

Crossing 291

Chapter 291: Not Wronged!

Staring out into the pitch blackness before her, Ling Lan could no longer keep calm. Through gritted teeth, she said, "Dear father, are you planning to demolish our living quarters? And then let us sleep on the streets?"

Ling Xiao's anger which had been about to explode deflated rapidly under this question of Ling Lan's, scattering to the winds. The entire hall was eerily silent for a few seconds, and then Ling Xiao could be heard to say carefully, "This ... I really could not control it. I'm sorry, son, I'll take care next time."

Next time? There would still be a next time? Ling Lan felt her head start to ache. She had known that her dad coming here would definitely not be calm and peaceful, but it still should not be to the extent of breaking her house down, right?

In a very bad mood, Ling Lan's entire body was giving out endless cold air, dropping the temperature of the room instantly by several degrees, making the others in the room shiver involuntarily in the dark.

Ling Xiao naturally knew that this was a sign that his daughter was truly enraged now, and so he could only ask hesitantly, "Then, this ... what should we do?"

"What to do? Of course we'll need to fix it? And also, father, do you expect me to fix it personally?" Ling Lan stretched out a porcelain hand with a cold expression, waving it in front of her dad's face.

Ling Xiao naturally could not bear for his beloved daughter to do this kind of rough work, and so he said quickly, "I'll fix it, I'll fix it ..." Taking care of one's daughter was the solemn duty of a dad, not to mention that this accident was his fault anyway — he could not shirk the responsibility.

"Sir, let us handle it," His bodyguards quickly stepped up to volunteer. If they let General Ling Xiao do such menial things himself, they could forget going back and just kill themselves here and now for the crime of doing so.

"Uh ... then I'll leave this to you both. Thank you for the trouble." Ling Xiao knew that if he insisted on doing it himself, these two bodyguards would definitely disembowel themselves and use their deaths to pay for the 'crime'. In order to save two lives, he could only let them help him.

"We'll help too." Although the two men who had volunteered were bodyguards, the insignia on their shoulders clearly marked them as majors. How could Qi Long and the others just sit around and watch the two majors repair their things? They quickly leapt up to lend a hand.

In the face of the students' eagerness, the two bodyguards naturally would not refuse. Just like that, the few of them begun to clean up the mess Ling Xiao had made. In fact, the villa had its own self-automated sweeper and cleaning device, but unfortunately, Ling Xiao's burst of power had also destroyed those things as well. Thus, the group could only do things manually unless they sought out someone from the administration to come solve this, but that would be even more troublesome.

Once everyone had begun busying themselves with their respective tasks, all of them leaving the hall, Ling Xiao turned to look at Ling Lan and said, "Do you want me to do anything? Son?" Even though Ling

Xiao really wanted to call his child 'darling daughter', as level-headed and rational as he was, he would never commit such a base mistake and bring possible trouble to his daughter.

"What can you do?" asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow.

"They'll probably apply for enlistment, right? Even if I cannot influence the other divisions, for the 23rd Division at least, I have the ability to refuse them," said Ling Xiao with a smile on the corners of his lips, still appearing as kindly and gentlemanly as ever. It was as if what he was saying had not one whit of personal motive leading to his abuse of power.

Ling Lan decisively shook her head and said, "No need!"

"Why?" Ling Xiao was shocked by her response. He was sure his daughter must be angry at those who bullied her, and he truly wanted to help his daughter vent some of her anger.

"This is between us students. There is no need to escalate things!" said Ling Lan evenly, "Besides, even if they managed to qualify for the 23rd Division and become my rivals in the future, I'm not afraid of them now, and I won't be afraid of them in future either." Ling Lan stated all this with conviction, the confidence on her brow moving Ling Xiao greatly. Boo hoo hoo, my daughter is just too amazing, she is just too aspirational ...

Inside Ling Xiao's mental landscape, his Twenty-four Filial Exemplars dad mode was officially activated. He was all kinds of emotional inside, weeping freely and copiously. However, on the surface, he was as composed as usual. After a brief silence, he nodded and said, "That's how my son should be like. If they really apply for enlistment to the 23rd Division and pass, I'll take them all in, and as for the grudge between you and them ..." Ling Xiao's eyes gleamed brightly, "I'll let you handle it personally."

As if not sensing the sudden spike in the pressure coming from Ling Xiao's body, Ling Lan continued to stand tall and replied steadily, "What I have said, I will do."

Ling Lan's behaviour made Ling Xiao both proud and sad at the same time. He was proud that his daughter was so independent and strong, but also sad over all the hardship his daughter had had to suffer to support the entire Ling family for these past 16 years. If he had not disappeared for those whole 16 years, how could Ling Lan have turned out like this? Believing that she had to handle everything herself?

At this thought, Ling Xiao was filled with regret. In a low voice, he said, "I'm sorry, these past years have been hard on you."

What these words were referring to, both Ling Xiao and Ling Lan understood very well without needing any further explanation. Ling Lan's heart throbbed, a complicated emotion stealing over her heart. For a moment, she did not know what to say, and the silence stretched out between father and daughter.

Finally, Ling Lan raised her jaw and replied proudly, "I do not feel wronged. I feel that, this shall be one of the most colourful parts of my life. I am glad that I could experience all of that."

Yes, if she had not impersonated a man, would she have made friends with this bunch of steadfast companions and become their boss, working hard and growing up together? At most, she would only have been able to become a girl much like Luo Chao or Han Xuya¹, chatting about the things girls liked

to chat about, fantasizing what their future husbands would look like ² ... but was that sort of life really what she wanted?

Ling Lan mentally shook her head. She had already gotten used to her current thrilling rollercoaster life with its dramatic ups and downs — a tranquil life would probably feel strange to her now. At the very least, she just could not imagine becoming that kind of sweet and delicate girl like Luo Chao — becoming a tomboy like Han Xuya was perhaps a more likely possibility. At this thought, she began to miss those two girls, wondering how they were doing at the Federal Co-ed Military Starship Navigation Academy ...

“Alright, Ling Lan, You must remember what you’ve said today. I, Ling Xiao, am proud of you.” A trace of emotion brushed across Ling Xiao’s eyes. With a daughter like this, how fortunate was he? If he could, he would laugh wildly up into the skies, to better express the full swell of his happiness.

“Father, I will not disappoint you.” Ling Lan reeled back her nostalgic thoughts, speaking to Ling Xiao with a serious expression.

Ling Xiao nodded in satisfaction, but his heart was weeping, *‘Daughter, if you switch that ‘father’ into ‘daddy’, I’ll be even happier ...’*

Right at that moment, the villa’s hall was abruptly lit up. It turned out that Qi Long and the others had finished repairing a small part of the light sources. The greatest contributor was Lin Zhong-qing — he lived up to his role as the team’s logistician, repairing all those devices at soonest notice. After that, under the intense repair work of these reactivated devices over the course of 10 minutes in the dark, Ling Lan’s entire villa was once again restored to the light. Of course, not everything was as good as it had been previously, but at the very least, the lights were back on, and that was a good thing.

Seeing this, Ling Lan felt that she could not keep her dad, this king of destruction, here any longer in order to save her villa from further catastrophe, so she said, “Father, the assessments begin tomorrow. You had better go back earlier and rest.”

Ling Xiao was touched. His daughter was really too considerate, fearing that he would become tired ... in any case, he would not admit that his daughter was sick of him and wanted him out of her house.

Though he was touched, Ling Xiao could not bear leaving his daughter so quickly. He was just about to say that he was not at all tired when Ling Lan suddenly lifted a brow and sent an icy look straight at her father, saying, “Don’t you think so too, my father?” In particular, the two words ‘my father’ was greatly emphasised, pretty much squeezed out from between clenched teeth.

Those phoenix eyes filled with an air of desolation, the subtle warning in her words, that demeanour and tone, was exactly alike when Lan Luofeng was warning him.

And so, Ling Xiao succumbed to tragedy, because he just godd*mn had no resistance at all to this kind of tone and demeanour ...

In the end, Ling Xiao could only leave Ling Lan’s villa with a bellyful of resentment and reluctance. Of course, when he left, he did not forget to remind his daughter to report to the assessment point bright and early tomorrow. For a week from now, all of Ling Lan’s time had been claimed by this shameless dad, Ling Xiao, and he seemed rather comfortable ordering his daughter around.

After they had sent Ling Xiao off, Ling Lan let out a silent breath. Finally, this great bundle of trouble, her dad was gone ...

When she turned around to see those countless pairs of starry eyes, Ling Lan's headache became worse. It turned out that her troubles were just beginning. She still had to settle these five obviously overexcited and curious little followers before her eyes.

