

Crossing 121

Chapter 121: Battle Points for Self-Redemption!

This was the first time in the last couple of years that a nemesis combat match was to be held in the Central Scout Academy. Lin Zhong-qing and Li Yingjie's wager on their futures created an uproar among the lower grades; this was also why there were so many people here in the combat hall today.

Li Yingjie had long taken up his position on the stage, waiting for Lin Zhong-qing to arrive. At this moment, he was very pleased with himself, thinking that Lin Zhong-qing was already a bird in his hand. All that remained was for the final result to be declared — Li Yingjie was extremely confident that he would be able to take down Lin Zhong-qing easily with his strength.

The more Li Yingjie thought about it, the more excited he was — he could almost see Lin Zhong-qing bowing down before him now ...

However, the following events did not unfold as he had pictured. In the final minute before the arena battle would officially start, the person that appeared across from him was not Lin Zhong-qing, but Qi Long. Right then, Li Yingjie knew that his plot had been countered by the opponent, and he screamed in anger, "Why is it you?!"

Qi Long laughed freely, saying, "Why can't it be me?" In Li Yingjie's eyes, Qi Long's hearty laughter was a taunt, mocking him for falling victim to his own cleverness.

"Who'd have thought that Lin Zhong-qing would be your team member ... I'd never expected you all to be willing to waste a member slot for that fellow." In Li Yingjie's plans, after he had defeated Lin Zhong-qing, the first thing he would do would be to forbid him from joining any teams. Since Lin Zhong-qing had been so unwilling to submit to him, then he would utterly destroy him and turn Lin Zhong-qing into a lowly dog for Li Yingjie to kick and scold as he pleased!

"You yourself were willing to let a regular class person join your team. At least Lin Zhong-qing is still a Special Class-A student. It's not at all shameful to have taken him in." Qi Long was rather perplexed by Li Yingjie's words. Right now, no matter how he looked at Li Yingjie, he just felt that there was something wrong with the other's brain. Really, what was he thinking? The members of a team were supposed to be the best partners to grow up with, and would be the most intimate companions who would fight right by one's side in the future.

Therefore, every team leader would be more careful than careful, weighing their options again and again, when deciding whether to accept someone into their team. Li Yingjie's act of adding a weak member who would obviously drag down the strength of a team, all for the sake of revenge against someone who didn't want to join him ... in Qi Long's opinion, this sort of behaviour was illogical. It was definitely the action of a retard.

Qi Long's words further ignited Li Yingjie's rage — there was only one notion in his mind now, and that was that he had fallen prey to Ling Lan's team's evil scheme. He believed that this was all a ploy set up by Ling Lan's group to eliminate their greatest rival (him) so that they could obtain the coveted status of kings of year 4738.

It had to be said that Li Yingjie was really full of himself. He had always thought of Ling Lan's group as his competition, so the moment he found that the situation wasn't looking good for him, his first conclusion was that he had been set up.

Dizzy with rage, Li Yingjie could no longer remain calm. The moment the referee teacher said start, he charged with bloodshot eyes towards Qi Long on the opposite end. Of course, this manner of approach was useless — already weaker than Qi Long in general, after losing his composure, the difference between Li Yingjie's and Qi Long's strength was even clearer. Within the span of a few moves, Li Yingjie was being dominated by Qi Long on every front.

A slight smile appeared on Ling Lan's lips; this match was already Qi Long's.

In a corner not too far from the arena stage, Wu Jiong, who had been observing the fight, sniffed coldly at this point and said, "Ye Xu, let's go."

"Yes!" replied Ye Xu, nodding. Even at their level, they could tell what the final outcome of the fight would be. Initially, they had been looking forward to seeing the fight between Li Yingjie and Qi Long, but who would've guessed that Li Yingjie would become mentally imbalanced and lose his calm? Hence, the fight had lost all meaning, making them lose interest in it as well.

Wu Jiong and Ye Xu had actually come to spectate for a specific purpose — they too had wanted to invite Lin Zhong-qing to join their team. Although Lin Zhong-qing was currently only ranked 15th in the class rankings, seemingly not too strong, the fact is that he had successfully moved up from the position of dead-last to the upper segment of Class-A in just short of 2 years. If Lin Zhong-qing continued to improve at this rate, he would certainly be able to make a true place for himself among those at the top one day. Wu Jiong and Ye Xu both thought highly of his future prospects, so they were willing to give one of their precious team member slots to Lin Zhong-qing.

Of course, Wu Jiong and Ye Xu also believed that as long as Lin Zhong-qing was willing to join them, if they negotiated politely with Li Yingjie based on their families' status in the military world, the other would probably give way.

However, Wu Jiong hadn't considered that Ling Lan would beat them to the punch ... Wu Jiong felt a twinge of regret in his heart, thinking that he had lost this chess match by a slim margin. He had wanted to wait till Lin Zhong-qing had utterly lost all hope before offering a helping hand — that way, he would have been able to gain Lin Zhong-qing's gratitude — but unexpectedly, Ling Lan's group had stepped in halfway and hijacked his target. If he had only known earlier, he would not have waited to try and maximise his advantages. He should have just contacted Lin Zhong-qing directly the moment he had found out about Li Yingjie's trap ...

"That punk Qi Long really moves too goddamn quickly. Actually beating us to the punch to get Lin Zhong-qing," complained Ye Xu, displeased, as he stared at Qi Long dominating the match.

"Qi Long? That punk is just a battle maniac, he wouldn't think that far. Without that person, Lin Zhong-qing would never have chosen to join them." Gaze serious, Wu Jiong directed Ye Xu's attention to Ling Lan who was standing in a corner.

“Ling Lan ...” Ye Xu’s expression changed subtly. He still remembered when he had first been defeated by Ling Lan in one move — that one incident had almost destroyed his confidence. Luckily, Wu Jiong had found him, and they had bonded while commiserating together over their losses to Ling Lan. The two of them began working together, and finally managed to build a team of their own, becoming one of the only three teams in their grade at present. This also allowed their reputation to stay on par with Ling Lan’s team, taking on the role as a sort of counterbalance.

As for Li Yingjie’s team, in their eyes, it wasn’t even a threat. It was really only Li Yingjie himself who blindly believed that his team was one of the strongest teams in the class ...

At the heart of it, Wu Jiong actually looked down a little on Li Yingjie. He was a direct descendant of a top elite family, but though his combat ability was not bad, that brain of his ... was really below Wu Jiong’s notice. He just kept doing a bunch of nonsensical things that did neither himself nor anyone else any good.

Wu Jiong’s group quietly disappeared from the combat hall. Meanwhile, on the stage, the results were quickly decided. Li Yingjie, who could fight against Qi Long for up to several 100 moves typically, did not display any of the strength a top 5 of Class-A should have this time. It hadn’t taken even 100 moves before he was struck by one of Qi Long’s fists and flew off the stage, sealing his loss.

After Li Yingjie lost, two options popped out on his communicator — one was to adhere to the wager and serve the other, while the other was to redeem himself by using battle points to trade for his freedom.

Based on Li Yingjie’s personality, he would certainly choose to redeem himself, but before he could make his choice, he had fainted out of sheer anger.

Because Li Yingjie had lost the ability to choose, after 3 minutes, the academy’s mainframe automatically transferred that right to Qi Long, allowing him to make the choice on behalf of Li Yingjie.

If Qi Long chose the first option, he would have to send out an invitation for his team, while the second option would require the loser to forfeit a set number of battle points to redeem himself.

Of course Qi Long was unwilling to take on this trash Li Yingjie; he hurriedly chose for Li Yingjie to redeem himself. And then, all he saw was the immense figure supplied by the A.I. — the countless number of zeroes made Qi Long’s eyes cross. It turned out that Li Yingjie was worried that Lin Zhong-qing would choose to redeem himself, and so had set it so that the price for self-redemption was one million battle points. This was an absolutely astronomical number. For context, despite Qi Long’s battle achievements, in these two years at the academy, he had only managed to earn slightly more than a thousand battle points.

In truth, Li Yingjie had already proposed this self-redemption price right from the beginning when he had challenged Lin Zhong-qing to a nemesis match. This way, no matter which option Lin Zhong-qing chose, he wouldn’t be able to escape his palm. If Lin Zhong-qing chose the second option, he would use the debt of these battle points to force Lin Zhong-qing to give up his studies and work non-stop in the virtual world by taking on missions to repay his debt. (The scout academy’s battle points can be traded using the credits earned within the virtual world.)

However, this malicious intent of Li Yingjie's had now smashed his own toes, benefitting Qi Long. This was also another reason why Li Yingjie had fainted — he knew what the price of self-redemption was, and even he could not bear the cost.

Very quickly, a message was sent to Qi Long's communicator, informing him that a batch of battle points under Li Yingjie's name had been transferred into his account. The mainframe also told Qi Long that the remaining deficiency would be automatically transferred to his account whenever Li Yingjie earned more battle points in the future. In other words, even without taking Li Yingjie in as a lackey, Li Yingjie would have to work for Qi Long until the day he graduated from the Central Scout Academy.

Just like that, Li Yingjie was forced to take a great loss. On the other hand, Lin Zhong-qing managed to get rid of a burden that had troubled him for close to 2 years. However, Qi Long very quickly received the remaining battle points from Li Yingjie, clearing the debt. Qi Long knew very well that this was most likely the doing of Li Yingjie's family. They must have applied pressure in the background to allow the direct transfer of credits into Li Yingjie's virtual account so that he could trade them for battle points to clear his debt.

Although the academy had announced to the public that it was impossible to obtain credits from the outside world, when real power and authority came into play, the academy would still give some face to the extremely resourceful large elite families. Qi Long was clear about the twists and turns involved in this, so he wasn't particularly surprised to receive the payment for Li Yingjie's debt so quickly. He merely told Ling Lan and Han Jijyun about the amount he of battle points he received. In the end, Ling Lan decided that she would leave 100,000 points for emergencies, while the rest would be left to Han Jijyun to handle. Hopefully, this large windfall would be able to give them a boost within the scout academy's virtual world. Of course, the greatest objective of Ling Lan's group was to free all the members of the team from the worry of purchasing developmental agents.

Battle points were very useful — you could use them in the academy to buy the highest-grade cultivation agents, which were extremely hard to find in the outside world, as well as high-grade gene agents. However, the price was extremely steep — 100,000 battle points for just one tube. Even if the children of the academy worked their butts off doing missions and pushed their hardest during the arena battles, they would still need at least 5 years before they would accumulate 100,000 battle points.

Qi Long's current amount of battle points could only purchase 10 tubes of high-grade gene agent, and this number was only enough to supply Qi Long for one year of absorption. Ling Lan felt that buying these agents now was rather not worth it — they might as well try to think of a way to gain some interest on these battle points and earn more. The more they earned, the more agents they would be able to get.

Han Jijyun felt the same way and so accepted the duty graciously. He was filled with vigour, thinking that this sort of purposeful life right now was what he really wanted. Everyone left to do their own things, leaving only Little Four to continue muttering by Ling Lan's ear. He was whining that he would have been a better candidate than Han Jijyun to handle those battle points.

Chapter 122: The Cheetah Mecha Operator!

In the end, Ling Lan couldn't take Little Four's incessant whining, so she had no choice but to let him take the remaining 100,000 battle points she had saved for emergencies to invest. Of course, Ling Lan warned him beforehand that if he lost the battle points, she would pull down his pants and give him a good spanking, lifting the ban on domestic violence this once.

Little Four naturally sniffed at this, thinking that Ling Lan's threat would never have a chance to happen. In his words — have you ever seen a god lose money? What? You said yes? Then you must definitely be a retard!

Ling Lan definitely did not want to be called a retard, so, after she gave the 100,000 battle points to Little Four, she gave the matter no more thought. Of course, Ling Lan was mentally prepared — if the battle points were really lost, then she would make Little Four take a little risk and transfer some credits in from the outside world to repay the debt. As a boss, she needed to be accountable to her followers, after all.

After Ling Lan had settled all the real-world matters, she continued to focus on training up her mecha control. Time was slowly ticking by, getting closer to the final deadline, but Ling Lan just couldn't break past the critical 3-minute line. In other words, Ling Lan had pushed till she could use her highest hand speed without making any control errors, but unfortunately, her time had stopped around 3 minutes and 30 seconds. Even in her best condition, her best results were only infinitely nearing 3 minutes 20 seconds — the distance to 3 minutes was just too far away ...

Once control hits a critical threshold, it was virtually impossible to improve the time needed by even just one second. Ling Lan could almost predict the failure of this mission already; the memories of numbing pain of her body being electrocuted reared up from the depths of her mind, and she couldn't help but tremble a little.

Ling Lan became more and more anxious, which negatively impacted her training results in her following sessions. This feeling was just like when she had reached a bottleneck previously with her father's hand speed training. Ling Lan thought to herself — could this really already be her limit? Was she actually unsuited for piloting mecha?

