. This kind of strict and mechanical playstyle is a little too boring," Pan Lin offered.

"Heh, what if this is interesting to him?" Li Yibo simply said in reply. In that moment, he shone with his former identity as a pro player. Only those who had stood in the same shoes had the right to say these empathetic words. Interesting? What was interesting? The red-blooded excitement of head on clashes, intense APM battles? That was just the definition to you viewers. To each pro player, their chosen playstyle was the most interesting to them. Maybe some will purposefully change their styles to appease the crowd, but this was a trend that had appeared only after Glory became commercialized.

However, Li Yibo, from an older generation of players, rejected this sort of commercial air deep down. He liked to see players maintaining their unique style, even if there were some he, his knowledge rather outdated, couldn't figure out...

Li Yibo's lightly spoken words had Pan Lin rather stunned. He didn't know what to say in response. On the stage, Mo Fan's Deception managed a smooth escape, using the gullies peppered across the map to conceal himself.

"He's got a pretty clear head!" Fang Rui exclaimed.

"Yeah, he's nowhere near as reckless as you thought!" Su Mucheng said to Ye Xiu.

"Stretching his limits and performance might be an attempt to confuse his opponent. This kid must have been secretly observing my performance and learning valuable lessons from me!" Wei Chen decided.

"Shamelessness?" Steamed Bun asked.

"Bastard, he learned that from your boss!" Wei Chen cursed.

"Of course, boss is best at everything!" Steamed Bun boasted.

"Hahahaha, I won't object to that in this case!" Wei Chen laughed out loud, satisfied with the follow up attack Steamed Bun had given Ye Xiu.

"Steamed Bun doesn't understand, don't you go feigning ignorance. You're the most shameless," Ye Xiu retorted.

"Don't be so humble. You're the best at everything!" Wei Chen emphasized the word "best".

"You..."

"Mo Fan is still in the match and you're here talking nonsense!" Chen Guo got angry and yelled at the two.

"Aiyou, boss, relax, relax," Wei Chen hurriedly assured her, "Mo Fan will be fine."

"Really?"

"So long as he can keep this pace up," Ye Xiu said, "His opponent hasn't figured him out yet. Old Wei is right. By overstretching his limits, he's misled his opponent. His opponent will be having doubts about him, giving him a good chance."

"Mo Fan..." Chen Guo didn't continue her train of thought. In reality, she had wanted to express surprise that Mo Fan could beat Sun Xiang, but then she realized that this would be a blow to the players on the team, so she held back. However, she was still shocked at Mo Fan's improvement.

Could he win? Chen Guo gazed at the stage.

Mo Fan didn't fail everyone's expectations. When Deception was at 14 percent health, One Autumn Leaf fell, and the surprise Chen Guo didn't voice was yelled out by Pan Lin.

"I never would have expected that Happy's Mo Fan could defeat Sun Xiang!" Pan Lin cried out.



## Chapter 1299: Challenging His Limits

Deception only had 14% health remaining. One Autumn Leaf had started the fight with 72% health, yet those comparing the matchup on paper would still think Mo Fan would be less likely to win.

Even so, Mo Fan won, and his victory astonished many.

Because Sun Xiang truly was strong. He had sunken to the Challenger League for the season and ended up losing that to Happy, but the champion team Samsara still wanted him, showing a deep-rooted recognition of his skill. Two seasons of failure hadn't affected people's evaluation of him.

For such a player, despite starting the fight with only 72% health, most would favor him in a match against a rookie.

His opponent Mo Fan was astonishingly valiant. He went equal with Su Xiang in multiple direct confrontations, which left a deep impression on the viewers.

In the end, Sun Xiang unexpectedly lost the fight.

Sun Xiang walked down slowly from the stage.

In the past, if he lost against a rookie, he would feel ashamed and fly into a rage. However, the current him didn't have an expression of anger, although he obviously wasn't happy either. He raised his head, looking at the replay on the big screens. He pondered as he watched.

"Nice job!" When he returned to Samsara's bench, his teammates welcomed him back. Losing to Mo Fan was a bit surprising, but if you looked at the outcome, Sun Xiang had nearly completed a 1v2. Mo Fan's Deception only had 14% health left. In the group arena, this sort of performance was splendid.