At this thought, Ling Lan could not help but sigh long and loud. Other dads helped their daughters settle problems, so why was it that when it came to her, she as a daughter had to clean up the messes her dad made? As expected, she was not a winner in life in this world. She was not a global sweetheart, a female lead showered with the love of the masses. This was why her life was so tragic, filled with trials and tribulations.

After Ling Xiao and the two bodyguards left Ling Lan's villa, they very quickly arrived at the nearest hover car stop, and waited for the next hover car to come.

At this time, one of the bodyguards suddenly spoke up, "Sir, Young Sir Lan is very strong." It was the one who had been closely watching Ling Lan and the others from his position in the corner of the hall all the while.

"Don't call him Young Sir Lan. Just Ling Lan will do," replied Ling Xiao with a subtle smile, "In future, he will be a soldier just like you all. At that time, the both of you will be his senior officers."

"Yes, Sir!" said the two bodyguards in unison. Respect shone from their eyes — General Ling Xiao was just this sort of person, treating every single soldier objectively without caring about their personal statuses.

Soon, the hover car arrived, and the bodyguards opened the door to the backseat, and Ling Xiao boarded the car and sat down. Then, the bodyguards split up. One sat at the back with Ling Xiao while the other sat in the front and swiftly entered the address of their lodgings in the military academy, and the hover car sped off ...

Seated inside the hover car, Ling Xiao still maintained that typical trademark smiling face of his, but the bodyguards by his side could clearly sense his unusually excellent mood.

Ling Xiao was indeed very happy, because today's meeting had proven that Ling Lan's disguise was impeccable. After living with Qi Long and the other boys for so long, they had still not discovered that she was a girl. Just this ability alone would make it much harder for any outsiders to discover Ling Lan's secret; this caused a worry which had been weighing on him all this while to disappear.

She only needed to endure for four years and it would all be over! When she reached her fifth year, he would definitely enlist his daughter into his army division and protect her from close quarters, and then provide her with a life that would truly belong to her ... Ling Xiao mentally clenched a fist and made a promise to himself.

Chapter 292: Ambition!

Outside the regiment commander's office of Leiting headquarters, Lin Zhidong suppressed his urge to flee and forced himself to press the doorbell.

"Who is it?" A cold voice came from within — it was the voice of the current regiment commander of the Leiting Mecha Clan, Qiao Ting.

"Regiment Commander, it is I, Lin Zhidong." Lin Zhidong sucked in a breath and stated in a still relatively steady voice.

"Come in!" At the same time that Qiao Lin's voice rang out, the room's door slid to the left. The first thing that came into Lin Zhidong's sight was a well-built youth with a stern and frosty expression seated on the sofa on the right — he was Qiao Ting.

Meanwhile, on a sofa to his side, another youth was seated. His expression was sinister and he was clearly a little younger than Qiao Ting, and he was currently looking at Lin Zhidong with a wide smile. In fact, this person was actually seated in a position which was even more easily noticeable by anyone entering the room. However, Qiao Ting's aura was too powerful, unable to be ignored, which was why the first person Lin Zhidong saw was Qiao Ting.

Seeing the other youth, Lin Zhidong's expression changed slightly, but he quickly recovered and forced himself to stay calm and walked through the doorway. As intelligent as he was, by now he had already realized that this youth must have come one step earlier to tattle to Regiment Commander Qiao. It looked like he would not be able to overcome this matter easily.

"Sit!" Qiao Ting casually pointed at the sofa across from him, signalling Lin Zhidong to sit down and speak.

Lin Zhidong sat down carefully, as if in the presence of a great enemy — this behaviour of his made a mocking smirk appear on the corner of the other youth's lips.

"I heard Lin say that, a month ago, you initiated a wagered arena battle and lost?" Right then, two deep furrows had appeared on the stern-faced youth's brow. It was clear to see how bad his mood was.

Lin Zhidong bowed his head, deeply ashamed. "I am sorry, Regiment Commander. I was careless."

The youth who had tattled was Qiao Ting's younger brother, Qiao Lin — Lin Zhidong knew that no matter how he tried to explain, it would not stand up against one word from the regiment commander's own blood brother. The regiment commander most certainly had already formed his opinions beforehand, so he might as well admit the fault honestly — the regiment commander might be merciful this way.

Qiao Ting said nothing. His right arm resting on the arm of the sofa, his index finger and middle finger were rubbing vigorously against his thumb — this was a habitual motion of his while in thought.

Qiao Ting's silence made Lin Zhidong even more afraid to say anything; he could only watch silently as he waited for Qiao Ting's decision.

"Freshmen?" Qiao Ting seemed to be inquiring, but also seemed to be talking to himself.

"Yeah, it's that bunch of arrogant freshmen! Even creating a new cadet regiment. Who knows whether in their second year, after entering mecha piloting, this new cadet regiment will still be standing," Qiao

Lin butted in with a face full of anger. He cast a cutting glare at Lin Zhidong across from them and said resentfully, "And our Vice Regiment Commander Lin, before fully understanding the other's true strength, impulsively suggested a wagered arena fight, losing all our Leiting's face, even helping to boost the New Cadet Regiment's reputation ..."

Lin Zhidong could only bend his head even lower, hunching into himself. Even if he knew Qiao Lin was saying all this because Qiao Lin was dissatisfied with his position, and so was intentionally mocking him, there was nothing untrue in what the other said. On this matter, his responsibility was indeed the greatest. His tactical error had caused Leiting's reputation to be greatly impacted — if not for the fact that the Tianji incident had coincidentally occurred right after, drawing away the attention of the entire school, Leiting's situation would have been much worse than how it was now.

"Zhidong, so hastily rushing into a wagered arena fight and submitting a wager to fully absorb the other side into our Leiting, was there some special reason behind this?" Qiao Ting stopped the motions of his fingers, peering intently at Lin Zhidong as he asked.

Lin Zhidong looked up in astonishment — he had not expected Regiment Commander Qiao Ting to be willing to hear his explanations. This made Lin Zhidong feel extremely grateful, his loyalty to Qiao Ting increasing by a level higher. He nodded solemnly and said, "Yes, there is one very important reason. I believe that taking in the New Cadet Regiment would push the power of our faction one step further."

"Even if we don't take in those punks, our Leiting will still be the number one faction in the academy." Qiao Lin did not believe Lin Zhidong's words at all, feeling that he was just making excuses.

Lin Zhidong seemed about to say something but stopped. Seeing this, Qiao Ting said, "Just speak if you have something to say. Lin is my younger brother, he will not spread what we say here lightly." Hearing this, Qiao Lin sent a glare in Lin Zhidong's direction, believing that Lin Zhidong was certainly doing this on purpose, trying to get his elder brother to think that he was unreliable.

Lin Zhidong knew that this time, Qiao Lin had truly been offended. Still, Lin Zhidong could do nothing about it — who asked Qiao Lin to find him disagreeable? Till today, he did not know why this was so.

Although Lin Zhidong felt that Qiao Lin was untrustworthy with secrets, since the regiment commander had spoken, Lin Zhidong could not continue to hedge. He passed a document he always kept on him over to Qiao Ting, and indicated for him to take a look.

Qiao Ting flipped it open casually, and then he abruptly sat up straight, the expression on his face becoming grim and focused. Meanwhile, from the moment his brother had flipped open the first page, Qiao Lin had scampered over to peek at the document as well, and when he saw the grading of 'excellent' and 'good' attached to row after row of names, he too was dumbfounded.

Qiao Ting snapped the file closed and asked sternly, "Is this document true?"

Lin Zhidong nodded heavily, "I retrieved it from the S-tier partition of the academy mainframe. There can be no error."

Qiao Ting stood up, pacing back and forth a few times before turning his head to ask, "Who else knows of this information?"

Lin Zhidong replied, "All the other vice regiment commanders of Leiting know, but I've already told them clearly from the start that this information stays with us few. All of the documents were destroyed after they looked at it ..."

"Good, well done!" Qiao Ting shouted abruptly, a slight smile finally appearing on his austere face. He paced back and forth animatedly a few times in the room, involuntarily clenching his fists in his excitement and said, "Their joining would not only advance our Leiting by a step, it might even allow us to become the true rulers of the entire military academy ..."

Qiao Ting's words made Lin Zhidong excited as well. Worked up, he smiled and said, "Yes, that's what I thought back then, which was why I wanted to take in all these freshmen in one go before the other factions discovered this info ..." At this point, Lin Zhidong's smile vanished, his excitement and adrenaline fading, leaving behind only endless regret. "Unfortunately, in the end, I messed up. I did not fully understand the depth of the New Cadet Regiment's strength, thus helping them increase their reputation instead."