This mental state of Ling Lan was unsuitable for mecha control training; the picky learning space ruthlessly kicked Ling Lan out of the training area.

Little Four, who had been busy earning battle points, sensed his boss's glum mood, and quickly put down what he was doing to come and ask her why. When he heard that she had encountered a bottleneck once again, he again suggested taking Ling Lan to the outside virtual world for a trip for a change of pace.

Ling Lan felt that just staying in the mission space wouldn't solve her problem anyway, and her training results recently had just been getting worse and worse — she might as well go outside for a bit. Then, she recalled that it was only after she had first learned some mecha control in the outside virtual world that the learning space's mecha course had been unlocked. Perhaps the answer to her breakthrough would also be in outside virtual world.

Just like that, Ling Lan and Little Four once again returned to the place where they had logged off the first time, inside the mecha training hall.

However, at this time today, there were quite a few newbies training at the mecha training hall. Inside the room Ling Lan had selected, there were also seven to eight bestial mecha practising their basic movements. There were powerful agile fierce bestial mecha, such as a panther, a tiger, and a lion, as well as tough offensive type mecha with sharp horns or protrusions, such as a porcupine, a stegosaurus, and a rhinoceros. Of course, there were also nimble scout type mecha, such as a wolf and a fox.

They were all in the middle of practising the basic movements of their mecha. Some were doing like Ling Lan previously, stumbling around; this was obviously their first time here, making them the newbies of newbie operators. There were also some who had trained for some time, who displayed a certain level of control, marking them as older newbies.

The moment Ling Lan entered the room, most of the bestial mecha inside stopped moving or slowed down. This was because Ling Lan's mecha was the extremely rare rabbit mecha, highly uncommon on the market. On top of that, the resting state action Ling Lan had set was just too adorable — the rabbit was nibbling at the red carrot ¹ held between its forelegs, head twitching slightly. Its cute appearance coupled with its cute actions naturally drew the crowd's attention.

Ling Lan had set the resting action of the mecha this way on a whim. Originally, she had thought that this action would never be seen by anyone else, and so had purposely set it to be cuter for her own entertainment. But she hadn't known that her first visit to the mecha training hall had been a special circumstance. Back then, most people had been drawn away to watch the mecha fight in the battle stadium, so there hadn't been many people staying behind to practise in the hall. Thus, she had ended up being the only person in the room.

Although Ling Lan was rather surprised that there were so many mecha training together here, she didn't really think too much about it. Though the resting action of the rabbit mecha was rather adorably silly, no one would be able to tell who was operating it anyway. Ling Lan did not think that she would be so unlucky to get a rabbit mecha again when she used her real identity to log on in the future ...

In the training hall, there was one cheetah mecha which completely ignored Ling Lan's arrival. His actions remained the same as he continued to go about his training systematically and meticulously. Ling Lan's attention was quickly drawn to the other, because he was controlling that mecha perfectly. Whether it was running, jumping, leaping, or pouncing, every movement was clean and precise. When executed in sequence, the actions were agile and flowed smoothly, bringing an aesthetic beauty where power merged flawlessly with speed. This even gave Ling Lan the illusion that the mecha before her was no longer a mecha, but actually a real live giant cheetah.

Ling Lan's attention also drew Little Four's attention. He surreptitiously looked in on the operator of the cheetah mecha, and upon seeing that familiar figure, he couldn't help but exclaim in surprise, shaking Ling Lan from her mesmerised stupor. *"What happened? Little Four?"*

Little Four said excitedly, *"Haha, Boss, we've bumped into an acquaintance. Guess who the operator inside the cheetah mecha is?"*

"How would I know? This is only my second time in this virtual world, so I don't really know that many people ... could it be someone from real life?" mused Ling Lan, rubbing her chin.

"No, we met this person on our last trip, Boss. You even talked to the other. Here's a hint: the other is very dangerous ..." said Little Four with a cheeky grin, shaking his right index finger.

Ling Lan figured it out abruptly. *"That hacker with spectre abilities?"* He had been the only one who fit the definition of dangerous.

"Haha, Boss, you got it! It's him. Who knew his mecha control is also so good ... but why is he still practising basic mecha control here? Could it be that his age isn't as old as we thought?" said Little Four, wondering. Back then, although the man had concealed his appearance, he had given off an impression of being a mature adult. Could it be that they had been fooled?

"What, is there an age limit for someone to learn basic mecha control?" asked Ling Lan curiously.

"Well, no, there isn't. It's just that most learners are around age 13 to 16; even the oldest wouldn't be as old as 18. That's why I find it a little odd. The feeling that man gave us is that he should already be over 20, right?" replied Little Four. *"But then he's a hacker-evolved spectre, so it could be that he had manipulated his aura."*

"If only Boss had let me investigate his real appearance, then we wouldn't have been fooled." Little Four still seemed to still hold some resentment over the matter.

"Leave it, let's avoid trouble if we can. He has nothing to do with us, why should we know so much about him?" Ling Lan then reassured Little Four, *"Still, this person's mecha control skills are really impressive. Looks like I should go reference the control methods of some mecha experts. Perhaps then I'll be able to find some inspiration to break through."*

Ling Lan felt that she had been building a car in a sealed room ² for too long. Training on her own day after day, she had taken many of the control moves for granted, becoming set in her ways. Especially after seeing the way the cheetah mecha operator controlled his mecha, Ling Lan deeply realised that she still had some unnecessary frills for some of her moves — she had overcomplicated things a little.

"Oh, it looks like he's going to take the basic movement assessment mission now. Let's go see." Little Four didn't wait for Ling Lan's response, dragging Ling Lan and her mecha along to follow the other into the assessment mission's space.

"Is it alright for us to just enter like this?" asked Ling Lan somewhat worriedly as she glanced at the cheetah mecha who was preparing to take the assessment. After all, the other was an evolved spectre who could kill brainwaves. If the other had already set it so that viewing was restricted, wouldn't their barging in here be taken as an outright challenge? If things took a turn for the worst, heads would roll.

"No worries, this type of assessment mission is open for public viewing. Anyone can choose to watch. Many people like to watch others take the assessment before taking the assessment themselves so that they can absorb some experience," said Little Four breezily.

Little Four's answer let Ling Lan relax completely. She then took a look around, and noticed that she was the only one here observing. This made her suspect whether Little Four had just been shooting off his mouth again ...

However, seeing the other ignore her presence, Ling Lan decided that it wouldn't hurt. Even if Little Four had been lying to her, she had no way to go out anymore anyway because the assessment mission had already started.

Inside the assessment mission, the entire space was filled with all kinds of messy and disorganised obstacles. The cheetah mecha was weaving among the obstacles, no trace of hesitation or awkwardness in its movements. All of its actions flowed naturally, no observable kinks at all.

Just as Ling Lan was thinking that the other would easily pass the mission this time, the initially stationary obstacles began to move irregularly. This sudden change shocked Ling Lan, and also flustered the cheetah mecha operator.

A rock column suddenly burst out of the ground — the cheetah mecha had just leapt into the air, and it looked like he was about to collide with the column. Right then, the cheetah mecha twisted so that its four limbs could spring off the rock column, and with this force, the mecha's body was sent leaping in another direction, nicely evading a collision with the column.

Ling Lan's high-strung nerves eased slightly, but the following situation made her heart rise into her throat again. It turned out that the cheetah mecha had not escaped from danger yet — though it had changed directions, a giant rock was hurtling towards him from the other direction.

The operator of the cheetah mecha was very calm. He controlled the mecha to shift movements in mid-air; the mecha's four limbs shuddered twice in the air and then stepped firmly on the giant rock. Borrowing this force, it bounced back, once again dodging a potentially dangerous collision.

Chapter 123: Breaking Through a Bottleneck!

The cheetah mecha changed direction repeatedly in mid-air, springing from one obstacle to another; it actually managed to stay in the air without having to set foot on the ground even once. Using multiple rebounds, he weaved his way nimbly through the air, jumping over wave after unending wave of obstacles. Without any real danger, he lasted till the final point, passing this assessment mission perfectly.

“Congratulations, XXX, for graduating the basic mecha controls course with a result of 1 minute 57 seconds. This record has been entered into the top 1000 of the elite leaderboard.” A line of red text appeared suddenly on the screen of Ling Lan's mecha. This proved that the other's speed was indeed exceptional.

“Wow, Amazing. This result of his actually placed him within the top 1000 of the elite leaderboard, and this is his first attempt too!” Little Four's words stunned Ling Lan once more. Mind you, the other's control ability is something not even she — with the learning space she possessed, and the tenfold extra practice time she had because of it — could do. And the other had just accomplished it so easily ...

“Could it be that he has suppressed his previous passing results?” Ling Lan felt her own confidence take a big hit, and recalling that the other was an evolved spectre, capable of manipulating data in the virtual world, she wondered if the other had applied some subterfuge here.

"I checked. He really didn't." Little Four's words informed Ling Lan that the other's result was a true one. This fired up Ling Lan's motivation — this time, she really felt the difference between herself and a true aberrant-level prodigy of this world. Having no true rivals that could match up to her in the Central Scout Academy had made her slacken, but this event made her draw taut the reins of hard work once more, setting her firmly on the road of the strong.

"He's really amazing. Who knows how well I can do?" Competitive spirit flared in Ling Lan's heart. She had always been the boss at the academy, so suddenly having someone be better than her had made her eager to test herself.

"Why don't you try for yourself, Boss?" Little Four was obviously a troublemaker; sensing her restlessness, he immediately started goading Ling Lan.

It was true that Ling Lan wanted to know what level her basic control skills were at, so she went along with Little Four's suggestion and chose to take the basic controls assessment mission.

Ling Lan felt herself being transported into a spacious area. This area was different from the assessment area of the cheetah mecha previously.

"Every assessment map is chosen randomly. Word has it that there are over 100,000 maps, so it is virtually impossible to prepare for the assessment by researching the maps beforehand. This also guarantees that the result of every assessment is valid and reliable," said Little Four, explaining why the map was different.

"Since the maps are different, then why do they still rank people based on time? Among these hundred thousand maps, there must be some levels which are harder or easier than others," said Ling Lan doubtfully.

"The difficulty level of all the maps is equal. The controls being assessed on each map are about the same so that the operator's true abilities are reflected in the results. For instance, the operator of that cheetah mecha earlier finished his map in 1 minute 57 seconds; then, he would also finish this map in almost the same amount of time. The deviation won't exceed one second, give or take."

Ling Lan nodded to show she understood. She saw a timer appear on the screen of the mecha counting down to the start of the test. This method of informing was much more humane than that of the learning space — after all, the system here gave you some prep time, unlike the learning space, which would start whenever it felt like it. Every start would just sneak up without warning, leaving Ling Lan feeling helpless.

Seeing two large letters 'GO' appear, Ling Lan controlled her rabbit mecha to bound off at flying speed. The fully engaged Ling Lan didn't know that, at this time, a familiar mecha had slipped into her assessment mission space. It was that cheetah mecha, the evolved spectre who Ling Lan had always considered extremely dangerous.

It turned out that the cheetah mecha had been fully aware of Ling Lan's presence during his assessment. However, Ling Lan's mecha had really just seemed so harmless, and its behaviour of nibbling on a carrot had been so amusing, that the cheetah mecha's operator couldn't help but chuckle, curiosity towards the operator of such a cute mecha stealing into his mind.

He saw that the rabbit mecha was simply observing quietly, and so left it alone. When his assessment ended, seeing the notification messages from the system, he was also very moved and satisfied. By the time his emotions settled and he was about to select the option to graduate and leave the mecha training hall, he unintentionally noticed that Ling Lan's rabbit mecha had chosen to take the assessment mission as well. Curious, he didn't choose to graduate, but instead chose the option to return for more training, and so was sent back to the mecha training hall. Then, he had entered this space to watch Ling Lan's assessment.

Of course, this choice meant that he would have to retake the basic assessment again once more later on, but he didn't care. After all, for him, passing the assessment was really a simple matter.

Little Four had noticed the other from the very moment he entered to observe, but Little Four chose not to inform Ling Lan. This was because Little Four didn't think the other could influence them in any way. Even if the other was an evolved spectre, Little Four believed all along that the virtual world was his territory — no one would be able to harm Ling Lan under his watch.

In order to let the rabbit mecha manoeuvre freely without any burden, Ling Lan shifted the carrot, which had initially been on the rabbit's back, to its mouth and clamped down to hold it between its teeth. After that, a giant rabbit could be seen hopping around nimbly within that vast space, dodging one obstacle after another.

There was sufficient room for Ling Lan's mecha to prance around freely — this allowed Ling Lan to pay less attention to those obstacles. At this moment, Ling Lan was unleashing the fastest speed she could handle for the rabbit mecha to run; in other words, her hand speed had already reached its highest point at present.

"What great speed. Their hand speed is most likely already at a high level. Who knew planet Azure had such an amazing youth ... is it an academy student? If it is an academy student, then who could it be? Is it a supreme prodigy who managed to beat the trial to remove their virtual access lock at only age 13?" The cheetah mecha operator wondered to himself in awe as he watched the rabbit mecha's speed. In his mind, he was going through the people he knew to try and figure out who the rabbit mecha operator could be among those on planet Azure.