"That Mo Fan..." Sun Xiang felt like he should have grasped something, but he was drawing a blank right now.

"We can slowly figure it out when we go back and review the match!" Jiang Botao patted him. He could see that Sun Xiang seemed somewhat troubled by the match.

"Okay, it's finally my turn." Du Ming got up excitedly.

He was a player who yearned for competition. Before Sun Xiang transferred to Samsara, he had appeared on stage very often. But when Sun Xiang joined, Sun Xiang took up a spot on the main roster, and Du Ming's position instantly fell.

Saying that he wasn't sad about it would be false, but Sun Xiang's skill was truly there. His addition improved Samsara's strength even further. Du Ming couldn't ask the team to reject an upgrade, so he could only accept it.

Du Ming had his own plans for his future, and he hoped for more opportunities on the stage. But he was still a part of Samsara, and his resolve in Samsara hadn't been shaken! Winning three championships in a row with his teammates of many years and then leaving for his own selfish fights would be the most beautiful outcome.

As a result, even though his position was on the fringe, Du Ming worked even harder.

No one in a championship team had weaklings! Du Ming had plans on leaving Samsara, but his pride and arrogance as a part of Samsara had not lessened.

"Good luck!" His teammates yelled to Du Ming.

"Relax!" Du Ming waved carefreely to his teammates behind him like a cool person.

"Fuck, he's acting like he's our team's biggest trump card," Wu Qi cursed, "Captain, I'm not the type of person to pick fights, but I wouldn't be able to bear it if I were you."

"Haha," Zhou Zekai chuckled.

Du Ming walked onto the stage, into the player booth, and his character loaded into the map.

Blade Master, Moon-Luring Frost.

Whoosh whoosh. As soon as he loaded into the map, Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost immediately drew his sword, displaying his impatience.

"COME!" He shouted in the chat.

Mo Fan obviously didn't respond and quietly ran over.

Du Ming didn't move strategically either. After Moon-Luring Frost slashed his sword a few times, he headed straight for the center too.

Like last round, the two characters practically saw each other at the same time.

Into the ditches?

No, this time, neither side went into the ditches. The two characters came across each other, and then after a short pause, they started fighting.

Shuriken!

Mo Fan's Deception attacked first.

This low-level flying tool posed no threat Sun Xiang, and it was no different for Du Ming.

Moon-Luring Frost raised his sword and swept it aside.

Triple Slash!

Du Ming started his offense just as fast as Sun Xiang. Sun Xiang had used Dragon Breaks the Ranks, while he used Triple Slash. His momentum might not be as powerful as Dragon Breaks the Ranks, but it was more nimble.

His sword led the way. Du Ming observed Mo Fan's reaction cautiously. He hadn't forgotten how fast Mo Fan had countered after Sun Xiang and him brushed past each other last match. Anyone who saw that scene couldn't help but pretend they were there, and feel their bodies drip with cold sweat at that reaction speed and mechanical skill. Du Ming had done the same and felt stunned. However, he still wanted to try it and see if he could do what others couldn't.

First slash, second slash...

The first and second slash of Triple Slash came out, and Moon-Luring Frost rapidly closed in. However, Deception didn't move. He didn't meet it directly with an Shining Cut like last time.

What is he planning? Du Ming muttered to himself. Triple Slash's third slash flew out, both an attack and a movement, towards Deception. At this moment, Du Ming lowered his head. Mo Fan's usage of Underground Tunneling Technique had left a deep impression on him too. Du Ming didn't want to fall for this sort of trap.

As soon as he lowered his head, he saw a glint of cold light from in front of him.

Caltrops?

When had he thrown these?

Du Ming was startled. He immediately had Moon-Luring Frost's third slash switched directions. Moon-Luring Frost moved horizontally and dodged these Caltrops.

How dangerous!

Du Ming yelled in his heart. Ninja Tools - Caltrops, a low-level skill. If an opponent stepped on it, it would harshly reduce the opponent's movement speed. And even though these Caltrops were thrown onto the ground, they weren't easy to see. If Du Ming hadn't looked down because he was wary of Underground Tunneling Technique, he would have certainly stepped onto the Caltrops.