Lin Zhidong's words made Qiao Ting's high spirits settle down as well. After some careful consideration, his mood turned up once more and he said, "No, the waged fight this time did not turn out too terrible. Although Leiting's reputation has been damaged somewhat, the other side's wager has also given us another chance to integrate them into our ranks in the future."

Lin Zhidong raised his head in confused shock, unsure why Regiment Commander Qiao Ting would say this. Was he just trying to console him?

"No, this is not consolation," said Qiao Ting, sensing Lin Zhidong's confusion, "Didn't we promise to help the New Cadet Regiment fend off all harassment from the other factions for two years? This means that, in these two years' time, the New Cadet Regiment will still be right under our watch and will not be consolidated into any of the other factions."

"This wager gives us an excuse to pull the New Cadet Regiment under our wings, preventing any of the other factions from coveting them. Once the two years are up, that will be the chance for us, Leiting, to try our hand again!" Qiao Ting's eyes were filled with fire — just the information in this document alone was worth Leiting spending two years' time to wait and plan.

Just thinking about how he would have a chance to accomplish such a great undertaking, Qiao Ting's face was flushed with vigour and excitement. Finally, he forcefully suppressed the emotional upheaval in his heart and turned to look at Qiao Lin, whose head was spinning in confusion from the other two's conversation, and warned the other, "Lin, everything that you've heard or seen today, not one word can be leaked to the outside. Otherwise, don't blame me for skinning your hide!"

The unforgiving cold glint in Qiao Ting's eyes scared Qiao Lin so much that he shuddered, emphatically shaking his head and saying, "Never, never, I would never!"

Qiao Lin did not dare to disobey — he knew well that his elder brother was an absolutely ruthless person when the occasion called for it, so he would truly do what he dared to threaten. He really did not want to be skinned alive by his brother.

"But two years later, when you, Regiment Commander, enter an army division for your practical training, if the New Cadet Regiment produces another one or two genius mecha operators, I fear that

our odds of winning a wagered fight will not be very high still.” Having lost once, Lin Zhidong had become extremely cautious. Without Qiao Ting holding the fort, he still felt that it was rather risky.

At these words, Qiao Lin said angrily, “Don’t worry! Two years from now, I’ll definitely be able to take on the heavy responsibilities of my elder brother and make Leiting even bigger and better!” Qiao Lin had always considered himself to be the next regiment commander of Leiting, so Lin Zhidong’s words had once again pricked and irritated him. Yes, he disliked Lin Zhidong so much because the other did not take him seriously, thinking he was an incapable fool — but his mecha skills were clearly not bad, able to place him within the top 5 in his class ... Qiao Lin had never considered the fact that his mecha class was not a special class, merely a regular class.

“Lin, shut up!” Qiao Ting, who had always been gentle and courteous with his own younger brother, instantly berated the other angrily when he heard such foolish and self-deluded ¹ words coming from Qiao Lin.

Qiao Lin heard Qiao Ting’s angry roar and glared back with an expression of stubborn indignation. However, his eyes were already turning red, a wounded sort of feeling expressed by his gaze.

Seeing Qiao Lin like this caused Qiao Ting to sigh helplessly, “Mecha piloting is not as simple as you imagine it to be. When you advance to intermediate mecha warrior level, I’ll bring you with me to a clan battle and let you properly experience the depths of mecha piloting.”

He was the reason why Qiao Lin, who did not have much talent in the way of mecha piloting, had refused to listen to the advice of their family and had stubbornly insisted to apply for the Mecha Piloting specialization in the First Academy. Although his ability qualified him for the regular mecha class, in the long run, it was impossible for him to develop to Qiao Ting’s level. Still, Qiao Ting knew that Qiao Lin had not given up. He worked very hard — when no one was looking, he had always been training hard in his mecha control. Qiao Lin was willing to use hard work to compensate for his lack of talent — this made Qiao Ting unable to say anything discouraging, only able to sigh in the end.

Lin Zhidong wisely sidestepped this matter between the two Qiao brothers, pretending that he knew nothing. After comforting Qiao Lin, Qiao Ting turned his head to say to Lin Zhidong, “Don’t worry. We have to spend six years in the military academy. Even if we go off for practical training in an army division, we will still be military academy students and can still fight on behalf of Leiting.”

Lin Zhidong lifted his head in pleasant surprise, “Regiment Commander, you’re saying that ...”

“Yes, two years later, I will return once more with my mecha battle squad and host this wagered fight!” After subduing the New Cadet Regiment, in his final year, he would utterly conquer the entire military academy and accomplish his grand goal of complete domination! Sheer naked ambition flashed through Qiao Ting’s eyes.

Meanwhile, in the upcoming two years, the New Cadet Regiment would constantly be on Qiao Ting’s mind, always within the sphere of his attention!

Chapter 293: A Trap!

In Li Lanfeng's villa, three uninvited guests were there once again, and their expressions were extremely solemn. These three were Zhao Jun, Han Yu, and Wei Ji.

Seated in the living room flipping through video data, Li Lanfeng saw them drop in suddenly for a visit and stared at them in confusion. He asked, "Why are your expressions so horrible? What has happened?"

Zhao Jun's face was dark as he said, "According to the latest news, the Thunder King has come out of Closed Door Meditation."

Li Lanfeng's finger jerked to a stop in the middle of swiping across the screen, then resumed its motion without any fuss. He asked, "He advanced?"

Han Yu sneered and said, "Yes, he has become the first genius mecha operator in our school who managed to advance to ace operator in his 4th year. Everyone is saying that he will be the next General Ling Xiao!"

"This is a good thing. When the time comes for us to apply for enlistment with the divisions, it won't be like this year where the divisions are being perfunctory, only sending some small fry to handle things," Li Lanfeng replied nonchalantly.

"Li Lanfeng, stop looking at that." Han Yu blocked the screen in Li Lanfeng's hands with a palm. Peering at Li Lanfeng, he said, "Don't you know what this means?"

Li Lanfeng regretfully set the miniature display in his hands aside, lifted his head, and said, "I know. The Thunder King's ascension to ace mecha operator means that he has truly become the number one within the military academy. We are no longer able to threaten his top position."

"Not just that. I'm also worried that he'll take the opportunity to dominate the entire school, perhaps even merging all the factions of the school together to become the true king of the military academy," said Wei Ji with a frown. His initial calm and unruffled air had completely disappeared at this moment — it was clear to see how great a blow the ascension of the Thunder King was to him.

"He won't. He has just advanced to ace; his realm isn't stable yet. The Thunder King will not act against us so quickly." After some thought, Li Lanfeng outright denied this possibility.

"There will come a day when his realm will settle. We all know that the Thunder King has wanted to be the military academy's true king for a very long time," said Han Yu worriedly.

"King, is it ...?" This querying tone of Li Lanfeng was airy, and a chill seemed to envelop the other three, only for the sensation to vanish in the very next second. Startled, they stared at Li Lanfeng — he still had a smile on his face, and the warm air around his body had not shifted for even a moment; it was as if that brief sense of cold had just been their imagination.

"If we want to stop him from becoming the king of the academy, we can only become even stronger." Li Lanfeng did not seem to sense the other three's shock, directly offering his own opinion.

"Although we have all advanced to special-class operator, aside from Zhao Jun, Wei Ji and I are both newbie special-class operators. Being able to stabilise this realm is already not easy, not to mention raising our level further. Probably only Zhao Jun has hope of advancing to ace operator, right?" Han Yu

turned to look at the hulking physique of Zhao Jun with a hopeful expression, hoping that he would be able to hear some good news from him.

Zhao Jun shook his head. "I've not sensed the possibility of advancing to ace operator. For the near future, I can only solidify my own abilities as a special-class mecha operator."

Zhao Jun's words made disappointment emerge on Han Yu's and Wei Ji's faces. An ace operator who had stabilised his realm would be able to easily handle up to 5 or 6 special-class operators. Even if their Wuji Mecha Clan sent out a team of special-class operators to gang up on him, they would be no match for the Thunder King ... Furthermore, the Thunder King had other strong and powerful teammates by his side as well, and those people were also special-class operators themselves.

"I never said that 'becoming stronger' meant advancing to ace operator level. That's something that depends on serendipity which cannot be forced." Following their discussion, Li Lanfeng could tell that they had misunderstood his meaning, so he quickly spoke up to clarify.

"If we cannot advance to ace operator level, then how do we become stronger?" Han Yu's face instantly became grim and dark. He really hated this demeanour of Li Lanfeng's which seemed to say he had everything under control, as if indirectly showing them up as idiots. But it just so happened that they currently could not separate themselves from Li Lanfeng's strategic planning. Every time they sought out Li Lanfeng, Han Yu always felt as if his face as regiment commander was smacked thoroughly by Li Lanfeng.