Frankly, the cheetah mecha couldn't be blamed for not considering the other planets. This was because the newbies in the mecha training hall were either the freshest of newbies, those who had just gained access to the extended virtual world, or students from the scout academies who had succeeded in their challenge. Either way, they were the type with no money who wouldn't be able to afford the exorbitant fees for a transfer. Therefore, if they wanted to learn about mecha, they would definitely go to the local mecha training hall for training, and not choose to transfer to another planet.

Just like that, due to a misunderstanding, the cheetah mecha operator was never able to find the operator of the rabbit mecha. Only when he went to military school later on did he manage to find some hints.

Some of Ling Lan's high-speed turns left the cheetah mecha operator in awe, but also with some regret. *"Hmm, it looks like there are some minor flaws in accuracy, but at this speed, this performance is*

already impeccable.” The cheetah mecha operator’s operator knew very well that, the faster the speed, the more difficult it was to control the mecha. Certain turning motions, which could be executed within perfect range at low speed, would become extremely difficult at high speeds. Typically, as long as a set movement can be completed at high speed, then it would already be considered an excellent performance.

Ling Lan’s performance in the first half was basically perfect, but the latter half of the assessment wasn’t that easy. Just when Ling Lan was enjoying her run, the difficult section arrived — it turned out that she had reached the part with the irregularly moving obstacles. Even though Ling Lan already knew these obstacles existed, they came on so suddenly that she was still thrown for a bit of a loop.

This was because these moving obstacles arrived so abruptly, and they moved without any sense of predictability.

Ling Lan was in the midst of sprinting when she saw a large rock hurtling towards her from her left side with the corner of her eye. At that speed, Ling Lan knew well that it would soon smash into her mecha’s waist.

In a split second, Ling Lan decided — she rejected the option of an emergency stop, because she knew that once her mecha stopped, she wouldn’t be able to increase its speed to this level again. This was because there was no longer any space here for her to slowly increase her mecha’s speed. Her only option now was to break through with pure speed.

Ling Lan’s decision was the same as the cheetah mecha’s — progress by leaping from obstacle to obstacle. The thrusters on both sides of Ling Lan’s mecha’s waist activated at the same time. Borrowing the force of the thrusters, the mecha’s speed was again raised by a whole level.

But the large rock was just coming at her too quickly — even though Ling Lan had increased the speed of her mecha by a hair with the help of her thrusters, she still only managed to push half of the mecha’s body out of the path of the incoming rock. The rabbit mecha’s hind legs were still within range of the rock’s trajectory.

“Is he going to fail here?” The cheetah mecha operator frowned, because at this moment, there was already no possible way for the rabbit mecha operator to dodge anymore. However, right then, the rabbit mecha’s next move sent a sparkle through his eyes, and he couldn’t help but yell out in admiration.

The rabbit mecha had done something completely unexpected. With a sudden shake of its hind legs, the rabbit mecha had bent its hind legs back till a right angle ¹ was formed between its waist and its hind legs. Because of this bizarre move, the large rock had just barely grazed by the rabbit mecha’s hind legs. On top of that, the mecha’s raised hind legs pushed off abruptly against the large rock passing by, making an extremely terrifying loud noise. And this push sent the rabbit mecha zooming forwards at three times its original high speed.

If the instructors of the learning space had seen this move, they would have all exclaimed that this was the secret combat skill Rabbit Sky Leap.

This move had been inspired by the abilities of a rabbit, but was actually unsuitable to be used in conjunction with the rabbit mecha. However, in this last scene, Ling Lan had been forced into a corner,

and had involuntarily used this move. Of course, being able to execute the move so nimbly with the rabbit mecha was all thanks to the hard work Ling Lan had put into her basic mecha control training in the learning space. She had already absorbed those basic mecha controls into her very instincts. Thus, in that critical moment, she had been able to take out this move, helping her to escape this desperate situation.

However, Ling Lan's crisis wasn't over yet. The added power of the Rabbit Sky Leap made the mecha's speed go beyond the limits of what Ling Lan could safely control. Meanwhile, the obstacles also became faster to match the increased speed of the mecha, becoming even more erratic and strange in their movements, leaving Ling Lan scrambling to stay in control.

Seated within the rabbit mecha, Ling Lan was already drenched in sweat. She peered intently at all the images being displayed inside the mecha, dodging every obstacle that came from heaven knows where. Unknowingly, her hand speed had actually broken past her bottleneck, becoming faster and faster, at times even producing several afterimages, something which had never happened before.

Chapter 124: Don't Choose to Graduate?

"Warning, because the mecha used an irregular movement, some damage has occurred, some damage has occurred." Right then, the rabbit mecha's A.I. sounded out a warning.

Ling Lan was currently fully immersed in her mecha control; she ordered calmly, "Check damage level of mecha."

"Mecha damage at 30%. Warning, still sustaining damage. Please decrease speed by 50% immediately ... damage at 31% ... please decrease speed by 50%!" The A.I. repeated its warnings mechanically.

"How much longer can it hold on?" Ling Lan didn't choose to decrease her speed. For one, the speed of the moving obstacles around her no longer allowed her to decrease her mecha's speed. And secondly, her current speed was from the rebound energy of the Rabbit Sky Leap — the mecha itself had no way to control this speed anyway. Reality made it so that Ling Lan had no choice but to continue moving at high speed.

"Estimated that after 2 minutes, the mecha shall enter breakdown condition. Warning, damage level at 31%, please reduce speed by 50% immediately."

"That's enough time." To prevent the warning sounds of the A.I. from affecting her control, Ling Lan simply turned off the A.I.'s vocalization. Her expression calm, she once again controlled her mecha to evade the continuous ambush of the obstacles.

It had to be said that Ling Lan's adaptive ability was at an abnormal level — this had always been one of Ling Lan's strongest innate talents, and combined with the study and training provided by the learning space, this talent improved even more, its effects becoming even more obvious. After dodging somewhat clumsily for the first few abrupt attacks, Ling Lan got used to the mecha's present speed.

Very quickly, yet another horizontal wooden beam suddenly swept out from left to right, Ling Lan controlled the mecha to push off another obstacle once more to fly into the air, dodging it cleanly. This time, the movement seemed to flow easily, with no sign of the previous fumbling. Not only that, Ling

Lan controlled the mecha with pinpoint accuracy to twist so it could step on the flying wooden beam, and pushing off it, she made the mecha fly forwards once more like a cannonball.

“That adaptive ability is really abnormal. Only after adjusting 3 or 4 times, he has already grasped hold of the mecha’s new speed and the ability to leverage force.” The cheetah mecha operator was similarly amazed by Ling Lan’s insane level of ability.

Sure enough, Ling Lan’s subsequent performance was just as the cheetah mecha operator expected — the airborne rabbit mecha’s leaps were never again as flustered as it had been at the start, moving with ease and grace to spare. In the end, Ling Lan safely completed the assessment mission.

“Congratulations, 40, for graduating the basic mecha controls course with a result of 1 minute 58 seconds. This record has been entered into the top 1000 of the elite leaderboard.” A line of flashing green text suddenly appeared on Ling Lan’s mecha’s screen. Right below it, an option appeared soon after — Name: Reveal/Hide.

Ling Lan immediately chose the option to hide, and then a line of red text appeared on the highest section of the mecha’s screen. It was just like the text which had appeared when the cheetah mecha had completed his test: “Congratulations, XXX, for graduating the basic mecha controls course with a result of 1 minute 58 seconds. This record has been entered into the top 1000 of the elite leaderboard.”

“Slower than me by one second, and also on his first assessment as well! As expected, gifted mecha operators exist everywhere. Even here on this small planet of Azure, there is someone whose talent is equal to mine.” A sense of threat welled up in the cheetah mecha operator’s heart — he would never forget the words his grandfather had once said to him ... if you want to change your destiny, you will need to rely on yourself!

The cheetah mecha operator was just about to take the assessment again to graduate and officially leave the status of newbie behind, when he noticed that the rabbit mecha’s operator actually chose to return to training like he had previously.

The cheetah mecha operator was extremely curious. He had chosen to return out of curiosity about the rabbit mecha’s assessment results, but why would the rabbit mecha choose to return as well? The cheetah mecha operator knew very well that it couldn’t be because of him, for he hadn’t even chosen the option to retake the assessment yet.

Perhaps Ling Lan’s superhuman control and adaptive ability had piqued the cheetah mecha operator’s curiosity, for he did not choose to continue and take the assessment. Instead, he backed out from the assessment space, prepared to go look for that rabbit mecha, and ask him why exactly he had chosen to return.

After all, the rabbit mecha’s result was extremely outstanding — a normal person would have been thrilled and chosen to graduate in a hurry so that they could go off and make a living in the real world of mecha.

Ling Lan, who had returned to the great hall of the mecha training hall, was reflecting deeply on how it had felt to control the mecha earlier during the assessment. Then, she sighed, saying, “Who knew that

controlling mecha is not all about pushing the limits of speed ... sometimes, alternating the speed between fast and slow to control the rhythm is better.”

“Congratulations, Boss, on breaking past your bottleneck!” At this moment, Little Four finally piped up to congratulate Ling Lan. Earlier, Little Four had been smothering his mouth with both of his hands, afraid that in his excitement, he would accidentally make some noise to disrupt Ling Lan’s breakthrough and realisation. If that had happened, he would have truly become a fiendish felon guilty of a thousand years of sin.

“This time is all thanks to you, Little Four. Thank you!” Ling Lan knew that this successful breakthrough had all been because Little Four had brought her to the outside virtual world and let her encounter mecha. And then, she had seen the images of the cheetah mecha during his assessment at the mecha training hall. This series of events had all led to her epiphany and subsequent breakthrough.

Ling Lan was just about to say something more when she saw countless red warning signs appear on her mecha’s screen. Abruptly, she recalled that she had shut off the A.I.’s vocal functions during the assessment mission. She hurriedly turned it back on, and then the A.I. could be heard blaring out warnings in a frenzy: “Warning, mecha damage level at 67%. Please choose to repair immediately, please choose to repair immediately.”

Ling Lan stuck out her tongue. Who could have guessed that the Rabbit Sky Leap skill would cause that much damage to the mecha? No wonder the learning space had emphasized again and again that the physical body must be extremely flexible to use this skill, otherwise the user could incur some latent injuries.

“Repair!” Right now, Ling Lan didn’t want to choose a new mecha just yet — after all, she still hadn’t passed the learning space’s standards for the basic controls of this rabbit mecha.

Registering Ling Lan’s order, the A.I. immediately displayed the contact numbers of the major mecha repair shops in the capital. All Ling Lan needed to do was call. As Ling Lan still hadn’t graduated yet, she wasn’t allowed to take the mecha out of the mecha training hall. So, she could only call for someone from one of the repair stores to come here and service her mecha. Ling Lan swiftly chose a repair shop closest to the mecha training hall, called its number, and secured an agreement for them to send someone to the mecha training hall to check her mecha in 5 minutes.

As Ling Lan was waiting, a cheetah mecha appeared again in the great hall of the mecha training hall. It looked left and right, and when it saw Ling Lan’s rabbit mecha in the hall, it suddenly ran over. When it was about 10 metres away from Ling Lan, Ling Lan’s mecha received the other’s contact request.

Ling Lan was extremely surprised — why would this evolved spectre come looking for her? Out of responsibility for her own safety, Ling Lan seriously tried to recall if she had done anything that might have offended the other. Coming up with nothing, she approved the contact request and accepted the communications channel he established. Then, she asked hesitantly, “What’s up?”

Against the mysterious ability of a spectre, Ling Lan was still very wary. She would try her best to avoid offending the other as much as possible.

“Excuse me, I just wanted to ask. Why didn’t you choose to graduate earlier, coming back here instead?” The voice of the cheetah mecha operator was still the same voice; it was just as Little Four had said — the operator of the cheetah mecha was that evolved spectre.

“My mecha’s broken.” Ling Lan’s reply obviously surprised the other. It was true that mecha would often get damaged with newbies piloting them, because some people with terrible control skills would ram the mecha into obstacles until they were almost unrecognizable during basic training. Just like when Ling Lan slammed into walls repeatedly at the beginning of her training. However, Ling Lan was obviously an expert at control, so she wouldn’t make this kind of low-level mistake — so how did the other’s mecha get broken?

The doubts of the cheetah mecha operator merely flashed through his mind, unsaid, but Ling Lan’s reply still did not explain his decision to return. “Even if you choose to graduate, you can still get the repair shop to come and repair your mecha, just at a different location.”

“Oh, this is just one of the reasons. The main reason why I chose to return is because there are still many things wrong with my basic control. I still need a lot of practice to make sure there is no chance for error.” The cheetah mecha operator also had a hand in Ling Lan’s breakthrough — the other just didn’t know it — so, the grateful Ling Lan decided to reveal a bit of her secrets of evolution to him. As for whether the other believed her, that was not something she was responsible for. She was just going to act in a way that would give her peace of mind.

