

BIOLOGICAL 74

Chapter 74: The tournament (2)

Principal Harris strode confidently onto a podium in the school's lush garden. The eager participants gathered before him, standing a few meters below the elevated platform, their eyes fixed on him in anticipation of his speech.

Principal Harris stood confidently before the crowd of students, his voice booming with enthusiasm as he greeted them. "Welcome!" he said, ensuring his voice reached every corner of the gathered assembly.

"This is the first time our school has held such a contest." His eyes swept across the youthful faces before him. He leaned forward for emphasis, a sparkle of excitement in his eyes. The students, meanwhile, appeared tense, their bodies rigid as they listened.

Principal Harris paused, a warm smile spreading across his face. "We tried our best to leave a lasting memory of such a day."

Continuing, he stood tall, his voice gaining strength. "This will be the first step you all will set into adulthood, where you will be forced to show your capabilities if you want to be successful." His hands clenched into fists. The students shifted uneasily, the weight of his words making their hearts race with both fear and determination.

"Confronting other talented individuals will be very beneficial to you all. It will allow you to understand what you should work on if you want to improve yourselves." He looked around, making eye contact with several students, his gaze encouraging yet solemn.

The man went on with an air of self-importance, which made some of those students who had never been at ease around authority figures even more nervous than usual.

Principal Harris paused for effect, surveying the crowd of students before continuing. "We've arranged for the matches to take place across the school campus," he said. As he spoke, his hands gestured towards various parts of the sprawling grounds, showing the widespread nature of the tournament.

This announcement caused a ripple of murmurs among the students, their faces reflecting a mix of excitement and apprehension.

"This format mirrors the unpredictable environments you'll encounter in the military." The students exchanged glances. Silent nods and clenched jaws greeted his words.

"The tournament's design also streamlines the selection process," Harris said. "Our aim is to conclude swiftly, respecting your last summer of freedom before military academy enrollment."

As he concluded this segment of his speech, Harris's eyes lingered on the crowd, silently acknowledging their mixed emotions.

Principal Harris raised his gaze, peering out from beneath his bushy eyebrows at the sea of youthful faces before him.

Each student, locked in their own blend of anticipation and apprehension, returned his stare. He offered them a smile, his teeth yellowed from years of tobacco use, giving him an almost shark-like appearance.

This smile, though intended to be reassuring, carried an undercurrent of severity, perhaps stressed by his advanced age.

He resumed his address with a more serious tone. "I trust that none of you would entertain the thought of cheating in this tournament," he said. "Should any such attempt to occur, we will detect it and the consequences would be severe."

Principal Harris paused, allowing a wave of appreciative murmurs to ripple through the audience. He surveyed the crowd, noting the mix of emotions displayed on the students' faces. Some appeared tense, others anxious, but all were attentive. He nodded, acknowledging their response before continuing.

With a warm, encouraging tone, he addressed them again. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of you who decided to join this tournament." His eyes moved across the sea of faces, attempting to make a brief, personal connection with as many students as possible.

"I know well that the lure of joining the Red Palace is a powerful motivator, yet standing up to face Professor McAllister's students might seem daunting."

He leaned forward, emphasizing his next point. "However, by choosing to enter this tournament, you've already showed your true mettle." He paused, allowing his words to resonate with the students, hoping to instill a sense of pride and accomplishment in them.

"Remember, this isn't just a contest for a place in the Red Palace. It's a showcase of your strength, a testament to your courage and determination."

A hush fell over the audience, signaling their grasp of the tournament's significance. Each student harbored a fervent desire to join the nation's elite by securing a place in the Red Palace.

Principal Harris, sensing the shift in the atmosphere, continued. "Now, let me explain how this competition will unfold."

He detailed the tournament rules to the attentive students. Erik, observing, noted the considerable number of healers employed for the event.

It seemed the school had invested heavily in ensuring the participants' well-being, perhaps explaining the choice to limit the number of rings.

To Erik, the allocation of resources towards healers seemed excessive, yet he surmised there must be a rationale behind the principal's decision.

He also realized the competition extended beyond mere martial arts. Students could use their powers, provided they exercised restraint to avoid lethal outcomes. This stipulation justified the presence of many healers around the campus.

The tournament, as Principal Harris outlined, would span eight days, with one match per participant each day.

Glancing at the clock on the wall, Harris noted ten minutes had gone by since he began his speech. It was time to organize the matches.

Modern technology simplified the process. Students had submitted their entries via their smartphones, which enabled a computer algorithm to pair contestants randomly.

At that moment, Erik's phone buzzed with a notification. He remained connected to it through his biological supercomputer, but checked his phone to maintain discretion among his peers.

ERIK ROMANO VS ROCCO JOHNSTON

HEALER: MARCUS DE VRIES

Erik stared at his phone screen, puzzled by the name Rocco Johnston. This opponent was unfamiliar to him.

However, for Rocco, the situation was different. He knew Erik well, along with the potential of his powers.

Rocco watched his own screen with a smirk forming on his face. He underestimated Erik. The kid wasn't someone who particularly put a lot of effort into what he did, leading him to be average in every aspect.

His parents had pushed him into training from a young age, shaping him into a decent fighter, but he didn't really like training.

However, that amount made the kid look down on Erik, not just because of Erik's past reputation as the school's trash, but also because Erik had awakened only recently.

Not even a month had passed since the event, and he believed his schoolmate couldn't have gained enough experience to compete against him. In his eyes, Erik's decision to enter the tournament was foolish, given his perceived lack of strength.

Erik considered himself lucky. He hadn't been paired with monsters like Amber, Nathaniel, and Anderson, meaning that he had a shot at this competition.

His first match was likely to be with a less challenging opponent. This wasn't arrogance on Erik's part; it was a logical conclusion. There were many participants, and it wasn't like the people he had to pay attention to were many. Just 21 based on what he heard from Amber and the others. The chance of meeting one of them before the fourth day was like, what, 2%?

Besides, he had been sparring with top students like Amber, Gwen, and Floyd in recent days. He was becoming familiar fighting against humans, and since he could use his sharpening power, and got increased stats by the system, he felt confident he could do it.

While Amber and the others were in the top twenty, and Erik always ended up losing, he could compete with them. A loss in today's match, however, would crush his chances of joining the Red Palace. He didn't need to win the entire tournament, just make it to the top 22.

Eagerly, Erik hit the button to accept the match. He waited for his opponent to do the same. After a few seconds, he saw a notification appear on his screen.

"I will rip you to pieces, you stupid motherfucker!"

<He surely isn't that great with words. >

In that instant, Erik resolved to defeat Rocco Johnston. He noticed another alert on his phone, showing Rocco had accepted the match.

They proceeded to their designated combat zone, a spacious open field nestled between two buildings. Rocco was accompanied by a crowd of cheering family members and friends, while Erik stood alone, his companions busy in their own matches.

Rocco was already revelling in expected victory, bolstered by the vocal support from his entourage.

"You're going to need therapy when I'm done with you!" Rocco said, leaving Erik bewildered by his overconfidence.

Erik, finding Rocco's comments absurd, could only respond with a dismissive, "Oh, God... help me..." while rolling his eyes in exasperation.