"Since we cannot beat him individually, we can only obtain victory through numbers." Li Lanfeng did not seem to sense Han Yu's displeasure, still composed as he calmly stated his recommendation.

"Numbers? Leiting is the number one faction in our school, and it also has the most members among all the factions. What numbers will we use to obtain victory?" Hearing what Li Lanfeng had to say, Han Yu's face turned even darker — was this Li Lanfeng messing around with him?

"Leiting is indeed the faction with the greatest numbers in our school. None of our other factions can match up to it. But what if we combined two factions together? Or perhaps even three or four factions?" Li Lanfeng felt that the current situation did not allow for units to battle individually anymore; it was time for the factions to work together to bring down Leiting.

Li Lanfeng's words made Han Yu's and Wei Ji's eyes light up. Even as Han Yu was moved by the proposition, he could not help but hesitate a little. "Who knows if Tianji and Doha Central would be willing to collaborate." If their three factions joined forces, even though the Thunder King had advanced to ace operator, Leiting still would not be able to eat them all.

"If we want the Doha faction to work with us, I do have a plan. Right now, Tianji is at their lowest. If both your factions challenge them at the same time, I believe that our rankings will go up a little. Once we become the second faction and gain Doha as an ally, we can work with some other factions. Even without Tianji, that will not affect our going up against Leiting." Li Lanfeng dutifully outlined his plan to Han Yu. As for whether Wuji could climb over that necessary step, that would depend on whether Han Yu had enough resolution as a leader.

Han Yu's complexion was shifting rapidly — his eyes met Wei Ji's and there was an exchange of opinions. Li Lanfeng's recommendation had perfectly scratched the itch nestled deep within Han Yu's heart. He

did not dare to oppose Leiting, but he had been eyeing Tianji's number two position for all this time. And now, with Li Lanfeng's reminder, he realised that it was truly a great opportunity to snatch the position of second ... he was moved!

Finally, Han Yu stood up abruptly and slammed a heavy fist onto the tea table before him. Through clenched teeth, he said, "Let's do it."

Having found some direction, Han Yu and Wei Ji quickly said goodbye to Li Lanfeng, while Zhao Jun planned to stay back for a while longer. According to him, Han Yu and Wei Ji were going to busy themselves planning and arranging this matter, and these were things he hated the most, so they should leave him out of it. As long as they told him the time and place of the operation once they were done discussing, that would do.

Han Yu and Wei Ji did not force him, for they knew Zhao Jun was a fierce brute who was all brawn and little brain. And besides, they were indeed returning to look for the top ranks of the Wuji Mecha Clan to discuss things, such as how to best use this chance to join forces with Doha and push Tianji off its pedestal to obtain the number two position in one go. As such, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng, as external collaborators, were indeed rather unsuitable to be present at their meeting with the upper ranks of Wuji.

Zhao Jun walked the two out of Li Lanfeng's villa and then returned to the living room. He peered intently at Li Lanfeng for several seconds and then asked, "You're really that nice?" Knowing how black-bellied Li Lanfeng was so far and how he liked to entrap others, Zhao Jun just did not believe Li Lanfeng would be so generous this time and give out such a good suggestion freely.

Li Lanfeng stretched leisurely, cast an accusatory glance back at Zhao Jun, and said, "I've always been very nice, okay?" He definitely would not admit that he was a black-bellied fellow.

"Always?" Zhao Jun's lips twitched. *These words were just too fake!*

"Fine, I do indeed have some small ulterior motive. I want to know, when the Thunder King is still unable to become the true king of the military academy after advancing to ace operator level, will he be angry enough to vomit blood?" admitted Li Lanfeng with a laugh. He too felt that his previous words were too far off the mark.

"Lanfeng, do you hate the Thunder King very much?" After a beat of silence, Zhao Jun suddenly spoke up to ask.

Li Lanfeng's smile stiffened as he turned back to ask incredulously, "Zhao Jun, why would you think that?"

"Frankly, whether or not the Thunder King manages to consolidate all the factions in the school has nothing at all to do with us. We might be collaborators with Wuji today, but we might not be tomorrow. We have had no issues in contention at all with the Thunder King, but every scheme of yours seems to be setting up roadblocks in the Thunder King's path to becoming king ... I can't help but suspect your motives."

Zhao Jun was very frank — he, like Li Lanfeng, was from a third-rate planet. It could be said that qualifying for the First Men's Military Academy was definitely a one in a million chance. Therefore,

besides them, no one else from their respective planets had managed to get in — this caused them to feel like they did not belong to any of the factions. Many times, Zhao Jun felt as if Li Lanfeng was just playing with the world around him. With deft and skilful manipulations, he would incite conflicts between several large factions, like just now, especially hopeful that they would actually break out into a great fight.

Zhao Jun's words made Li Lanfeng laugh once more. "I have no grudge against the Thunder King, but just imagine this — the Thunder King has everything within his grasp, but because of us small fishes from third-rate planets, his path to domination becomes riddled with difficulties and challenges, so much so that he will not succeed. Don't you think that's very interesting?"

"You ..." Zhao Jun gaped at Li Lanfeng in shock. He had never known that Li Lanfeng was holding such thoughts.

"I only want to prove that even if we come from third-rate planets, we can still stir up a storm of bloody trouble within this military academy ..." *Even though I am still weak and vulnerable right now, I can still prevent that person from becoming king ...* The smiling Li Lanfeng adeptly secreted his true thoughts deep within his heart. There were some secrets that should never be shared.

Zhao Jun could only shake his head in resignation at those words. "Alright, your words are convincing. I would also like to see if that Thunder King can overcome all the difficulties to climb to the pinnacle of the school." Watching the show and whatnot were the things he most liked to do ¹.

Even though Li Lanfeng still had a smile on his face, there was an emptiness in his eyes, along with endless coldness.

"I have another question. If we plan to ally with other factions to go against the Thunder King, why do you want Wuji to go challenge Tianji? That's obviously against your original plan." Zhao Jun very quickly came up with another question. He was not at all as simple-minded as Han Yu and the others thought he was — the things he needed to know, he picked up on them much better than Han Yu and the others would.

"Compared to the Thunder King, you hate Tianji even more." Knowing Li Lanfeng too well, Zhao Jun stated his conclusion with conviction. "So, even if the timing is inappropriate, you still egged on Han Yu and the others to act against Tianji. Why is that?"

"Have you not heard about the horrific incident which happened a few days ago?" Hearing Zhao Jun ask this question, Li Lanfeng's smile finally disappeared.

"The murder of Shi Mingyi?" That was the first thing that sprang to Zhao Jun's mind.

"Since Tianji had such a shameless and despicable vice regiment commander, it's about time they paid the price," said Li Lanfeng coldly. At this moment, he no longer had any trace of warmth around him — it was clear to see how deep his hatred of this sort of thing ran

Chapter 294: Top-Class Elite [belief]!

The enlistment assessments at the military academy officially commenced; almost all of the attention of the cadets were drawn by this major assessment. As the leader of his assessment team, Ling Xiao had to be present for the first day at least. This made Ling Lan feel as if her time was her own again.

These past few days, Ling Xiao had made Ling Lan bring him all around the school, his excuse being that he wanted to understand the conditions of his daughter's campus. Regarding this, Ling Lan was extremely disdainful of Ling Xiao — could it be that when her dad was giving this reason, he had completely forgotten that he himself had graduated from this very school 20 years ago ...?

Of course, Ling Lan understood inside that this was just her dad finding opportunities to get closer to her — after all, having been absent for 16 years, whether it was Ling Xiao himself or Ling Lan, they both needed this kind of opportunity. Thus, Ling Lan may have been disdainful of his lame excuse, but she still gladly accepted this task and accompanied her dad around the campus for the past few days. It should be said that the effect was still pretty good. At the very least, the two of them were no longer like they were before, awkwardly silent in each other's presence — now, they could at least find a few topics to discuss.

However, having obtained half a day of free time, after eating lunch, Ling Lan was once again summoned by her dad's incessant pestering ¹. Apparently, after showing his face for courtesy's sake, Ling Xiao had excused himself and then came running back.

Arriving at the place Ling Xiao was staying, Ling Lan saw Ling Xiao standing at the doorway, casual and nonchalant, and then she looked back outside where the sun was blazing brightly at the zenith of the sky, and instantly felt that going out at this time was really not a good idea.

Seeing Ling Lan frown as she looked outside, Ling Xiao glanced over as well, and then scratched his nose a little embarrassedly, "Er, it looks like it's rather hot now."

With his mind filled with the thought of seeing his daughter again, things like the weather were not something Ling Xiao had considered. "Why don't we just rest for a bit inside?" Ling Xiao's temporary quarters was also a villa, and it was one that was even more luxurious than Ling Lan's.