Of course, Ling Lan also thought of building a good connection with the other. If the other really took her words to heart, and trained up his basic mecha control, it was very likely that he would be able to achieve the rank of special-class mecha operator at the least. In Ling Lan’s opinion, the other’s innate talent with mecha was even better than her own.

“Didn’t your result already make it into the top 1000 of the elite leaderboard?” The cheetah mecha operator did not understand. “Doesn’t this result prove that your basic training is already very outstanding?”

“Outstanding doesn’t equal perfect. Besides, aren’t there about 1000 other people in front of me? I don’t want to lose to them,” said Ling Lan calmly. These were words spoken from her heart — although she wasn’t sure what realm her father had achieved with his ultimate immersion into perfecting his basic control, she couldn’t lose to any other random people out there, right?

The cheetah mecha operator seemed to have been shaken by Ling Lan’s words; only after a long while did he reply, “So that’s why. But we can still practise our basic control outside; we don’t necessarily have to stay here in the training hall.”

“There are too many distractions outside. People are very easily attracted by fresh new things. At that time, I’ll definitely get distracted and won’t be able to focus fully on training my basic control. So I might as well get rid of all these potential problems from the start. Here, there’s nothing, so all I can do is train my basic control. I’m not a very strong-willed person, so I can only use this method to fix that. But Big Brother, you are different from me. Perhaps you can stand the loneliness and resist the temptations ...” Ling Lan started teasing the other, making the other unsure whether to laugh or cry.

At this moment, 4 to 5 people accompanying a repair mecha walked into the training hall. Ling Lan knew that this was most likely the repairmen she had made an appointment with, so she bade farewell to the cheetah mecha operator, and walked over to greet the group.

The cheetah mecha operator sat within his cockpit, thinking. In the end, he found that what Ling Lan said was true — he also could not confirm that if given the choice to learn a new move, he would be able to resist the temptation, and choose to practise that instead of continuing to focus on his basic control.

“Ambitious. Actually planning to defeat all those other prodigies before him. How interesting ...” The cheetah mecha operator rubbed the control stick in his hands, a slight smile on his lips. Talking to himself, he said, “Since I plan to spark a revolution, then I will need to achieve the pinnacle of strength in this world. Then, starting now, I can’t lose to anyone. How can I be satisfied with just being within the top 1000 ...”

Chapter 125: The Emergence of Gods?

In one of the basic training rooms in the mecha training hall of planet Azure, three mecha were practising to dodge obstacles in the air and on the ground.

A humanoid mecha and an avian mecha very quickly finished their own basic training, leaving only a rhinoceros bestial mecha dodging awkwardly — he was only about halfway through his course.

The other two mecha who had already finished began to talk quietly between themselves. In an annoyed tone, the avian mecha said, “Lu Xiaolong is really too stupid. Even letting him choose to control the easiest bestial mecha, he still needs over 15 minutes to complete the basic training course. The assessment contents will be several times harder than this, and a passing grade needs to be within 5 minutes ... heaven knows when he’ll be able to get there and graduate.”

“Originally, I had thought he was simple-minded and easy to order around, but now it looks like I made a mistake. Simpletons just can’t handle mecha control,” said the humanoid mecha sulkily, as if deeply regretting his oversight.

“Do we have to stay here together with this idiot? The other students who graduated from the scout academy with us have all already entered the real mecha world. I even heard that quite a few of them have already upgraded their mecha.” The avian mecha was rather anxious, feeling that he was being held back by that idiot on their team.

“At the beginning when we wanted to form our 3-man team, our plan was for Lu Xiaolong to be the shield right at the front. You would be in charge of aerial attacks, and I would cover long-range attacks. If we give up on him, we’ll need to find a new team member in the mecha world ...” The humanoid mecha was considering what would be the most beneficial course of action for them.

“By the time we wait for that idiot to graduate, we would long have integrated with our new team member. Right now, I’m very worried about whether he can even coordinate with us. You should know that the middle to late stages require team work to complete missions. At that time, a team cannot have

any notable weaknesses ...” The avian mecha had already lost patience; he didn’t think much of Lu Xiaolong’s chances at all, thinking that he might hold them back then.

“Fine, we won’t wait for him anymore. Let’s go take the assessment first, but how should we tell him?” The humanoid mecha had always maintained his outward image of a nice guy.

“Watch me do it. When the idiot comes out from practice, I’ll tell him.” The avian mecha knew the troubles of the humanoid mecha, so he chose to volunteer.

After waiting a good long while, the bestial mecha finally finished his one round of basic training. Face beaded with sweat, he ran over to the two mecha waiting for him, and said in embarrassment, “Sorry, Ah Ka, Dali, I made you wait.”

The avian mecha sighed softly and said, “Xiaolong, looks like we need to go our separate ways.”

The bestial mecha was taken aback, unable to figure out what the avian mecha was saying at that moment.

“I discussed things with Ah Ka, and think that we should go and take the basic assessment first. We’ll then go out to the mecha world to gather some resources, and then complete a team building mission to fully establish a team.” The avian mecha laid out their plans.

The bestial mecha still didn’t understand. “Isn’t the minimum requirement for the team building mission three people?”

“We’ve checked out the discussion forums at the mecha world, there are professional gamers who specialize in taking on these kinds of missions. They help teams that don’t have enough members to complete the mission, and when a proper member comes along, they’ll quit the team to let the other in.” The avian mecha was cursing internally — why did other have to choose to be so smart now? Actually knowing about the member requirement for the team building mission.

“So that’s how it is. That’s great! I’ve been worried that I might be holding you both back. This past period of time, I’ve actually been thinking of telling you both to just go look for a new member and stop waiting for me.” The bestial mecha let out a sigh of relief. He was really very reluctant to part ways with these two good friends who were willing to accommodate his denseness.

“Hehe, so you had already known that you were holding us back, eh ...” The avian mecha chuckled awkwardly. Internally, he was filled with regret. He regretted that he hadn’t known the other had had these kinds of thoughts; otherwise, he wouldn’t have had to find this sort of excuse. He was also annoyed at the other — if he had those kinds of thoughts, then why hadn’t he said anything earlier?! If he really considered them as friends, then he definitely wouldn’t have wanted to hold them back. This Lu Xiaolong was clearly trying to cling to them and rely on them.

“Xiaolong, don’t take this to heart too much. We’re good friends, you know. You need to work hard here; don’t let us leave you too far behind,” said the humanoid mecha in a hurry, sensing the avian mecha’s building rage. If the fact that they had abandoned a teammate were to become public knowledge, their team would definitely be unable to get a new member. Whether it was in the real world or on the virtual network, abandoning and betraying one’s teammate was extremely looked down upon. He was unwilling to have such a sin staining his name.

Clearly ashamed, the bestial mecha said, “Yeah, I’ll work hard. I must pass this assessment as soon as possible to catch up to you two.”

The avian mecha operator’s lips curled, thinking nothing of the other’s promises. However, under the humanoid mecha’s warning glare, he could only throw out some comforting words, “You really don’t have to rush. Wait for us to get even more resources in the mecha world, then when you join us, you will be able to get a newer and better mecha immediately.”

The bestial mecha said gratefully, “Thank you, Ah Ka and Dali.”

The humanoid mecha and the avian mecha immediately made preparations to take the assessment. The bestial mecha wanted to watch their assessments, hoping to gain some experience, but the humanoid mecha advised him otherwise, saying, “You should observe the assessment of someone who’s also using a bestial mecha. That would be much more useful for you.”

The bestial mecha felt that what the humanoid mecha said was right. So, he looked up the assessment venues of bestial mecha, and found that there were a few bestial mecha taking the assessment right now. He selected the one with the most recent start time, and clicked the option to enter and observe.

Seeing the bestial mecha disappear from the training room, the humanoid mecha and the avian mecha each chose to begin their respective assessments, and were transported to their individual assessment mission spaces.

Lu Xiaolong had just entered the assessment space, when he saw a rabbit mecha dancing and leaping gracefully among the irregularly moving obstacles. Lu Xiaolong first reaction was to wonder if he was seeing things — he rubbed his eyes and found that the scene before him was real. Gradually, without knowing it, he was absorbed into the other’s movements. The mecha before his eyes was no longer a mecha, but a real live rabbit, prancing freely in a forest.

Suddenly, the scene stopped moving. Lu Xiaolong roused from his trance, and found that the rabbit mecha had already passed and ended its assessment. Abruptly thinking of something, he looked up at the top part of his screen. A line of red text was flashing brightly, *“Congratulations, XXX, for graduating the basic mecha controls course with a result of 1 minute 18 seconds. This record has been entered into the top 100 of the elite leaderboard.”*

“Top 100 of the elite leaderboard!” Lu Xiaolong felt as if his eyes were about to pop out of his head. Such great fortune had fallen upon him — he had never expected that a random choice had given him the chance to observe the assessment of someone at the level of a god. If he could only draw some inspiration from this experience, it would benefit him for life.

However, Lu Xiaolong very quickly deflated, because he found that in his mind, other than the other’s magnificent and graceful moves, there was nothing else. This had truly been an epic fail of an observation — he couldn’t believe he had missed such a great opportunity.

Head bowed in depression, Lu Xiaolong opened up the selection pane for bestial mecha assessments once more. Besides the rabbit mecha which had just finished, the other mecha’s assessments were still

in progress. Lu Xiaolong stared at the few names on his list, and just couldn't work up the enthusiasm to go watch any of them.

Right at that moment, a new mecha suddenly popped out among the selections. Reflexively, Lu Xiaolong clicked on it.

This time, it was a cheetah mecha. Lu Xiaolong had just raised his head, when he saw the cheetah mecha flying out to become a shooting ray of light, even leaving a phantom trail behind it.

"An expert!" Although Lu Xiaolong knew his own control was nothing to talk about, his skills of appreciation were pretty amazing. He immediately sensed that he had gotten lucky once again.

Sure enough, it wasn't long before the other arrived at the section with the moving obstacles. The feeling that he got from the rabbit mecha in the previous assessment engulfed him once more. Once again, he had the illusion that the cheetah mecha before his eyes was a live cheetah on the hunt. It nimbly dodged all obstacles in its way, heading unerringly towards its target.

Lu Xiaolong didn't even look at the time; once again, he was utterly absorbed in the cheetah mecha's agile movements, all the way till the end.

"Congratulations, XXX, for graduating the basic mecha controls course with a result of 1 minute 19 seconds. This record has been entered into the top 100 of the elite leaderboard." Unsurprisingly, when Lu Xiaolong turned back to his screen, a result infinitely close to the rabbit mecha's appeared before his eyes. It was also a top 100 score.

"Later, I must definitely participate in the mecha lucky draw!" Lu Xiaolong felt that his RP must definitely be off the charts for him to bump into two gods of mecha back to back. This luck could very well nab him a rumoured mecha equipment in the draw!

If only he could get to know those two gods ... but unfortunately, those gods must have already chosen to graduate and leave. Feeling regretful, Lu Xiaolong didn't have any mood to observe any further, so he chose to leave the assessment area to return once more to his training room. But when he got there, the two gods that he had assumed had graduated and left were actually standing right there before him ...

"Ah ... why are you two still here?!" Lu Xiaolong's voice blasted out into the room. It turned out that Lu Xiaolong had forgotten to close the public speaker he had turned on when he had spoken with his friends.

The rabbit mecha and the cheetah mecha had initially been practising on their own, but hearing his voice, they both looked back simultaneously.

Lu Xiaolong could almost see the confusion in the eyes of both mecha. This made him almost want to slap himself so that he could use pain to remind himself to be more aware of what he was doing.

"Didn't you both make it into the top 100 already? Why didn't you choose to graduate?" Lu Xiaolong still couldn't restrain his curiosity, spilling his questions out in a rush.

However, right after he said this, Lu Xiaolong immediately regretted it. Who knew if the two gods would find his questions annoying and choose to leave this room and go somewhere else? Then, wouldn't he have thoroughly lost the chance to get to know these two gods better?

Sure enough, the rabbit mecha only turned to glance at the cheetah mecha, and then with a bob of its head, it turned away to continue practising its basic movements. Sigh, as expected, gods weren't so easy to approach. Lu Xiaolong lowered his head and sighed dejectedly.

Chapter 126: A Strange Sense of Rapport!

Just as Lu Xiaolong was beating himself up mentally, a cool voice suddenly rang out by his ear, "The basics are very important. We haven't mastered them fully yet, which is why we cannot graduate and leave."

Lu Xiaolong jerked his head up and saw that it was the cheetah mecha who had replied. Gratefulness surged in his heart — so not all gods were cold and aloof; this cheetah mecha operator was obviously a friendly person.

In reality, Lu Xiaolong was completely wrong. The cheetah mecha hadn't planned to answer Lu Xiaolong's question to begin with, but because the rabbit mecha had signalled him to do so with that glance and bob of its head, the cheetah mecha had no choice but to reply.