"You're quite cunning!" With the change in direction from Triple Slash, he didn't step on the Caltrops. Du Ming didn't distract himself despite the close call. His next move had already begun.

Sword Draw!

Sword qi flew out. With this as a cover, Moon-Luring Frost leaped up, Falling Phoenix Slash! He directly shot down from the sky, creating an arc in the air.

Deception turned and ran.

"Hey! You bastard!" Du Ming shouted. Against Sun Xiang, that punk had rushed forward and fought a few exchanges directly, but against him, he just ran away. What was that supposed to mean? I'm scarier than Sun Xiang? Du Ming didn't think so. He couldn't understand what Mo Fan was thinking.

"Looks like Mo Fan's tired..." Happy's players saw through it.

In the previous fight, he had played explosively multiple times and played to his limit. Those were just the two plays at the beginning too. Afterwards, in order to win against Sun Xiang, Mo Fan had fought even harder at his limits. He had beaten Sun Xiang, but those who didn't understand him wouldn't know how hard he had worked for that win. Now, against Du Ming, he didn't fight like he had with Sun Xiang. It wasn't that he didn't want to, but he couldn't. His energy didn't let him reach that crazy concentrated state.

"This punk, with that in him, we should put him in the individual competition more!" Wei Chen said.

Just when they were commenting on him, Mo Fan suddenly erupted!

Combo. Another invincible combo. Except this time, the first sneak hadn't been executed too well, and Du Ming was able to respond. However, Mo Fan didn't let up, the second, third attack... he attacked as if he were comboing and then finally on the fourth strike, he was able to break Du Ming's defenses.

Annihilation!

For the fifth strike, Deception actually used Annihilation. This low-level knock-up skill was never a finishing move for a combo. This could only mean that Mo Fan had no plans on stopping his combo.

"Is he crazy!" Wei Chen yelled out in amazement.

They thought Mo Fan was tired already, but he once again showed up with his three axes. On the fifth strike, which should have been the limit, he didn't stop but continued.

Flame Cut!

A blaze followed along the blade's path. Following Annihilation, this attack struck Moon-Luring Frost. The sixth strike was linked very precisely as well.

Then, Underground Tunneling Technique! Deception sprinted forward, but...

"Too slow," Ye Xiu said.

Yes, the seventh strike was too slow. After being set ablaze by Flame Cut, Moon-Luring Frost made a move.

Falling Blossom Form!

It was faster than Deception's Underground Tunneling Technique. The swordpoint stabbed into Deception's back, and blood spurted out. Deception crashed to the ground.

The damage dealt by the Blade Master's four Level 75 skills weren't too terrifying, but the other areas were increased further.

A forced knock-down, Falling Blossom Form.

Maxed attack speed, Meteor Form.

High priority, Piercing Wind Form.

Sword qi that can pull the target, Curving Wind Form.

Falling Blossom Form just looked like a careless attack, but Deception had been knocked to the ground.

Falling Light Blade!

Moon-Luring Frost attacked again from the air towards Deception.

This combo was fast and without any openings. Deception, who had just crashed to the ground, could do nothing.

But afterwards, Deception rolled up and tried to dodge Feather Scar's control.

Lunge!

Sword light chased after Deception.

Pu! Deception poofed into smoke, turning into a strawman.

"Fuck!" Du Ming cursed angrily. Ninjas had more escape skills than other classes. What was usually a combo would be easily dispelled in front of Ninjas.

Du Ming had Moon-Luring Frost turn around in search of Deception's whereabouts.

The earth underneath him loosened.

Underground Tunneling Technique!

At the crucial moment, an opening appeared on Du Ming. Just like how Underground Tunneling Technique had struck One Autumn Leaf, it struck Moon-Luring Frost squarely. A combo once again began.

"He..." Everyone in Happy was dumbfounded.

"He's... purposely attacking his own limits..." Ye Xiu could see it. Confuse the opponent? They had overanalyzed it. Mo Fan had been challenging his own limits the entire time.