Although Ling Lan was not afraid of the heat, she too did not want to go out and be roasted by the intense noon sun for no reason, so she gladly agreed. However, after she and Ling Xiao finished drinking their third pot of iced red tea, she began to think that it was rather silly for her and her dad to just keep drinking tea in silence like this.

Ling Xiao seemed to have also noticed this, and this made Ling Xiao rather dejected. Over the past few days, he had already explored all the topics they could talk about, and now, he truly did not know what else to say. Was he really going to just go over all the questions he had asked in the past few days all over again? Would this cause his daughter to run away because she really could not take it anymore? Or perhaps she would blow her top and just send a fist flying at him?

Seeing the ice in his daughter's eyes, Ling Xiao believed that it was far more likely for Ling Lan to dash away ... how could he willingly let this hard-won opportunity to hang out with his daughter slip away like this? Ling Xiao began to think hard — what exactly could he ask her? A 16 years old girl should already be at the age when romantic passions begin to blossom ... should he ask Ling Lan whether she has anyone she likes or perhaps admires recently ²?

Just as Ling Xiao was struggling with indecision, the long silent Ling Lan who had been stroking her teacup finally spoke up. “Father, do you have any virtual network login pods here?”

Ling Xiao was startled, but he quickly replied, “Yes, on the third floor!” In order to properly accommodate the assessment officers of the divisions, all their accommodations had been installed with virtual world login pods. This made it very convenient for the officers to log on to the virtual world during their spare time.

Ling Lan placed her teacup back on the tea table, lifted her head to peer intently at Ling Xiao, and said, “Father, since you’re free this afternoon, come with me to explore Mecha World.”

“Go to Mecha World?” Ling Xiao thought about it — ever since he had ascended to god-class operator, he had not been there for a very long time, almost about to forget the youthful days he had spent there. He too had once been an obsessed member of Mecha World ... his heart moved as his interest was piqued. Of course, most importantly, this was a personal invite from his darling daughter — even if he had never ever been to Mecha World, he would still want to go take a look now.

“Alright,” Ling Xiao happily agreed. And so the father-daughter pair swiftly went up to the third floor and laid down in two virtual login pods. Right before Ling Lan entered her pod, she did not forget to tell Ling Xiao that her username in Mecha World was [Lingtian First-String].

“[Lingtian First-String]?” Ling Xiao stared at the closed hatch of the login pod beside his, and smiled contemplatively.

Meanwhile, at this time in Mecha World, in a sealed private mecha combat room, two mecha were in the middle of an intense spar.

One was a standard Federation advanced mecha, its body painted with traditional blue and white. Other than being equipped with some weapons of personal preference, almost no modifications had been done to it.

In contrast, the other mecha was extremely unique in both form and colour — it was distinctly different from the blue, white, silver, or red basic colours of standard mecha, instead coloured black, which was rather infrequently used within the Federation³. The mecha’s entire outer frame, when compared to the other standard advanced mecha, was obviously much taller and bulkier — just its four limbs alone were twice the size of the other mecha’s, not to mention its equipped weapons, which all belonged to the higher tier of cold weapons. With just one glance, one could tell that this mecha was most definitely a close combat type.

Anyone familiar with Mecha World would know that this type of unique mecha was certainly a special-class mecha, and those who could operate them must certainly be special-class mecha masters.

Generally speaking, when an advanced mecha warrior encountered a special-class operator, the combat would end in a one-sided win. In other words, the special-class operator would definitely obtain the final victory, while the number of moves it would take would all depend on how great the gap was between the two combatants’ skills.

However, this fight was rather different. Although overall, it seemed like the advanced mecha warrior was indeed always at a disadvantage, they were only disadvantaged — the fight was not a clear one-way landslide. Several times, there were indeed precarious situations where the advanced mecha operator was being suppressed by endless blows, almost unable to catch their breath, but in the end, the advanced mecha warrior still managed to push through.

And so, the fight became a fight of endurance — in the end, what they were competing on was neither their mecha control skills, nor was it the capabilities of their mecha, but rather the stamina of the operators.

The two mecha clashed once more in mid-air, causing a loud noise of collision. In close-combat, the advanced mecha was obviously at a disadvantage — this could be seen from the distance the two needed once they sprang apart to land.

After the attack this time, the two mecha did not continue to grapple with one another, instead facing off from a distance.

“Huff huff huff ...” Due to the absence of outsiders, the two mecha had opened their public comms, and intense panting could be heard coming from the comm channels.

“D*mmmit, Li Lanfeng, you freak,” The first to recover from panting was the black mecha, who could not help but swear as soon as he caught his breath. The speaker was none other than Zhao Jun, who had already advanced to special-class mecha.

“Hehe ...” chuckled Li Lanfeng weakly. The gap between levels was not so easily made up — he could make it so Zhao Jun could not defeat him, but that was already the extent of his abilities. This outcome made him rather dejected — he was not at all pleased by this outcome which would already be greatly astounding by anyone else’s standards.

“Wasn’t I — almost — defeated — by you — a few times — back there?” Still panting heavily, Li Lanfeng spoke in fits and spurts. In terms of stamina recovery, he was no match for Zhao Jun and his type of physical constitution.

“Tsk, didn’t you manage to push through? Just like an unkillable cockroach,” grumbled Zhao Jun. Fighting with Li Lanfeng was always a frustrating matter for him. He kept having the sense that he could defeat the other, but he would always fall short by just that one breath. Quite a few times, the victory at-hand would just graze by him narrowly ... the disgruntlement he felt was no less than Li Lanfeng’s.

“How the heck did you train? Able to resist my special-class operator attacks just as an advanced mecha operator, if you advance to special-class operator, what am I supposed to do?” Zhao Jun felt that his position as number one mecha expert was being threatened — it looked like he would have to train harder now, so as to prevent himself from being out of a job once Li Lanfeng advanced.

Zhao Jun was very rational. Ever since he had discovered how aberrant Li Lanfeng was, he had been determined to stick with Li Lanfeng. His brain was actually pretty good, but after being showed up many times by Li Lanfeng, he did not want to waste the mental effort anymore, so he had set himself the role of supreme thug ... er, no, make that supreme fighter. But now, he found that this goal was actually pretty tough to realise as well.

“Don’t worry, there’s still quite a block of time before I advance to special-class operator level. By that time, I reckon you would already have touched upon the gates to ace operator level.” Li Lanfeng had finally recovered enough to speak in proper sentences again. “So, you’ll still be able to lord over me by a head. You’ll be fine,” consoled Li Lanfeng with a smile.

“Are you comforting me or mocking me?” Zhao Jun muttered back, discontent ...

Right then, a bright red system notice startled everyone, as well as interrupted the conversation between the two.

“Heavyweight news! The great top-class mecha elite [belief]⁴ has graced the mecha world with his presence. Does his coming herald the successive appearance of other top-level elites? It can be predicted that the mecha world will once again bear witness to great waves ...”

“[belief]!” Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng shouted almost in unison. This name was just too familiar — this was the name of god-class operator Ling Xiao’s mecha. Despite not knowing what Ling Xiao’s name in the mecha world was, the moment this name was linked to a top-class elite, they could not help but suspect whether this person was Ling Xiao himself.

“It has to be fake, right? How could General Ling Xiao have time to come to Mecha World?” Zhao Jun’s face was filled with disbelief and he was the first to voice a denial. They were well aware that General Ling Xiao was currently establishing the 23rd Division, as busy as could be. Even if he had time, he would not come to Mecha World, this sort of virtual world where youths made up the majority. If he wanted to find a PK partner, he would more likely go to a virtual simulation mecha battle stadium specially set up for the Federation military, where only military officers in service could enter.

“I don’t know, but these top-class elites are basically all old beasts from ten or so years ago or perhaps even decades before that ... it could just very well be him.” In contrast to Zhao Jun’s disbelief, Li Lanfeng did not outright reject the possibility. Perhaps General Ling Xiao had been seized by whimsy and had decided to come back and indulge the nostalgia for his younger days. Who knows?

Leaving aside Zhao Jun’s and Li Lanfeng’s uncertainty, everyone else in the mecha world had also been struck dumb by this heavyweight news. It could be said that the entirety of the initially raucous virtual world descended into a long moment of silence, while there were even some mecha operators who lost their lives⁵ to the monsters they were battling due to the distraction. However, all of this was not a problem. Very soon, the mecha world was swept up in commotion once more ... people all turned to the companions beside them and asked, who in the world was this top-class elite [belief]?