After several consecutive months of hanging out together, even though they hardly spoke to one another, a strange sense of rapport had been born between them. With just a look or a small motion, they could just tell what the other meant. Thus, the rabbit mecha's previous glance and head bob had let the cheetah mecha operator understand completely what the other was asking.

"But ... you are both already so strong. How could it be that you've still not mastered basic control?" Lu Xiaolong just couldn't understand. If these results wasn't proof that they had mastered the basics, then did it mean that those of them who had graduated by just achieving the passing line were basically unfit to operate mecha?

"Are we strong? Aren't there about 100 other stronger people in front of us?" The cheetah mecha operator's voice had a trace of self-mocking, as if unsatisfied with their current results.

This statement by the cheetah mecha operator made the rabbit mecha turn to glance at him once more. Its gaze was clearly questioning — when had they become a group?

This made the cheetah mecha operator snicker a little internally. It really was rather unbelievable — the two of them had only had one actual conversation. Their subsequent meetings had been coincidental when they happened to meet up in the training room. They really weren't that close, but there was just this indescribable rapport between the two of them.

Of course, part of this serendipity was due to his own initiative. Ever since their only conversation, he had always used his spiritual strength to locate the other's position, and then pretended to have entered the same room to train by coincidence.

However, he truly was fated to meet up with the other. Many times, the rabbit mecha arrived after him, but still somehow found its way into the training room he was in. (At this moment, Little Four was laughing gleefully up at the heavens: What? You think the magistrates are the only ones allowed to burn down houses, while the common people are forbidden even to light lamps? ¹Who can beat me, Little Four, in this virtual realm?)

Perhaps the heavens were being kind to him, the gods and spirits giving a peerless prodigy like him their blessing in the form of this assistance from an unexpected quarter.

He hadn't dismissed Ling Lan's words, which was why he changed his original plan to graduate and leave, choosing to remain here in the mecha training hall to hone his basic mecha control instead. On top of that, he also put in more effort into training up the scout academy basics physical skills. He figured that since it was also a foundational skill set, basic physical skills should be similarly important.

Reality proved that his assumptions were not wrong. In the end, he could thoroughly sense the benefits honing his foundations had brought to him. In the real world, his initially weak and sickly body was slowly recovering, while in the virtual world, his mecha control had broken through several limits, causing his results to improve in leaps and bounds.

As intelligent as he was, he had long figured out that the rabbit mecha had intentionally revealed those things to him in their only conversation. Perhaps the both of them being mecha prodigies in their own right had sparked some mutual care, so the other had been willing to reveal some of his own secrets of mecha control to him. This secret was very likely an exclusive secret belonging to the other's sect. Otherwise, out of the many mecha operators out there, why were there so few who viewed basic control with such importance? Thus, he would carve this great kindness into his heart.

Of course, he had no way to repay this kindness just yet — in fact, he didn't even dare to reveal his true identity to the other right now. Before he was fully in control of his own destiny, he needed to keep a low profile, otherwise it would be spitting on all that his grandfather had done for him.

He knew very well that, due to that reading of his *Four Pillars of Destiny* ², his grandfather had hidden all information on his true potential, purposefully announcing his mediocrity instead. In the end, his grandfather had even used the excuse of his potential being too average to exile him to the distant planet Azure. All of this was to protect him, to keep him out of the crosshairs of the rich and powerful elite.

But he was still indignant about it. He wasn't willing to just choose to escape passively — he wanted to become strong, and then stand at the pinnacle of this world, able to laugh at all the buffeting storms and winds. Yes, he wanted to master his own destiny — he wanted to change that prophesized destined finale!

The cheetah mecha was involuntarily drawn into his own thoughts. Meanwhile, due to the other's words, Lu Xiaolong had lost all of his initial urgency to leave the training hall. He believed that if the god had said so and was doing so, then it must really mean that the basics were very important. Without even having to think about it, he hurriedly sent a message to his two good friends taking the assessment. He told them not to graduate just yet, but to come back and train up their basic control more.

After a few minutes, his good friends responded. His good intentions naturally weren't able to convince these two 'good friends' who had already decided to abandon him. Their messages even suggested in a roundabout way that he was only doing this because he couldn't bear to see them leave, and was resorting to this sort of desperate measures.

Lu Xiaolong may be a bit slow when it came to learning, but he wasn't an idiot; of course he understood the hidden meaning in their messages. Lu Xiaolong was extremely hurt. He really wished he could explain to his good friends, even hoping that they would be able to watch the assessments of the two gods ... but he found that the two of them had shut off their communicators simultaneously, automatically rejecting all of his contact requests.

He went through his contact list, trying to pass on a message through some of their mutual friends, but the response he received again and again was not to disturb them — now that they were in the real mecha world, they weren't as free as when they were in the mecha training hall; they were really very very busy ...

By this time, Lu Xiaolong had already sensed something was off, but he did not want to think too much about it, unwilling to doubt his good friends. Before him were two options — one was to stop worrying about the others and focus on his own basic training until he was satisfied; the other was to quickly pass the assessment, paying no mind to how badly he did, so that he could be reunited with his friends as soon as possible.

He glanced at the two gods resting at the side after their practice, and after some thought, decided that he should try asking the cheetah mecha about this. Perhaps the god would be able to give him a good idea.

The cheetah mecha operator saw the rhinoceros mecha approaching him once again, and couldn't help but frown. Honestly, he didn't really like interacting with strangers — this was primarily due to his cloistered life thus far in his manor.

Subconsciously, he looked towards the rabbit mecha. The rabbit mecha's eyes suddenly blinked at him, as if telling him to be nice.

The cheetah mecha operator smiled wryly. Alright, since the rabbit mecha operator wanted him to be nice, then he would be nice. He just wasn't able to refuse someone who had helped him.

"Little Four, isn't challenging the other's tolerance this way a bit overboard?" Ling Lan was now rather worried that if the operator of the rhinoceros mecha really infuriated the cheetah mecha, he might be murdered right off by the other.

"Don't worry. I've already made arrangements. The rhinoceros won't die," replied Little Four. *"If I hadn't worked things out yet, I wouldn't have let him get so close to you. After all, he's an evolved spectre!"* Otherwise, if by any chance he was out and about away from his boss, and his boss bumped into the other, wouldn't that be too dangerous?

“That said, from the looks of it, his temperament is not bad. Not at all as dangerous as we thought.” Little Four was very satisfied with the other’s behaviour thus far. This way, he can leave Boss to him without any worry.

Little Four suddenly felt that something wasn’t right — what did he just think about leaving Boss to him ... Oh fie fie fie, he must take that back! Anyone who dares to covet his boss must die! Death to all of them! Little Four began sharpening his knife, his little eyes glaring with suspicion and animosity at the cheetah mecha operator.

Of course, this behaviour of Little Four’s was immediately stopped by Ling Lan. Ling Lan was extremely speechless — what nonsense was this brat thinking of this time? Ling Lan suddenly found that having a shared mind may not always be a good thing.

Lu Xiaolong told everything to the cheetah mecha operator in order, and Ling Lan and the cheetah mecha operator immediately knew what was up. Both of them were good at reading people, so they knew without a doubt that the poor Lu Xiaolong had been heartlessly cast aside by the two people he considered his good friends.

Ling Lan cast a sympathetic glance at Lu Xiaolong, but believed that this was actually a good thing. At least now he wouldn’t be used up by his friends before being cast aside. In that sense, this was much better.

The cheetah mecha operator also thought the same — the two of them once again shared a look through their mecha, feeling as if they could clearly sense the other’s thoughts. Once again, they marvelled at the miraculous rapport between the both of them; there were just no words to describe it.

Of course, the two of them weren’t about to blurt out the answer directly. They were just passing acquaintances with Lu Xiaolong; they weren’t close enough to be that blunt.

The cheetah mecha operator thought for a moment before saying, “I recommend you focus on training up your basic control. Although the time taken will be longer, this way will obviously be more useful to your friends. I’m sure you don’t want to become a burden to them, right?” Perhaps time will let the other figure things out for himself.

Lu Xiaolong nodded energetically. What the god was saying was undoubtedly what worried him the most.

“If you don’t have enough talent, then you’ll just have to make up for it with hard work. So, don’t think about simply passing. Make sure you master your basic control, otherwise you’ll really become a burden to your good friends.” Of course, the good friends he was talking about referred to true friends, and not those who had abandoned Lu Xiaolong.

The cheetah mecha operator’s words enlightened Lu Xiaolong. That’s true, even if he forced a pass and went over now, he still wouldn’t be much help to his friends. He might as well stay here and put in more practice to improve his basic control, and only move on when he truly had the ability to help them.

Decided, Lu Xiaolong bid farewell to the two gods. Of course, before he left, he tried to ask for a way to contact the two of them, but was unfortunately turned down by the cheetah mecha operator. Lu

Xiaolong did not dare to cling — he knew that it was already a great blessing to have received some guidance from a god just once. If he were greedy and tried to ask for more, that would be too shameless. However, he still told them his name, his parting words and tone filled with the hope that they might meet up again someday. Hopefully at that time, the gods would still remember him.

Seeing the other leave reluctantly, Ling Lan couldn't hold back a sigh. "Who knew you were so good with words?"

"Is that so? Looks like I have talent in this area." Hearing the other's praise, the cheetah mecha operator's mood improved immensely, and he began joking back.

"Yes! You should really develop your skills in this area. You shouldn't waste your talent." Ling Lan could hear the other's humour, and so she replied in kind with a laugh. Ling Lan had no way to know that because of this one statement, the other would truly change how he interacted with others. When the two of them met up again in the future, she wouldn't imagine the person she met then would be the same person as this cheetah mecha operator she knew now.

Chapter 127: Preset Control Mode!

"Hmm, since you've said so, I'll have to work on it then." The cheetah mecha operator's reply was very serious, but Ling Lan did not notice, still thinking that the other was joking.

There was a slight pause, and then the cheetah mecha operator said in awe, "Your speed this time is faster than mine. Recently, I've gotten stuck in a bottleneck. I keep getting stalled at this time with no way to progress further. My hand speed has already hit a limit, maybe this is the most I can do." The cheetah mecha operator's voice was somewhat sad; perhaps the time to leave had come.

"Then just train your hand speed!" Ling Lan blurted. After several months of hanging out together with their mutual understanding, Ling Lan was also extremely reluctant to see the other leave. However, her words had barely faded when her guard went up. When did she lose all her defences against the other?

"Train my hand speed? How do I do that?" exclaimed the cheetah mecha operator in response, just as shocked by Ling Lan's words.

However, he very quickly realised what he had done — his question had most likely stepped into the territory of the other's inherited secrets. How could he covet the other's training secrets? "I'm sorry. I overstepped."

"It's fine ..." Ling Lan frowned silently. She actually felt somewhat bad, as if not telling him was a sin. What in the world was happening? If Ling Lan's mind weren't so steady, she might have already blurted out the training method without even knowing it.

"*Little Four, can you sense anything off?*" In her mind, Ling Lan quickly called Little Four to the rescue.

"*Nope ... everything's perfectly normal! Eh? What's this? What a strange mental fluctuation ...*" exclaimed Little Four in shock. "*Actually matching up with the frequency of Boss's real brainwaves ... hold on, let me check my databases to see what this means.*"

“Is it harmful?” Ling Lan asked anxiously. She could not afford to take any chances — the other was a very dangerous evolved spectre, you know.

Little Four had already pulled up the data by this point, and with some schadenfreude he said, *“Oh, it’s nothing much. It will just magnify a certain positive substance¹ infinitely. For example, if you think he’s not bad, then under the influence of this fluctuation, you will think he’s really nice. If you think well of him, then this feeling will directly extend to the point of considering him a close friend. If you have any bit of affection for him ... hehe, Boss, then you’re done for. You’ll immediately be at the step of loving him so much that you’d be willing to die for him.”*

Little Four’s words made Ling Lan roll her eyes at him. Was she someone that thirsty, that desperate? Was she really surging with so much lustful desire?

“Also, this ability can reduce the existence of a certain negative substance. For example, it can decrease an enemy’s animosity, correct other’s negative opinions of him etcetera ... in short, everyone who sees him will like him!”

“He’s doing it on purpose?” Ling Lan’s face was tiger-fierce. If the other had used this ability on purpose, she would definitely put him on her blacklist. Although she had a good impression of him, who knew if this was all just the product of this ability?

“No, this is an ability he was born with. He doesn’t know how to use it consciously.” Little Four rubbed his chin and cackled, *“Hehehe ... because he likes you so much, and hopes you will like him in return, that’s why this ability activated now. Let me put it this way. This ability can only appear when he himself truly wants to treat the other well. So, congratulations Boss, you are part of the group of people whom he really likes and wants to treat well.”*

At this, Ling Lan relaxed. Little Four could even see the minor curve of a small smile on her lips — it looks like his boss was greatly gladdened by this. Little Four felt nostalgic — ever since Boss had begun developing in the direction of becoming a slackface, he had rarely ever seen Boss smile anymore. He really missed it so much. Boss’s smile at the start had been so beautiful — though it might not have been able to topple countries, it was certainly more than lovely enough to topple cities.