Chapter 1300: Long History

Mo Fan was testing his limits, but the reason why limits were called limits was because they couldn't be broken easily. Improving one's mechanics and awareness wasn't like farming for equipment in-game. You couldn't just get lucky and suddenly improve your strength with a piece of powerful equipment. These were things that were improved day by day, training and training, slowly accumulating real battle experience. If you wanted to break through your limits, it was the same. It wasn't as simple as one day becoming passionate about it, deciding to work hard and achieving a breakthrough.

Mo Fan was continuously testing his limits with disregard for everything else. He really was in a state he had never reached before in training. However, breaking through one's limits wasn't like farming equipment. It wasn't as if once you accomplished it everything was good. An abrupt breakthrough was one thing, but mastering it was another. In other words, you had to accumulate experience bit by bit.

Being able to defeat Sun Xiang, even if it was a One Autumn Leaf with only 72 percent of his health, was already an amazing breakthrough for Mo Fan. Against Du Ming, he wanted to continue, and was still stubbornly, even more wildly challenging his limits again and again. However, his condition had already been slipping, and though he had managed to surprise Du Ming, the other soon turned the tables. Deception's 14 percent health couldn't take much more before he eventually fell. Du Ming's victory was without suspense. Mo Fan's performance felt like it had plummeted at the most crucial moment.

It seemed like defeating Sun Xiang had taken a lot out of him, however, he was still so fierce in this match...

Although he was just a newbie, Du Ming still felt a sense of respect rise for Mo Fan. This kind of opponent who never gave up was always worthy of respect, no matter where, no matter if they lost or won.

Leaving the stage, Mo Fan seemed rather worn out as expected. For him, it was a mental exhaustion. Constantly drawing together his focus to launch a barrage of intense attacks was like drawing himself tight like a bowstring. He had pushed himself, uncaring of the consequences.

"That was too reckless of you," Ye Xiu commented, looking at Mo Fan.

Mo Fan quietly glanced at Ye Xiu, but didn't say anything, returning to his own seat. Qiao Yifan passed a bottle of water over. Mo Fan stared for a moment in surprise before accepting it, nodding at Qiao Yifan in thanks.

What was this guy thinking? No one knew. The only one who could really communicate verbally with him was Su Mucheng. And even if it was Su Mucheng, she merely spoke more often to him, but never got a look into his thoughts.

"Talk with him more often!" Ye Xiu was helpless and could only hand things over to Su Mucheng, asking her to guide the loner.

By then, Happy's third player for the group arena had already stood.

Tang Rou, after the 1v3 incident, had been a constant as the anchor for the group arena. When she stood, the atmosphere in the venue chilled somewhat. Even now, Tang Rou's popularity was still at rock bottom. Even their home turf fans weren't very happy with her. It was clear what position she had amongst the fanbase. Plus, Happy only had her left while Samsara still had Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost with 91 percent health, and a full-health Zhou Zekai, Glory's Number One, Zhou Zekai.

There was no point in continuing.

That's what everyone thought. Even if they announced Samsara's victory now, no one would care, probably.

However, Tang Rou simply ignored all of this. She stood, accepting the encouragements and blessings from her teammates and walking towards the stage determinedly. Even if she heard the jeers from the crowd, she didn't care. In their home games, Happy's fans would give her face considering that she was a member of the team, but in an away game, Tang Rou was like a public enemy. If she could endure that, then this silence in their home game was like an applause.

This sort of atmosphere in a home game was really rather strange and oppressive. Even Samsara's players felt uncomfortable, looking around at Happy's fans. They, of course, knew why this was, it was just that they didn't think it would be so intense. Tang Rou was receiving this sort of treatment from her own team's fans, the ones who would most stand up for them. And their support of Team Happy was so passionate too. This truly was strange.

They all knew too clearly what this sort of circumstance meant for a pro player, but a young lady like Tang Rou still managed to endure.

Samsara had researched Tang Rou's matches. After the one versus three event, the biggest change to Tang Rou was becoming the last line of defense in the group arena rather than the spearhead. Apart from that, there was no change. Her fearsome performance remained the same. Her popularity might have frozen, but her strength was still improving steadily. Amongst the rookies this season, she was definitely the best when considering pure ability. If it wasn't for the fact that she had started a little old,

her future would have been limitless. Then, with her flawless looks and demeanor, a lot of people felt that what had happened with her was a shame.