Several of those with quicker minds immediately logged onto the official website of Mecha World to look up information on [belief]. Unfortunately, they were disappointed. This was because the information of top-class elites could only be accessed by elites of the same level. All they obtained from their search was the response that their strength level was not high enough, hence they did not have enough clearance. Thus, they could not glean any clues from the website.

Chapter 295: <Wind’s Shadow>!

Ling Lan was oblivious to the things happening within Mecha World because this news had been announced a second before Ling Lan logged in, so she just so coincidentally missed this alert. If Ling Lan had known about it, she definitely would not bring her dad gallivanting all across the town ...

Very swiftly, Ling Lan received a friend request from [belief]. Seeing that familiar name, Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop. How much did her dad love this name really?

After she accepted, the other party instantly sent over a private chat request. When Ling Lan accepted it, she heard her dad's warm voice coming through, "Ling Lan, where are you?"

Ling Lan immediately told her dad her location — when she had logged off previously, she had been outside hunting monsters. Not because she wanted to collect any points from the monsters, but because in her mission to advance to advanced mecha warrior, she needed some items which would drop from these monsters.

The route Ling Lan was taking was different from other people — she never ever looked for monsters to level up, instead mostly choosing to enter the arena fights for cross-level challenges to gain a large amount of experience points in one go. This was also why Ling Lan had been able to earn enough points to advance to advanced mecha warrior in such a short amount of time. Of course, Ling Lan's personal mecha control skills were already high enough in terms of standards, allowing her to bring out the greatest combat power of the mecha she piloted, which was why she could take this shortcut.

If she had been like Qi Long and the others who had started from zero, she would have had to take her time and accumulate the fruits of hard practice. Thus, Qi Long and the others had spent a full three years to train up from trainee mecha to advanced mecha warrior. Meanwhile, at Ling Lan's speed, it would not be long before she caught up to Qi Long and the others. However, Ling Lan was planning to pause once she hit advanced mecha warrior level, because she wanted to lead Qi Long and the others personally at that point. Through verbal teachings, self-modelling, and sparring with them using mecha, she wanted to push them into mastering all the control skills of advanced mecha warriors so that they would be able to transition smoothly into the realm of special-class operator.

Well aware of the importance of foundational controls, Ling Lan did not want her companions to fall into the common pitfall of neglecting those skills. Once they had all successfully mastered those, at that time, it would finally be time for her to let them spread their wings and fly freely.

This was because once one entered special-class operator level, one's mecha piloting would begin to display one's individual style and character. No one else would be able to help with the development of these control skills — one could only rely on oneself to contemplate and seek insight. This was also the true reason why special-class operators were also called mecha masters, while advanced mecha operators could only be called mecha warriors.

However, entering special-class operator level was still only the first step. Only by advancing into ace operator status could one prove that one's personal control style had matured and become complete enough to be considered a distinct style of its own. Many mecha masters had ended up being stuck at this level — many people would only be able to be half-assed special-class operators for their entire lives, unable to push through to find a place among the ranks of those who held true strength, ace mecha masters.

It had to be said that Ling Xiao had left Mecha World almost twenty years ago, so he had to be rather unfamiliar with this Mecha World which had been updated countless times since then. Whatever the case, Ling Lan had to eliminate the monsters in the area she was in a whole 26 times before she saw Ling Xiao's mecha landing beside her, fashionably late.

Ling Lan herself did not really care how long she had to wait; after all, she was still trying to get the mission item she needed to drop, so this was not a waste of her time. Still, when she saw Ling Xiao's mecha, her initially calm heart became unsettled, the corners of her eyes twitching noticeably.

Damm*t, just how much of a showoff could her dad be?! Did he really not know how much attention operating such a bright and gleaming mecha — almost bright enough to make her blind — over would bring? Ling Lan sensed motion in the distance — it looked like her father's pretty mecha had drawn some attention.

Ling Lan did not know that she had only guessed part of it — a greater reason was that this was a relatively low-level hunting ground. For such a high-end mecha to appear here was definitely unusual; thus, everyone could only think — could the person operating that mecha be that top-class elite [belief] mentioned in the system announcement?

Regardless of whether he was or not, they would not let go of any bit of possibility. Therefore, everyone who saw this mecha all headed after the mecha in the direction it was flying in, chasing after it. The fact that no one had chased up to Ling Lan's location was all thanks to how much the speed of Ling Xiao's mecha outstripped that of all of the mecha here.

Ling Xiao's mecha was indeed extremely perfect. It was neither a standard mecha nor a modified mecha, but a mecha listed by Mecha World as a top-class redemption reward, an imperial mecha. This was the only top-class mecha the people playing Mecha World could use points to redeem. As for the rumoured god-class mecha, it could only be obtained by completing a mission. And that mission had already been confirmed by the majority of people to be humanly impossible.

There were six types of imperial mecha that could be redeemed, and Ling Xiao's mecha was one of those six types. Ling Lan had taken a cursory glance at it when she was redeeming her current mecha — it was called < Wind's Shadow¹ >. As its name implied, this was a mecha characterised by its speed. The entire mecha was uniformly white silver in colour, its form streamlined and elegant. Any equipment and structural design that could influence its speed had been discarded, leaving only those equipment and weapons which were necessary. It could be said to be a very extreme type of mecha.

These kinds of speed-type mecha were generally built for long-range attacks. Ling Lan saw two long and thin particle beam long-barrelled guns² slung on its back, and knew her guess was not wrong. However, Ling Lan's gaze was then drawn by the two sword hilts sticking out at the mecha's waist. Based on the direction the hilts were facing, one could tell that they were not the general swords used by mecha. They were very likely short swords similar to high-frequency blades, but since the mecha already had the standard equipped high-frequency blades on it, Ling Lan could not understand why it would have more short swords with almost the same function equipped.

Ling Lan very honestly voiced the doubts in her mind, and Ling Xiao laughed and replied, “This is the frightening aspect of this mecha. Everyone assumes that it’s a long-range attack type mecha and so are usually on guard against long-range attacks, neglecting its ability to close in swiftly ...”

Ling Lan’s eyes lit up. “Father, you mean that, this mecha is an all-rounded mecha which is proficient at both long-range and close-range?”

Ling Lan’s offensive manoeuvres were inclined towards close-range combat, but the designs of close-range combat mecha were typically very bulky and heavy. This clashed somewhat with Ling Lan’s need for speed, and furthermore, Ling Lan was still a girl at heart, so she much preferred light, graceful, and elegant mecha over those great, hulking, towering types. This was why when she heard that this pretty mecha was also strong in close-range combat, her heart was moved.

“Yes, because it’s extraordinarily fast, it can switch freely between close-range and long-range attacks, flustering the opponent. This is its strength, but also its weakness at the same time.” Seeing that Ling Lan had great interest in this mecha, Ling Xiao began introducing it in more detail, “It requires its operator to satisfy three conditions. Otherwise, even if one has this mecha, they would be unable to use this mecha to its full capacity.”

“What three conditions?” Ling Lan was listening very carefully. Although she could not possess this mecha which she coveted right now, this did not prevent her from making this mecha her future goal; for things she needed to pay attention to, Ling Lan would take them extremely seriously.

“One, the operator’s reflexes must be exceedingly quick to be able to keep up with the speed of the mecha itself. Two, the operator’s hand speed must reach a frighteningly high rate, otherwise they will not be able to execute any sequence of action transitions during high-speed movements. Three, the demand on the operator’s physical condition is high. It should be known that executing action transitions at high speeds puts three to four times the burden on the body than piloting a mecha at regular speeds. Without a strong and stout physique, one can never operate this mecha well. Otherwise, the operator would become injured simply by making a few moves, to say nothing of operating this mecha into battle.”

Ling Xiao listed out each of the requirements to pilot this mecha, when in fact, he really wanted to say outright — *Oh daughter, this mecha is not destined for you.* A girl’s body was just inherently weaker, unable to reach that level of toughness required even with stringent training.

Ling Lan only nodded after hearing all this, though of course she did not forget to ask what Little Four, who was within a little black room, thought about these conditions.

Why was Little Four in a little black room? Well, this had to be explained from the beginning. Every time they met with Ling Xiao, Little Four just could not keep his composure. Therefore, whenever Little Four regressed into a mindless fan, Ling Lan would shut him up in a small black room for a while so he could calm down. Of course, if Little Four behaved well, he would be let out again. Today, Little Four had once again lost control when Ling Lan had been drinking iced red tea with Ling Xiao in stilted silence. That was why he was currently stuck inside that small black room, waiting for Ling Lan to show mercy again.

Little Four was just being bored out of his mind in the little black room when he heard Ling Lan’s question. He instantly patted his little chest and guaranteed that as long as he, Little Four, was around,

his boss could have as tough a body as she wished. She could control whatever <Wind's Shadow>, <Wind's Form>, or anything else she wanted.