As he continued to think about it, Little Four began to resent those instructors in the learning space. Why was it set up so that all the smiling teachers were those with black innards and perverse attitudes?! While the strict and proper ones just had to have ice-blocks for faces? Totally skewing the perspective of his boss ... it should be known that Boss truly loathed that forever outwardly smiling, but internally extremely perverse Instructor Number Five.

Little Four’s words naturally made Ling Lan very happy — it had already been several months since she had told the cheetah mecha operator about the importance of the basics. After spending so much time together, she would have cultivated some emotions even if the other was a rock, not to mention that they were both living breathing human beings. Unknowingly, the cheetah mecha operator wasn’t the only one who had come to consider Ling Lan as a friend; Ling Lan herself had come to see the other as a dependable friend.

Setting that aside, during this time, Ling Lan had also overcome many difficulties within the learning space’s mission.

Because Ling Lan had broken through her bottleneck, there was a resulting breakthrough in her hand speed once again. This made Ling Lan's passing time improve tremendously, clocking in at slightly less than 3 minutes 10 seconds. This was just less than 10 seconds away from the mission's passing condition of 3 minutes.

Subsequently, Ling Lan attempted the tunnel mission again and again, each time fixing the control errors she made in her previous run. As Ling Lan's mistakes dwindled, her time needed for the course also got closer and closer to 3 minutes. However, when she hit the 3 minute 3 second mark, Ling Lan once again hit a wall. After several consecutive practices, she found that she couldn't progress any bit further.

Ling Lan did not panic. Even though her time was so close to the designated time limit of the mission, she knew very well that rushing would not solve anything. Only keeping calm would help her find a way to overcome this in the end.

Ling Lan started to think back on the movements of the cheetah mecha — back then, the cheetah mecha's movements had been extremely fluid, and his speed had been very fast as well; however, his running and jumping rhythm had not been as intense as his speed would suggest. Instead of more frequent bounds, it was more like each bounding motion had used up the mecha's limits — in other words, he had pulled out every bit of the mecha's latent reserves.

Even more astounding was the fact that he had used the reaction force of every landing to maintain and add on to his velocity, pushing it to the extreme. This had allowed the cheetah mecha's speed to go beyond the limits the operator had given it, letting it access speed beyond the abilities of the operator.

Meanwhile, she herself had similarly managed to push her rabbit mecha's speed to the limit, but could she also use the reaction force from this type of repetitive landing to increase her speed?

Ling Lan knew the Rabbit Sky Leap was the best stepping reaction force technique — she just wasn't sure how long the rabbit mecha in the learning space could hold out under the technique.

Ling Lan experimented a few times and finally grasped the timing. She could only use it during the second half of the course, and it had to be after the two-thirds point — otherwise, if she used it too early, the mecha would disintegrate before she could pass the mission.

Still, the advantage of the learning space was once again displayed. That is, mecha were indestructible inside it — after disintegrating, when she once again went back to the start, the mecha's condition would be back at 100%.

It wasn't free however. Ling Lan was naturally pained when she found that her honour points had been ruthlessly deducted by a whole 10 points — this was equal to the amount which she had used to redeem the Rabbit Sky Leap skill!

Under this repetitive testing, Ling Lan had used up almost 80 honour points before she finally pinned down the timing needed to use the Rabbit Sky Leap in the mission. Even if the mecha did not disintegrate, smaller repairs still required honour points; it was just slightly cheaper.

And then, in the final moments left, by luck, Ling Lan finally managed to break through the 3-minute limit, clocking in at 2 minutes 59 seconds. The cost was rather steep — this time, due to overwhelming

speed, the rabbit mecha had almost disintegrated entirely. Luckily, she had managed to complete the mission before it could fully disintegrate.

However, the learning space did not give Ling Lan any time to take pride in her achievement. At this moment, Instructor Number Three pranced onto the scene. He seated Ling Lan in the auxiliary seat, and then operated the rabbit mecha himself to run through the mission course once.

Ling Lan could see very well that Instructor Number Three's hand speed wasn't that fast; she could see every movement of his hands clearly. However, it was precisely this kind of control method that made the rabbit mecha move through the tunnel as if it were dancing. At times, it even left trails of light behind it, flashing through the tunnel like a bolt of lightning.

As Instructor Number Three controlled the mecha, he explained the reasoning for this type of control method to Ling Lan. Ling Lan compared it against her own control method and recognised her deficiencies. Right then, she finally understood why the instructor hadn't taught her how to control the mecha at the beginning, instead leaving her to figure things out for herself. It was because some elements of mecha control needed to be personally experienced before one could understand why it had to be done a certain way — only by doing so could one understand what was wrong. Most importantly, everyone had their own control habits, and the best control method was the one which suited oneself.

The whole way through, Ling Lan gained new insight on controls, while Instructor Number Three breezed through the course, finishing it in 2 minutes and 11 seconds on the dot.

Regarding this, Ling Lan was very curious. How did Instructor Number Three manage to achieve such a terrifying completion speed when his hand speed had been slower than hers? Of course, when Ling Lan asked this question, Instructor Number Three just asked her in return: Was his hand speed really slower than hers?

Ling Lan looked in astonishment at the reading from the hand speed monitor that the mecha's A.I. had gathered, finding that Instructor Number Three's hand speed had actually been the same as hers. But why did it look like his hand speed was slower then? She had not even noticed the appearance of any afterimages — Ling Lan knew that when her hand speed reached a certain level, this phenomenon would appear.

"You focused all your speed on a particular time period. Not only does this tire out your hands and mind, but even the mecha itself would also be extremely worn out," said Instructor Number Three, patting the body of the rabbit mecha, gaze affectionate. It was as if the mecha before his eyes was not a mecha, but a living thing which needed to be protected and cared for, and not controlled barbarically.

Ling Lan was surprised by the instructor's actions, but at this moment, she still could not comprehend this mental state of a mecha operator. She could only think back on the speed the instructor had used when controlling the mecha, and found that he had maintained an even speed throughout the course — this was rather strange. Mind you, within the tunnel, every scene was different, and there were even some unpredictable scenarios — how in the world had Instructor Number Three managed that?

"Among the control commands of the mecha, there is something called preset control mode. You should use it appropriately." Instructor Number Three's words enlightened Ling Lan. She knew very well what

preset control mode was — the resting motion of her mecha was a type of preset control. It's just that that motion was a fixed preset control; she just had to program the motion into the mecha beforehand, and then use the specially trained buttons to execute it ...

Chapter 128: Rabbit-Cheetah Duo!

Ling Lan did not have to question Number Three any further on how to input these preset control commands. This was because Ling Lan already knew that, other than the fixed preset control mode, there was also an instantaneous preset control mode. The latter mode would accept extremely brief input, and would only be effective for one usage.

This was a type of control method which was extremely well-suited for emergency battle. However, many people had forgotten that mecha came with this function, because this instantaneous preset control mode required a lot from the operator. Many people did not possess the ability to handle this type of control method, so most mecha operators still found it easier to just depend on their own adaptive ability and control the mecha directly.

Instantaneous preset control mode needed the mecha operator using it to have a certain level of predictive ability — the so-called awakened 'sixth sense' of this world. Meanwhile, in the learning space, this ability was named 'Animal Instinct', and was a lower-average standard innate perception ability.

In fact, Ling Lan's innate talent of Profound Insight was the best among the other innate talents in the same category. As such, the instantaneous preset control mode was extremely appropriate for Ling Lan — this was why Instructor Number Three had made it a point to bring it up.

During this time, Little Four had gradually siphoned in data he had collected from the real world into the learning space, giving the instructors within it a general understanding of the technological environment Ling Lan was living in. Thus, they knew that this world was extremely behind with regards to awakened perception abilities at the moment, and even in terms of mecha control, this world was N-levels worse than that of their own world.

So, the instantaneous preset control mode, which was familiar to all the residents of the learning space, was rather neglected in this world. Here, with the exception of those who had awakened the sixth sense, other common mecha operators would be utterly clueless about this function on their mecha, and even many instructors of mecha control may not remember the existence of this function. This was another reason why Instructor Number Three had stepped up to demonstrate mecha control in person.

Ling Lan understood what Instructor Number Three intended with his guidance. In contrast with the instructor's control, she could clearly see that she was still lacking in many areas, whether it be awareness, control, or prediction. Ling Lan knew this was all because her basics were still below standard, so she didn't choose to learn a new control method, merely continuing to train her basic control. The only exception was that she began including the usage of instantaneous preset control mode in her training. Of course, this was extremely difficult. Many times, Ling Lan's attempts ended in failure, but Ling Lan still continued tirelessly in her attempts to learn it.

In this manner, several months passed. Ling Lan's life fell into a regulated routine — at dawn and at dusk, she set aside two blocks of time to train her basic physical skills; whether it was the scout

academy's or the one taught by the learning space, she wouldn't allow them to fall behind. At the same time, she also didn't forget to train her hand speed. By this time, she had already broken through the limit of three marbles ¹, and was now able to train with four marbles at a time.

However, just like when she had been training with three marbles, she could not sustain the activity for long. Still, Ling Lan wasn't anxious — she remained patient and practised every day, improving bit by bit. It was a victory as long as she could sustain activity for just a little bit longer than the day before.

Meanwhile, during the day, she would attend classes at the academy if there were classes, and if there weren't, she would enter the virtual world to practise her mecha control there. Of course, Ling Lan would habitually check to see if that cheetah mecha was at the mecha training hall. Anyone would have a lasting impression of the first stranger they met in the virtual world who also helped them out.

Of course, there was another reason Ling Lan was looking for the other — every time she saw the other's training movements, she would somehow gain some measure of insight from it. In return, the other seemed to be of a similar mindset; and so, the two of them often ended up training together without planning it in advance. Although they still did not speak much to one another, they knew each other very well, just like old bosom friends. By the end, they could even tell with just a look or a motion what the other wanted to do.

Meanwhile, Little Four was also very busy. One of his duties was to find time to fake Ling Lan's virtual appearance to help his boss complete some of those scout academy daily missions. Ling Lan couldn't very well stay offline for so long, right? Besides that, Little Four also had to help Boss to maintain her relationships with Qi Long and the others. There were times when he even had to pretend to be Ling Lan to join them in clearing some group missions. Luckily, Little Four had grown up with Ling Lan and had hung around her all this time, so he was extremely familiar with Ling Lan's mannerisms and tone of voice, managing to carry it off without raising any suspicion among her companions.

On top of that, Little Four still had to prevent the cheetah mecha operator from getting too close — Little Four firmly believed that someone being so nice for no reason, must definitely be hiding some evil intention. The cheetah mecha operator was treating his boss so well, so he must have some nefarious intentions. Little Four had to protect his boss!

Of course, all this was just Little Four's opinion; Ling Lan completely disagreed. From what she could sense, the cheetah mecha operator was extremely mature, and he was also an operator who was deeply obsessed with mecha control. Moreover, the other did not even know whether she was a boy or a girl, so what sort of nefarious intentions could he have?

Of course, Ling Lan's words drew Little Four's derision. He mocked her, saying that she was just fooling herself — just think about it, all of the newbies in the mecha training hall were basically all youths of about 16 years of age ... why would a mature adult be here? And youths were the hardest people to figure out — who knew what kind of insanity they would involve themselves in next?

Neither one could convince the other, but Ling Lan did not take any of this to heart. She continued to 'coincidentally' meet the cheetah mecha (Little Four was the main contributor to this; he felt that it was still safest to keep someone dangerous close where he could watch him) and train together in silence. At times, Ling Lan would feel as if she had gained some breakthrough and enter the mecha training hall to take the basic assessment again. At those times, there would always be a cheetah mecha watching from

the side. Similarly, every time the cheetah mecha retook the assessment, as long as Ling Lan was online then, she would also choose to watch from the side.

With all of this, Ling Lan felt that the cheetah mecha should be considered one of her friends now. Which was why she had been so happy when she had heard what Little Four had to say about the other's ability. In her mind, only when both parties felt the same could a relationship be called a true friendship.

Thus, Ling Lan decided to tell the other her secret of training hand speed. "It actually isn't much of a secret. Back in the real world, you just need to place some marbles in your palm and move them around quickly without letting them fall, that's all."

Ling Lan's words caused the cheetah mecha to be extremely taken aback — he had never expected Ling Lan to just reveal her inherited secret just like that. He could not help but be worried for her, saying, "Aren't you afraid of drawing the displeasure of your teacher's sect? Don't reveal this kind of secret so easily in future."

"Displeasure? It shouldn't." Ling Lan lifted her head as she thought about it. She did not think her dad would be so stingy and mind that much, so she said, "Don't worry about it. I'm only telling you about this, because you're my friend."