Slowly, there were some voices that spoke out, hoping that people could be more lenient on the rookie. However, there were always those that just wouldn't let go, especially Esports Home's Ruan Cheng as a representative, who was now a professional hater of Tang Rou's. No matter what article or commentary he was writing, he could always twist it to hate on Tang Rou a little. However, it was more Tang Rou's attitude that exacerbated it. If she could stand up and address the issue with sincerity, with the winds beginning to change and people beginning to stand up for her, then this incident might have passed by without further trouble.

However, she didn't. Tang Rou didn't seem to have anything to say about this. This was why many fans hated her. Everyone felt that she refused to learn from her mistakes, staying as stubborn as a mule. Then some tied this to her appearance, arguing that she was probably used to being spoiled because of her looks, so she thought she was special and could do whatever she wanted. The few who spoke for her failed to pull her out of this slump.

However, what was most depressing for the haters was that they couldn't use her performance on the field to attack her. After the one versus three incident, Happy entered a period of consecutive wins. The worst of their scores were 9 to 1, and even their loss against 301 Degrees was a 4 to 6. They had still managed to obtain the two points from the group arena. With their group arena always victorious, Tang Rou's performance as the last line of defense in the group arena was really flawless. This meant that they were trying to pick bones from eggs, discussing subjective things such as "what techniques were appropriate".

They had been left hungry for so long...

But now, against Samsara, Tang Rou was in a difficult place as the last line of defense. It was such a difficult place that these starved people thought that even if Tang Rou lost here, it wouldn't be anything they could feast on.

She was set against almost two whole opponents, with Zhou Zekai as one. Losing was all too expected.

After Tang Rou entered the booth, the atmosphere changed, buzzing chatter arising from the crowd. The crowd was chatting, discussing, gossiping, like no one cared about the following match. Since they didn't like the next player on Happy's side, they had already convinced themselves of how the following match would end.

There was no more sounds of encouragement. In fact, the number of people who were even remotely paying attention to the match had plummeted. Only Samsara's supporters were still cheering, happy that they would finally be able to take back two points in the group arena.

The match started. The applause that would usually ring out at a time like this was few and far between.

"Is this because of... Zhou Zekai?" Feeling this awkward atmosphere at their home game, Chen Guo was smiling in a rather strained way.

Tang Rou truly was unpopular, but when she was on the stage, she was still representing Happy. The fans might not like her, but they couldn't not hope for Happy's victory. Thus, when she went onstage to defend the arena, she would usually get some applause.

However, this time, it seemed like Happy's fans had given up on her.

Chen Guo knew that there was only one reason why this would happen. The fans believed that Happy couldn't possibly win.

Why?

Because Samsara had almost two full health characters left, a huge advantage.

Because one of these two was Zhou Zekai, Glory's Number One.

Zhou Zekai's strength went beyond just boosting the morale and confidence of his team. He hadn't even gotten onstage yet, and he could already influence the attitudes of the fans.

"They have Zhou Zekai, we can't win..."

Chen Guo now truly understood Zhou Zekai's status in the Alliance, seeing how he could create such ideas even in a home game.

Chen Guo was a little annoyed at these fans, but not long ago in the Spring Festival event, the passion of their fans had proved how much hope they had in Happy. Perhaps they couldn't be blamed. The only thing to be blamed was the sheer strength of Zhou Zekai's presence and... how deeply unpopular Tang Rou was. Perhaps, if it was a different member of Happy, they might've gotten some encouragement and support.

"Ai..." Chen Guo sighed. Tang Rou's persistence made Chen Guo feel even more helpless than Zhou Zekai's strength. That young lady really wasn't "soft" at all. Was her name given to use as mockery? Chen Guo silently thought in exasperation at that renowned father of Tang Rou's.\*

The match begun under the attention - or lack thereof - of the audience. But the players onstage didn't know about the reactions of the crowd. Du Ming was very much looking forward to this match. As the match started, his character Moon-Luring Frost made a few more cool poses than he did last match.