Little Four's answer made Ling Lan relax. She secretly set obtaining this <Wind's Shadow> mecha as the goal she would accomplish within the next few years. Meanwhile, Ling Xiao thought his daughter had understood his intentions and received his counsel, and so relaxed as well. Ling Xiao did not know that Ling Lan had indeed listened to him, but her choice was completely contrary to what Ling Xiao was hoping for.

Of course, Ling Xiao was not the type to take things for granted; he was about to personally ask what Ling Lan thought when he suddenly heard some commotion coming from a distance. He could even vaguely hear someone saying 'is it over there?' ... This made Ling Xiao hold back on what he had intended to say, turning to look in the direction of the noise with a troubled expression, uncertain what was going on.

Ling Lan had also heard the voices and figured things out instantly. She said to her father, "Not good. Let's run."

Huh? Run? Ling Xiao did not know why they had to run, but seeing that his daughter had already activated her mecha and was swiftly running towards a dense forest in the distance, he dared not tarry, chasing after her quickly.

They had just dashed into the forest and concealed themselves when quite a number of mecha showed up in the initially endlessly empty grass fields. These were the people who had been attracted by Ling Xiao's mecha and had rushed here in pursuit.

"It's not here either! Looks like this isn't the spot." Everyone saw the empty fields before them and turned to leave despondently.

Even if there was the possibility of hiding in the dense forest ahead, everyone had naturally overlooked this avenue of thought. This was because they subconsciously believed that no one would do so and seek death. It should be known that the savage beasts in that dense forest were several times stronger than the savage beasts in the plains — even if it were a special-class operator going in, they would be coming out horizontally³.

Right then, they had all forgotten that the one they were seeking was a top-class elite — how could he be afraid of these savage beasts? It could only be said that these people were fooled by their own preconceptions. They were all low-level mecha operators — even special-class operators were existences that they had to look up to — so it was very likely that they just could not comprehend what a top-class elite truly meant.

Chapter 296: Mecha Instructor!

Ling Xiao and Ling Lan hid in the forest, coolly watching batch after batch of mecha come and go. Even though they had to hide in the forest for up to an hour, there was not one trace of impatience on their faces. It could be seen that both father and daughter had extraordinarily strong patience.

Ling Xiao glanced at the completely still Ling Lan in her mecha by his side and just knew that his daughter was extremely calm. The feeling called pride reared up in his heart once more — just this patience alone was not something an ordinary person could possess.

Following the passage of time, their patch of grass finally regained its initial peace and quiet. Only then did Ling Lan move her mecha, and she could not help but say, “Father, you should keep a lower profile. Why don’t you change to a slightly more common mecha?” She did not want to keep hiding here in this dense forest, unable to go out.

Ling Xiao was silent for a beat, then sighed and said, “This is already my worst mecha.”

In his virtual mecha hold, all the other mecha were even higher level than this one. One of them was even the so-called god-class mecha he had obtained by completing that horrific mission, while several others were exclusive special editions specially gifted to him by the Mecha World after he had created a few imperial level skills in the game. These were all representations of his personal identity — the moment he piloted those mecha out, just the fire phoenix logo on their chests alone would allow others to guess who he was ...

Ling Lan was utterly speechless. The two of them once again descended into wordless silence. But then, right at that moment, Ling Lan’s heart clenched, a sense of danger suddenly rushing into her. Without thinking, Ling Lan chose to leap up and dodge instantly. When she turned around, she saw Ling Xiao, who had initially been standing immobile beside her, slowly in the middle of resheathing the two short blades of his mecha back at his waist. Meanwhile, on the ground beneath his mecha, two extremely ferocious-looking forest savage beasts were laid out.

Seeing this, Ling Lan’s heart was shaken — when she had sensed a threat earlier, she could only choose to evade. But Ling Xiao had been able to easily finish off these ambushing savage beasts coming from behind him. From the two bodies laying on the ground, she could clearly see that there was only one point of fatal injury on them. In other words, Ling Xiao had instantly drawn his swords, both swords stabbing out to kill one savage beast each in the blink of an eye.

This may seem like a simple thing, but to do it was certainly not easy. A savage beast’s life force was extremely formidable — even if one struck a fatal weakness directly, their powerful vitality would still allow these savage beasts a chance to carry out a final counterattack. This was precisely why many people did not dare to attack these type of savage beasts at close range.

However, all of this was no problem at all when it came to Ling Xiao. With clean and efficient moves, he had eliminated all danger.

“When you strike their vital points, you must instantly sever their nerves and disable their reflexes in one go. This way, the savage beasts’ ability to counterattack will be destroyed. However, this kind of ability requires tens of thousands times of training before you will be able to do it. It cannot be rushed,” Ling Xiao knew what Ling Lan was bothered about and so spoke up to explain.

Ling Lan nodded at his words. Her eyes shone vibrantly, because she had discovered that her father Ling Xiao was most likely the best instructor in this world to mentor her in mecha control.

Though Instructor Number Three in the learning space was indeed very strong in terms of mecha control, because the world she lived in now was still different from the world the instructors had come

from, there were still some aspects which Ling Lan found rather difficult while learning from him. It should be said that the control methods Ling Lan was learning were modified from the control methods of their world, based off the results of Instructor Number Three's analysis of this world's mecha. Despite being very high-level, those methods could not achieve true 100% compatibility ...

However, Ling Xiao was different. He was one of the top mecha operators in this world to begin with, and all the control methods he had learned were the accumulated results of this world over thousands of years. It should be said that Ling Xiao's control skills were the most appropriate for the mecha presently being used by the Federation, and he would be able to let Ling Lan truly understand the mecha of this world.

Ling Lan was rather frustrated at this time — why had she not realised this over these past few days? Actually wasting so many days for no good reason. Knowing that her dad's time was precious, Ling Lan decided that she could not continue wasting it any further, so she said to Ling Xiao seriously, "Father, you should be free these few days, right?" Ling Lan's eyes were sparkling brilliantly, her eyes shining with boundless hope ...

Could it be that his daughter had acknowledged his fatherly love? Ling Xiao was overjoyed — did this mean that his daughter was willing to accept him now and call him 'daddy' affectionately? He quickly nodded repeatedly, "Yes, I'm extremely free."

"Then instruct me a little on mecha controls." Ling Lan's subsequent words made Ling Xiao's mood plummet from the heights of heaven straight down into hell. He was greatly depressed, tears all over his face inside.

Oh daughter, daddy came all this way to come into the military academy undercover, just so I could establish a deep and meaningful father-daughter relationship with you, not so I could PK with you and be your instructor ...

But facing that bright-eyed gaze of Ling Lan's, Ling Xiao just could not say anything to refuse. He could only nod and say, "Okay."

Hearing Ling Xiao agree, Ling Lan's lips quirked up instantly. Even though Ling Xiao could not see his daughter's expression, for some reason, he just felt that his daughter was in a great mood. He could only smile wryly and console himself that he had finally done something that made his daughter happy, that all his efforts had not been for nothing.

An excited Ling Lan was completely an action-oriented Ling Lan — without saying anything more, she led her dad back to the city closest to them, Clear Winds City, running all the way. They came to the mecha combat hall at the city centre, and found an empty private room and requested entry for a spar.

Her entire mind filled with thoughts of learning from Ling Xiao, Ling Lan did not notice that when she and Ling Xiao had entered Clear Winds City, they had been noticed by those sharp-eyed people at the city gates. It could not be helped — Ling Xiao's mecha was just too unique; there was no way to conceal it. Some people were even quicker, instantly taking photos of the two of them flying across the city and uploading them onto the official website. The title of the post was naturally 'Top-class Elite [belief] Sighted'.

This news caused a commotion instantly, the post scoring several billion hits within just a few minutes. When someone pointed out that the gleaming and eye-catching mecha in the photograph was the top imperial mecha in the mecha world, the entire mecha world was rocked to the core.

For context, imperial operators were very difficult to see in the mecha world now. These top-class masters were now all old men who had become famous a decade or even a few decades ago. They were all basically already living reclusively, rarely sighted. There was even a time when many people questioned whether there were any imperial operators existing at all within the mecha world. And this time, this photograph proved that the imperial operators of rumour truly did exist in Mecha World, and one had finally appeared.

Everyone was worked up, especially since the post stated very clearly that the photo was taken at Clear Winds City. Having found some direction, the mecha operators all flocked towards Clear Winds City ... fortunately, Ling Lan and Ling Xiao were both moving extraordinarily fast, not meandering inside the city for long. They had directly headed straight into the combat room of the mecha combat hall to fight, thus dodging this crisis, not being trapped by the mecha operators who had rushed over because of the news and jammed up the city.