Ling Lan's words touched the cheetah mecha operator. He suddenly had the urge to tell the other about his true identity, but the words had barely touched his lips when his grandfather's words echoed by his ear: "Little Lan², you must remember, while you're studying at the scout academy of planet Azure, even if you meet a friend you find extremely dependable, you still cannot let them know your real identity or what you really look like. Only when you're fully 20 years old, after you've officially become an adult ..."

The cheetah mecha operator clenched his fists tightly and gritted his teeth — only by doing so could he push down the shame and guilt he felt to the bottom of his heart. After a long beat of silence, he finally managed to eke out two words, "Thank you!"

Ling Lan knew nothing about the struggle within the cheetah mecha operator's heart right now. She was in a great mood, because she believed that with the help of the training method to increase hand speed, the cheetah mecha would definitely continue to stay here and train his basic control. With a friend by her side, training wasn't as boring as it could be.

In the following period of time, inside the mecha training hall, a rabbit mecha and a cheetah mecha were often seen training their basic control together, taking assessments together, studying control techniques together ... they became known as the famous rabbit-cheetah duo of the mecha training hall.

The rabbit-cheetah duo's skilful and almost flawlessly perfect movements attracted the respect and admiration of all the mecha newbies who walked through the mecha training hall's doors. Gradually, they gained reputation among the newbies; every one of their assessments would draw countless spectators. These spectators were witness to the birth of Ling Lan's and the other's increasingly high ranking on the leaderboard. They saw off batch after batch of old newbies, and welcomed group after group of fresh newbies.

Due to these newbies both young and old, talk of the rabbit-cheetah duo spread even further and became even more legendary. In the end, rumours about them spread far and wide throughout the entire virtual world — saying that two experts of mecha control were unwilling to graduate from the planet Azure mecha training hall, because they wanted to surpass the old time and make a new record.

Of course, this rumour was greeted with scorn by most people. Almost everyone thought that the rabbit-cheetah duo were obviously chasing a pipe dream — they would never be able to break the old record. This was because the current best record of the basic control assessment was set ten years ago, by none other than the god-class operator Ling Xiao. Of course, back then, Ling Xiao still hadn't become a god-class operator yet.

Still, even so, his result wasn't something an average person could break. After repeated studies by specialists, they confirmed that Ling Xiao's result had already achieved the pinnacle of basic mecha control. Only if someone were to use mecha of special-class and above, combined with the control skills of an ace operator or better, then there might be the low possibility of surpassing it. (Because the mecha used for basic control assessments were the most primitive three types of mecha, the crudeness of the mecha had also limited Ling Xiao's performance.)

But is this possible? Everyone knew that all the mecha training hall provided were the most primitive mecha; no one could get their hands on any better mecha. So, there would never be a scenario where, using the same type of mecha, someone would be able to break Ling Xiao's record ...

Ling Lan did not know that they had swept the whole virtual world into animated discussion. After she and the cheetah mecha operator had thoroughly studied and experimented with their bestial mecha, they had then switched to avian mecha, and had finally chosen humanoid mecha.

When they had become fully proficient in the basic control of all three main types of mecha, Ling Lan used a humanoid mecha in the learning space to pass the tunnel mission. After she passed, the long-absent Instructor Number Three appeared once more, and this time, he immediately told Ling Lan to make preparations — tomorrow, she would officially begin following him to learn the beginner level techniques and movements.

When Ling Lan heard this, she almost raised her arms and cheered; she laughed loudly three times³ to celebrate her progress to the next stage. It should be noted that continuous training in just the basic controls was really boring and hence tiring. If she had been alone, she might have already gone ahead long ago and graduated to the real mecha world to seek out newer and more interesting pursuits. But when she saw the cheetah mecha operator practising the basic mecha controls with such a serious attitude, Ling Lan had no choice but to carry on and persist. Dammit, how could she, a mature older woman, lose to this little green spring onion of a youth before her ...

(A certain pretty boy youth who had just logged off was cheering himself on at the same time: to be the strongest mecha operator in this world, he could not lose to anyone else. Since the rabbit mecha could train so tirelessly in the basic controls without complaint, then he must be able to do it too! He must hold on and persist!)

It had to be said that, at times, some misunderstandings were extremely beautiful. The two of them felt that the other's attitude was very serious and very tenacious, and so they both did not want to lose to

the other ... in this way, the two of them persisted together through mastering these extremely dry and boring basic mecha control exercises!

Chapter 129: Missed It?

The next day, Ling Lan rushed to log on to the virtual world in her excitement. She swiftly chose her rabbit mecha and was loaded into the mecha training hall, prepared to seek out the cheetah mecha operator to tell him the good news. Hell yeah, she could finally say bye-bye to basic control training!

However, she was quickly pinned down by horror. If the mecha could faithfully mimic what Ling Lan felt at that moment, we would see the rabbit mecha shiver from head to tail, all its hairs standing on end.

Apparently, Ling Lan had unwittingly turned on the mecha's viewing screen, only to be faced with two large black holes staring at her unblinkingly. Those black holes were really just too dark, too dim, and too vacant, causing pins and needles to break out all over Ling Lan's scalp.

"Hells, why did you have to lie down right in front of me!" raged Ling Lan, immediately jumping up to kick and punch at the other.

And so a rabbit was seen waving a carrot around violently, whacking a cheetah lounging lazily on the ground before it. This love-filled scene caused all the surrounding newbies to turn and look, extremely curious — what was this legendary rabbit-cheetah duo doing now?

Helplessly, the cheetah used its claws to block the rabbit's tantrum, and said somewhat dully, "Stop being angry, I have something to tell you."

Eh? He had something to tell her too? Blankly, Ling Lan pulled back her carrot and placed it in the rabbit's mouth for safekeeping. Then, she plopped down beside the cheetah, and waited patiently for the other to speak.

The cheetah was silent for a moment, before saying gloomily, "I just wanted to tell you that, I have to take the assessment and graduate today." Saying this, the cheetah was telling Ling Lan that this time, he would choose to graduate and leave the mecha training hall, and head off into the real mecha world.

The cheetah mecha operator actually felt as if he were doing a great wrong to the rabbit mecha operator — if it had not been for the rabbit mecha operator, he would not have ever been able to obtain such great improvement in his mecha control. After this period of training, he now fully understood the reason why basic control was so important. He was very grateful to Ling Lan, and this gratefulness just added to his guilt for leaving first on his own.

Ah? So coincidental? She was just thinking of leaving, and now the other actually needed to leave as well. In that instant, Ling Lan had the sudden feeling that the synchronicity between the two of them was really rather abnormal.

"Uh ... I actually wanted to say that too — that I wanted to take the assessment and graduate." Due to surprise, Ling Lan paused for a few seconds before finally spilling the words that she had wanted to say to the cheetah mecha operator.

However, this odd pause of a few seconds made the cheetah mecha operator misunderstand the situation. He thought that Ling Lan was intentionally lying to him just to comfort him. Mind you, to break Ling Xiao's graduation assessment record, it was still somewhat difficult at their current skill level. The cheetah mecha operator had always thought that Ling Lan had been staying behind in the mecha training hall because she needed to complete the mission of breaking that record. At one point, he even suspected that this was a mission assigned by Ling Lan's mentor's sect ...

So, when Ling Lan suddenly changed this stance of hers, saying that she wanted to take a final assessment and graduate as well, in the cheetah mecha operator's eyes, this was obviously for his sake. This made him feel touched and ashamed at the same time.

Such a great teacher and good friend, but because of his promise with his grandfather, he was not able to reveal his true identity and appearance to the other ... The guilt in the cheetah mecha's heart just grew and grew, and his reluctance to leave just became stronger and stronger.

"Sorry!" A torrent of emotions, and in the end he could only condense them into this most common of words.

"I'm speaking truthfully ..." Ling Lan was somewhat speechless. Dearie, you're really overthinking this.

"Due to some issues in the real world, I need to leave the mecha training hall to go to the real mecha world. I'm really very sorry."

"Honestly, I'm not lying ..." said Ling Lan moodily. Why wouldn't he believe her?

"I know! Thank you!" The cheetah mecha operator abruptly cut off what Ling Lan was saying, thanked her sincerely, and then before Ling Lan could respond, he had already chosen to enter his graduation assessment ...

Seeing the cheetah mecha disappear in an instant, fleeing under duress from his own perceived guilt, Ling Lan almost flipped the table in anger. Hells, that bastard! Couldn't he have listened to her properly before leaving?

A long while later, Ling Lan, who had regained her composure, suddenly burst into laughter. For the first time, she found — so the cheetah mecha operator had had such an obstinate side to him. Also, that fellow had really just been too good at letting his imagination run away with him.

Still, Ling Lan could feel the stirrings of regret in her heart. After all, the cheetah mecha operator was the first person in this world who had given her the true feeling of a friend; but unfortunately, the two of them just hadn't met at the right time. Both of them were hiding their respective identities, and so, in the end, they could only become strangers with the greatest rapport.

"Little Four, go take a look at his result." This time, Ling Lan did not want to go and disturb the other's assessment, especially since she knew that the other already harboured some guilty feelings towards her. Ling Lan felt that it was a bit of a pity — honestly, she really wanted to part on good terms with the cheetah mecha.

Very quickly, Little Four had returned to tell her the cheetah mecha's final assessment result. His time was just 2 seconds away from Ling Xiao's record, and this result was enough to leave his mark on history as the overall fifth place.

In the end, Little Four told Ling Lan that the other's brainwaves had truly disappeared from this mission space. In other words, he had indeed left the mecha training hall's world to enter a different virtual space.

Little Four asked if Ling Lan wanted to continue tracking the other to see where he landed in the other virtual space, but after some thought, Ling Lan declined. It was just as she had thought earlier — the two of them had met at an inopportune time. How would they have been able to continue maintaining their friendship when they were unable to face each other with their real identities?

"What a shame. If he's around, Boss, your mecha control would definitely improve even faster," Little Four would forever consider things from a perspective which benefitted Ling Lan most.

"You should know that, if it's truly gold, it will definitely shine one day," said Ling Lan enigmatically.

What the heck did Boss mean? Little Four was immediately struck by a wave of dizziness. He hurriedly ran a search on Boss's statement, and instantly understood. So Boss had meant that the other would never be able to escape from the palm of Boss's hand! 133t Boss owns ¹ ! Flower shower ² !

Ling Lan ignored Little Four's mistaken comprehension, immediately choosing to take her final assessment. She entered the mission space belonging to her, and cheered herself on mentally: "I mustn't lose to that punk!"

Countless runs of the assessment had let Ling Lan and the other experience almost every assessment map; this time, the map selected was coincidentally a map Ling Lan had run before. Ling Lan closed her eyes softly, and she could clearly visualize every obstacle of the assessment mission in her mind ...

The mecha sounded the last few alerts to signify the start of the assessment. When only two seconds remained on the countdown, Ling Lan abruptly opened her eyes, and a radiant spark of light flashed across her eyes.

Finally, the start sound rang out, and Ling Lan's rabbit mecha could be seen rushing out like the wind. Among the irregularly moving obstacles, it was leaping and dancing freely, just like an ephemeral shadow, a play of light, sometimes visible sometimes not.

Meanwhile, inside the cockpit, Ling Lan's expression was exceptionally relaxed — her eyes were half-lidded, and the movements of her fingers did not give off any sense of urgency like they used to. Instead, her movements seemed almost casual, sometimes creating afterimages without conscious thought. This made her hands seem like they were performing a graceful dance, choreographing an absolutely beautiful piece of her own.

Subconsciously, Ling Lan also used instantaneous preset control mode — her understanding of this map made it the obvious thing to do, so she included the preset controls without any fuss whatsoever. With that, Ling Lan had entered a sort of heavenly realm of control, causing Little Four to be both shocked and overjoyed at Ling Lan's great luck.

This situation clearly proved that Boss Ling Lan's control skills were about to ascend by yet another level. Perhaps, this time, she would finally be able to achieve the lowest hand speed required by her dad ...

"Congratulations, you've successfully created a new record! The secondary world shall now commence a world-wide notification, please select whether to publicize your name or to remain anonymous?"

Seeing that Ling Lan was still immersed in the insights she had gained in that control session, Little Four quickly helped Ling Lan choose to stay anonymous. Even though no one would be able to trace it back to Boss's real identity if they chose to publicize the name of her avatar, there would still be some risk involved. Little Four constantly took Ling Lan's words to heart, so he now knew to make sure to protect himself well first in all endeavours.

Once Little Four had made the selection, within the virtual world, everyone who was online could hear a voice from the main system: *Congratulations, XXX, for successfully creating a new basic mecha control graduation result record! Each generation brings forth new talent, this stable world has finally welcomed a new era of change!*

When everyone heard this, a great furore broke out. Those who knew about the rabbit-cheetah duo were all guessing whether it was one of them who had broken the record. Some people even logged off right then in their excitement, rushing to use their communicators in the real world to contact their friends who were still inside the realm of the mecha training hall to find out more.