"I never would've expected that we would meet in an official match," Du Ming sent into the chat.

Tang Rou replied with a smiley face.

"Let's give it our all!" Du Ming yelled excitedly.

"Of course," Tang Rou replied. Soft Mist charged out and Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost also charged directly. The two characters steadily entered each other's views without dodging or retreating, clashing head on.

Tang Rou was once the person who had put Du Ming in the most humiliating position.

In the audience player versus pro round of the All-Star Weekend, he had somehow lost to a challenging normal player and twice, too. For a long time, he had become a joke in their circle. But his opponent had



been a normal player, while he was a pro. He couldn't go seeking revenge for something like that! Du Ming could only accept his misfortune and was depressed for a good while.

That was until the player that had defeated him seemed to have the intentions of going pro, and now, she was finally here on the same stage as Du Ming.

Revenge? Two years had past, and Du Ming really didn't have any intentions for revenge. However, he couldn't forget that incident. Thus, one day, after he realized that Tang Rou was entering the pro circle too, he began paying attention to her. The target of his attention wasn't one to keep a low profile either. Not long after entering the pro circle, she had gotten into quite the snit with the one versus three incident. She was the main character of it even.

But she didn't manage the 1v3 and broke her promise, going from the protagonist to the antagonist, someone everyone hated.

Du Ming was stunned. Disregarding everything else, she was truly a girl with character, and she was also very beautiful.

His past grudge had faded and blurred, and Du Ming began to develop a liking for the young lady he had been paying attention to. Especially the one versus three incident, that had Du Ming's heart aching for her.

He really did want to go and support Tang Rou, but... just think of his position! After the one two three four All-Stars on Team Samsara, then the Assassin Wu Qi and Cleric Fang Minghua, only then you could get to him. For this sort of sensitive topic, the reporters would casually ask for Samsara's members' opinions, but it would never fall to him to answer.

Seeing Zhou Zekai hesitate for half a day before spitting out a very strange "really strong" as an answer, Du Ming kind of wanted to go up and punch in his handsome face.

Really strong my ass, what's really strong???

Du Ming had never felt so anxious about Zhou Zekai's lack of speaking ability.

Back then, Du Ming's state could be described as heart-in-throat. However, he soon realized that his worry was excessive. Though her popularity might've plummeted, Tang Rou's performance was even more stable. In the following period, Happy had performed even better than Samsara.

Du Ming's admiration for this young lady shot up another notch.

Round 20 had finally arrived and Samsara was once again faced with Happy. This time, Du Ming and Tang Rou had the chance to face each other on stage.

Du Ming was hyped, and the Samsara players on the bench were all deep in discussion too.

The attention Du Ming had directed at Tang Rou was no secret in Samsara. For example, Jiang Botao, immensely skilled at communicating and reading others, could easily see that this guy had a crush.

"That guy took his sword and charged. Seems to me he's in a pretty good state! Does this guy want to express his admiration for his goddess by crushing her?" Wu Qi wondered aloud, seeing Du Ming's more eager than normal performance.

"He's probably trying to attract her interest through showing off his own talent," Jiang Botao, as expected, was skilled at understanding others.

"How childish, like an elementary school kid!" Fang Minghua exclaimed.

"Holy crap!" Someone yelled in shock and Samsara's players all facepalmed, lowering their heads in silence for Du Ming.

Moon-Luring Frost, charging up excitedly, had been thrown to one side by a Circle Swing.

"Has he already been wiped out?" Lu Boyuan had a hand over his eyes, peeking at the situation through his fingers.

"No..." Zhou Zekai said.

"Ah, I was too careless!" Du Ming yelled into the chat.

"Jesus, this is embarrassing..." Samsara's players all decided.

"He won't start yelling 'I love you' or something right then and there, will he?"

"If that's the case, well, the transfer window still had two days to go, let's sell him!"

"Sell him to Happy?"

"That's probably exactly what he wants!" They laughed.

Onstage, the battle continued.

TN: \*The "Rou" in Tang Rou means "soft" or "gentle", the same "soft" in Soft Mist, so, Chen Guo is talking about Tang Rou's birth name, not the name Soft Mist