However, the response they received was that their friends did not know anything either. Of the few who had been coincidentally browsing the assessment name list at the time, none had seen any sign of the rabbit mecha or the cheetah mecha.

It turned out that, to ensure confidentiality, Little Four had removed Ling Lan from the list of observable assessments the moment she started her assessment. In other words, no one would have been able to see Ling Lan's assessment.

Thus, the only one who knew the truth was the cheetah mecha. Frankly, when the cheetah mecha operator had heard this system announcement, his first reaction was that it must be the rabbit mecha. Following that thought, he chuckled wryly and said to himself, "So you could have graduated and left a long time ago ... Hanging out at the training hall for so long, you were probably just waiting for me. But in the end, I still let you down." In low spirits, he immediately chose to leave the mecha world.

In a private manor, a major-domo was patiently waiting for his young master to log off. However, as time passed and the login pod remained closed, he suddenly thought of something and leapt forward to pry open the login pod forcefully from the outside. All he saw inside, though, was a pretty young man crying silently.

"Why are you crying, Young Master? Did something happen?" The major-domo was flustered. His young master was an extremely strong child — previously, when his body was in a bad condition, even if the pain was unbearable, he would still face others with a smile, never crying or showing his pain.

The pretty young man opened his eyes; his typically bright and steady gaze now seemed a bit lost and confused. Just as the major-domo was about to ask, the pretty youth suddenly spoke, "Major-domo, why did grandpa insist that I can only tell others my real identity and appearance after I turn twenty? Just why?"

If it weren't for this promise, he would not have chosen to leave the rabbit mecha operator. Then, he wouldn't have to feel this heartache — so losing a friend was such a painful thing.

The major-domo opened and closed his mouth several times, but in the end he could only recite that old fallback, “Young Master, you’ll find out later on!”

“Later on? Hehe, sometimes, what’s missed is missed, gone forever ... Major-domo, do you know? Just earlier, I’ve missed what should have been my most important best friend in this life!” said the pretty boy³ amidst bitter laughter, his tears spilling over silently once more. His expression was pained, and it was overshadowed with a deep sadness for not being able to control his own destiny. It was only at this time that he was truly acting like the 13 year old kid he was.

Chapter 130: It’s Been Tough On You!

Ling Lan had broken her dad Ling Xiao’s basic control graduation record. This greatly surprised Ling Lan — despite her joy, she knew very well that this was the result of a fortuitous accident. If it weren’t for the fact that she had been familiar with this assessment map, she would not have been confident enough to use the instantaneous preset control mode. And then, to stumble by chance into the extremely rare Celestial Realm ... her results were actually about the same as the cheetah mecha operator’s — at most, her best performance would have just beaten his by one second. All we can say is that as a time-traveller, she had been given a direct hack by the God of Time Travel.

Still, this hack had caused Ling Lan’s control ability and hand speed to ascend by yet another level. Ling Lan couldn’t help but sigh in awe at how unfairly intense the Celestial Realm hack was — actually pushing her abilities up by one level immediately.

In order to fully absorb and master her new hand speed as well as the control realm brought on by the Celestial Realm, Ling Lan immediately chose to isolate herself. She headed straight into the learning space to soak in her new insights.

The Celestial Realm did not bestow this increase in ability to a person directly; it only temporarily brought out a person’s best possible state at that moment in time. To really obtain these ability gains, it all depended on one’s effort in understanding and reflection, to seriously learn these new limits and make them one’s own. Otherwise, as more time passed, the insights given by the Celestial Realm would drift away with the wind, leaving no trace behind. At that time, one’s control ability and hand speed would revert to its original state.

Ling Lan spent over a month taking in these insights within the learning space, but outside, only a few hours had passed.

When Ling Lan finally stepped out from the virtual login pod, the aura of her body had changed slightly. The initially frigid and somewhat pressing air around her had diminished a little, no longer feeling as cold as before.

Over the past few years, as Ling Lan’s combat ability grew stronger and stronger, the endless killing missions in the learning space had caused the killing intent around her to become thicker and thicker. If Little Four hadn’t tried his best to help her suppress this blood-soaked killing intent, her classmates who were slightly weaker wouldn’t have been able to approach her at all. And even if Qi Long and the others got close, they would only be able to stand up straight with difficulty, they wouldn’t be able to move.

Of course, if that had happened, Ling Lan would certainly fall under the suspicion of the academy teachers and the monitoring military personnel. After all, the students in grades one to three shouldn't have had any real battle experience; only starting from the fourth grade would they be sent out on hunting assignments. How could a child who had never seen true bloodshed possess such a thick blood-red killing intent?

However, as Ling Lan's killing intent grew even thicker and thicker, Little Four also found it harder and harder to hold it back. In the end, a little bit of it escaped, but fortunately, at that time, Ling Lan was going through her icy slackface period. Therefore, even if she emanated a cold aura that chilled the hearts of others, it was still somewhat explainable. This had let Ling Lan safely avoid the suspicion of the military monitors once more.

Little Four was the first to sense the ebbing of Ling Lan's icy air. He instantly threw confetti into the air in celebration. He had been so worried that if the killing intent continued to increase, he would not have been able to hold it back any longer. It had been on the brink of happening — but now, they had dodged a bullet once again.

In a great mood, Ling Lan indulged herself with a great feast. Her title of 'glutton' had never changed, and she was even eating more than before. However, by now, Ling Lan's mum, Lan Luofeng, had already gotten used to the sight of her daughter guzzling down food like a black hole. This was normal. The day when Ling Lan ate less — now *that* would be a catastrophe, a sign that the Armageddon had arrived.

Several days passed, and Ling Lan, having received some great news, was rather distracted. She actually began to drift off inside the learning space, mind busily calculating the passing rate of time outside compared to time inside the learning space. This 'physically here but mentally elsewhere' behaviour thoroughly enraged Instructor Number Three, who had been in the middle of teaching Ling Lan some F-grade ¹ mecha moves. He immediately kicked Ling Lan out of the mecha training space, sending her to stare blankly alone in the great hall of the learning space.

Hells, if she didn't want to learn, then he didn't want to teach either! Instructor Number Three's tsundere ² side was triggered!

However, there was a legitimate reason for Ling Lan's inattentiveness today. It was because in the Central Scout Academy, a course that she had been anticipating for a long time was finally here — outdoor hunting.

This outdoor hunting wasn't just running around in a forest — using slingshots to shoot at wild chickens and wild ducks — that sort of boring thing. No. It was a full three months of wilderness survival training on some random primitive planet.

Of course, they were still only 10 year old kids, so the academy would not throw them straight off into some terrifying hell-hole to hunt. At most, they would only be sent to an area with some elementary-class wild beasts with low combat ability for training. At Ling Lan's current level of strength, handling those low-level beasts with trash strength was really not much different than killing wild chickens and ducks to her.

But ... that was not the main point. The main point was that they were going to another planet. This meant that Ling Lan would finally be able to take a ride on a spaceship like in the stories she had read ← This was the true reason for Ling Lan's excitement. Darling, did you get that?

In short, our country bumpkin Ling Lan could finally ride a real starship to take a trip into space. So, she just had no way of staying calm. It's just like when we were in primary school, and the teacher had announced a field trip for the first time, we would have been so worked up and excited that we would not be able to sleep the night before ...

The moment Ling Lan saw she had been kicked out of the mecha learning space, without even thinking about it, she immediately exited the learning space. She lifted the communicator by her pillow to look at the time. Er ... it's still too early, only about 4 a.m. in the morning ...

But Ling Lan just couldn't sleep anymore. She climbed out of bed, put on her communicator, and checked her luggage once more:

Weapons: Two magnetic alloy daggers! To the outside world, Ling Lan had always been a right-handed weapon wielder, but in truth, she was better at wielding weapons with her left hand than her right. This dual-wielding ability had been trained under Instructor Number Five — Number Five had said that, a trump that is hidden will always be one's strongest trump card.

Rumour had it that this time, the academy would actually give everyone a beam gun as an emergency backup; the students had all begun learning how to use beam guns since they were in third grade. Ling Lan's shooting skills were not bad, but they definitely weren't top-tier. On this front, both Han Jijun and Lin Zhong-qing were clearly better than her — their sheer natural talent in shooting was astounding.

Thus, this time, she also brought along an extremely covert weapon — a bracelet specially prepared for her by Chamberlain Ling Qin. Ling Lan carefully placed the bracelet on her right wrist. She looked at the metallic sheen of its deep black colour, common-looking yet serving a suitably decorative purpose, and nodded in satisfaction.

This was indeed that ultra-strong, unbreakable, ultra-thin rope that Chamberlain Ling Qin had used during in that ambush several years ago. It was an indispensable tool for killing people, crossing distances, and rock climbing. With this at hand, Ling Lan would be able to handle certain difficult situations with ease.

Of course, Ling Lan's bag was mostly filled with nutrient solutions of varying flavours (the results of her research), recovery fluids, and first-aid medications. At this time, she was somewhat annoyed — oh why couldn't the learning space come with some storage functions? If it did, then she would have been able to bring enough of all the things she might need, and wouldn't have to fret about what she should and shouldn't bring.

Because all these things would have to be with them at all times, if they brought more than what they would be able to bear, their hunting ability would decline sharply. At that point, they wouldn't be the ones hunting anymore, rather, they would be hunted by the wild beasts instead.

Ling Lan also did not forget to bring some changes of clothes. At this moment, she was atypically glad that she was a fake man. Because she had been injected with suppression shots, her body was in an undeveloped state. Thus, she didn't have to worry at all about menstruation or any of the other host of

embarrassing issues related to puberty. And from that, she also wouldn't have to worry about being endangered by these problems in the outdoors either, things like attracting attacks from the wild beasts due to the stench of blood ...

Just like that, after much study and much cutting down, she finally completed her packing. By this time, the sky was already fully bright. Ling Lan took a quick shower, and then walked out of her room in high spirits.

When Ling Lan arrived at the classroom of grade 4 Special Class-A, she found that she was one of the last few to arrive. It looked like she wasn't the only one who was excited.

"Boss Lan, over here, over here!" An energetic voice rang out from a corner of the classroom. Without even having to lift her head, Ling Lan could already tell who it was. The only people who would yell out to her so passionately — other than Qi Long, there was only Lin Zhong-qing. Qi Long's voice was louder, however, so his voice was still quite distinctive.

After following Qi Long around for two years, Lin Zhong-qing had lost almost all of his initial gloomy personality. Instead, he was as enthusiastic and full of smiles as he had been at the start of school, when he had served her for one month. However, Ling Lan knew very well that this was just a facade Lin Zhong-qing was holding up against the outside world; inside, it wasn't that simple.

Still, Ling Lan did not caution Qi Long and the others about this. It was up to them to decide their own relationships — whether good or bad, only they themselves would know.

Ling Lan lifted her head to look, and saw Lin Zhong-qing standing by his seat, waving at her.

Ling Lan walked over with an indifferent expression. As a girl, she really had no clue how to interact with these little boys, and so could only use this sort of macho-cool image to handle the situation. In any case, this group of kids seemed to be eating it up.

"Boss Lan, I've bought you breakfast," said Lin Zhong-qing, smiling, as he passed over a box on the table.

Ling Lan swept a look over the scene, and saw that Han Jijyun and Luo Lang were both sitting at their own places with identical boxes, eating delicately. Seated on top of his desk, Qi Long was also holding a box, and was wolfing down its contents unreservedly.

Looks like Lin Zhong-qing hadn't just prepared breakfast for her. Ling Lan accepted the box and opened it. It turned out to be the golden soup dumplings³ which were extremely hard to get within the academy. It looked like Lin Zhong-qing had gone to the canteen super early to line up just to get these — he had truly put in a lot of effort.

Ling Lan used her chopsticks to prod at the soup dumplings in her lunch box, and said coolly, "It's been tough on you!⁴"

Though Ling Lan had said this almost casually, Lin Zhong-qing's face was painted with a trace of pleasant surprise. Even the ravenously eating Qi Long behind him raised his head in surprise, surreptitiously using an elbow to nudge Lin Zhong-qing lightly, congratulating him for finally getting acknowledgement from Boss Lan.

He used a full two years, only to get this simple sentence ... Lin Zhong-qing's mind was a mixed bag of emotions — for a moment, he actually wasn't sure whether he was happy or resentful ...

Right then, a classmate suddenly rushed into the classroom, obviously emotional, shouting, "Big news! Big news!"

Wu Jiong and Ye Xu had been chatting at one side. When they heard this cry, they jerked, and quickly turned to look at the student who had shouted.

"It's likely that our outdoor hunting course this time may be cancelled ..." The moment the student entered, he shared the bad news with everyone. This caused all the students to become anxious — they had already waited for this day for so long, could everything be cancelled at the last moment?

"What happened exactly? And where did you hear this news?" Seeing that Qi Long had no intentions of asking, Wu Jiong had no choice but to speak up himself and ask.