Nevertheless, the small little Clear Winds City had turned into a choked up hive of activity within the course of several minutes. Those outside could not get in, while those inside could not get out either, causing the entire city to become unbearably congested.

Inside their own private combat room, when Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng saw the news about the top-class elite [belief] descending upon Mecha World, they no longer had the mood to continue sparring. They too wanted to see what the top-class elite [belief] was like and so were preparing to go outside and try their luck.

They had just left the private room on their end when Zhao Jun received a text message from a member of his team.

Zhao Jun instantly stopped moving after he glanced at the message, prompting Li Lanfeng to ask him curiously, "Why'd you stop?"

Zhao Jun smiled wryly and said, "It looks like we can't get out anymore."

Ah? Taken aback, Li Lanfeng immediately used his communicator to check, and after finding out about the situation, he too smiled bitterly and said, "Who would have expected that [belief] would actually be at Clear Winds City. I really don't know if we're lucky or unlucky ..." Lucky, because they were in the same city; unlucky, because they were trapped within the combat hall, unable to go out.

"We just weren't destined to meet that elite," said Zhao Jun regretfully, "Since we can't go out, why don't we have another spar?" He had no intention of going out to crowd with the people outside.

Li Lanfeng naturally agreed and said, "That's fine."

Obtaining Li Lanfeng's agreement, Zhao Jun bent his head over his communicator, connecting to the A.I. of the mecha combat hall as he said, "Let's just go back to our previous room, 817." Even as he spoke,

he keyed in the number '817', and without even noticing the alert tagged to the room, he clicked to enter.

Seeing Zhao Jun's entire mecha suddenly disappear before his eyes, Li Lanfeng shook his head helplessly. Knowing that the impatient Zhao Jun must have already gone ahead to room 817, he quickly connected to the mecha combat hall's A.I. as well and selected room 817 too, then chose to enter ...

Li Lanfeng unintentionally saw that the number of the people in the room was 3 ... huh? What was happening?

The next second, Li Lanfeng had entered room 817. In a corner of the room, he saw that familiar black-coloured special-class mecha of Zhao Jun's. Not only that, on the stage in the middle of the room, two mecha were facing off against one another. One was an extremely common standard intermediate mecha, while the other was an extremely dazzling and beautiful mecha. With just one glance, Li Lanfeng could tell that this was the rumoured top-class imperial mecha ...

"What in the world is this?" Li Lanfeng was stunned by this scene before his eyes, and quickly sent a private message to Zhao Jun.

Zhao Jun very quickly responded with a message of his own, "Shh, don't make a sound. That imperial mecha's operator is most likely [belief]. Let's observe quietly. Don't let them discover us and kick us out ..." Zhao Jun worked hard to shrink in on his own mecha. Right then, he truly wished that his mecha could instantly become tiny — best if it could become a speck of dust, invisible to the naked eye.

Li Lanfeng saw Zhao Jun's actions and sweatdropped profusely. This fellow ... did he not know that no matter how much he tried to hunch in on himself, these two hulking mecha they were piloting just had no way of becoming any bit smaller? This series of actions by Zhao Jun only made him even more conspicuous.

"Do you know those two mecha?" Ling Xiao had long noticed these two mecha that had entered behind them, and he turned to ask Ling Lan about them.

Ling Lan shook her head and said, "No, should we kick them out?"

Even though she had left messages for her companions, asking them to come to room 817 of Clear Winds City to observe the mecha fight between her and Ling Xiao, Qi Long and the others had soon responded with news that the entire traffic of Clear Winds City was already paralysed. They just had no way of getting there.

Chapter 297: The Composition of a Battle Clan!

For this reason, Qi Long was so frustrated he could almost bang his head into a wall, while Luo Lang was actually tearing up. The others were not reacting that much better either — after all, this was a mecha instructional fight from a god-class operator! How lucky did they have to be to witness that?! But now they had to watch helplessly as this great fortune slipped right through their fingers, unable to do anything about it ...

Ling Lan could only placate and comfort them, promising that they would still have opportunities in the future. At that time, she would definitely inform them beforehand to enter the combat room in advance so they could observe. Only then did these bunch of mournful brats subside.

It was precisely because of that that Ling Lan had not set a passcode on their room at the very first moment to restrict outsiders from entering. By the time she had settled her companions, two strangers had already entered the private room.

Ling Xiao was nonchalant about it. "No need. Since they have already come here, it can be considered that they're fated to see us. Besides, they don't know us. Let them watch a little, and if they gain some insight, that's their fortune." Ling Xiao was not someone who would stick to the beaten track ¹, otherwise he would not often invite others to PK with him at the military-exclusive combat fields. The stronger the Federation mecha masters were, the gladder Ling Xiao would be. He was a pure-minded military man.

"Since, father, you have said so, then let them stay." Ling Lan agreed with her dad's mindset. The mecha operators in Mecha World came from all the various star systems of the whole Federation. No one could tell who another was, or which planet they came from. If those spectators could gain something from this fight, it would indeed be a kindness on their part.

Ling Lan recalled the first time she had entered Mecha World and met that cheetah mecha. They had not known each other, but had had a startlingly amazing rapport. During that time, if not for the other's constant companionship and their mutual encouragement and supervision, perhaps she might not have been able to endure through that period of dry and monotonous foundational training.

Ling Lan cherished this sort of heaven-given serendipity, and so did not want to stand in the way of it. Since her father was not opposed, Ling Lan decided to just let them watch. Of course, the prerequisite being that they knew their limits and did not disturb her and her father.

On the stage, the two mecha that had been standing around casually began to shift. The intermediate mecha suddenly raised its hand to draw the long weapon from its back and got into an attacking stance, while the imperial mecha remained still and unmoving as before.

At this point, Zhao Jun could not help commenting surreptitiously, "Lanfeng, this match is probably going to end in one move. The gap between the strength of the two is just too wide. The intermediate mecha will definitely be unable to withstand an attack from the imperial mecha."

"It won't end like that," Li Lanfeng responded confidently.

"Ah? Why not?" Zhao Jun was boggled.

"Just think, which imperial operator would have the free time to PK an intermediate mecha operator? I'm guessing that the latter is just a disciple of the imperial operator, which is why the former would come to instruct him a little," Li Lanfeng analysed, "In this match, the imperial operator will definitely control his strength, perhaps even sealing away some advanced control skills and killing moves."

"In other words, this is an instructional fight." Zhao Jun's eyes brightened. Instructional fights were not only extremely useful to the one fighting, spectators would also learn quite a bit. However, Zhao Jun

began worrying once more, carefully asking, “Lanfeng, do you think they’ll chase us out? After all, this type of instructional fight is usually related to some sect legacies and secrets.”

Li Lanfeng glared exasperatedly at Zhao Jun, “You’ve only now noticed this point? Still, it’s been so long. Since they have not kicked us out, they are likely to have tacitly agreed to our presence here.”

“Ah? Really?” Li Lanfeng’s words made Zhao Jun ecstatic.

“Yes, of course, they could also have mistaken us for people they know, but that possibility is almost zero, so it can be excluded.” Li Lanfeng knew well that it was indeed possible to conceal one’s ID in Mecha World so that name cards would have to be exchanged before one’s name would be revealed. However, this feature was ineffective against top-class masters like imperial operators — that was a sign of respect and distinction Mecha World afforded to imperial operators. Thus, it was obvious that the other must know that the two of them were strangers.

“I believe that, they have chosen not to kick us because they intend to give us a chance.” Li Lanfeng felt that this was the likeliest possibility. Many top-class masters believed very strongly in fate and serendipity — perhaps the other felt that he and Zhao Jun’s stumbling into this room was fated, and so left them alone.

“That’s great!” Zhao Jun clenched his fists, exhilarated. Li Lanfeng’s words moved him greatly — if he could learn anything at all from this imperial operator, he would never ever forget this fated kindness for the rest of his life.

“Our luck today is truly incredible ...” said Li Lanfeng with a sigh. Perhaps his destiny was not going to be as tragic as he had thought — would this be the turning point of his life?

“Oh, they’re starting!” cried Zhao Jun, instantly calling Li Lanfeng back from his scattered musings.

On the stage, the two mecha divided by a great disparity in strength finally clashed for the first time.

Facing her unfathomable father Ling Xiao, Ling Lan chose to take the initiative and attack. She just did not have the confidence that she would be able to withstand her dad’s powerful attacks, so she decided to take the advantage of striking first.

Ling Lan could be seen to control her mecha to sprint forwards like a gust of wind, striking out towards Ling Xiao’s mecha. When she was about 3 metres away, *Regretless*, which had been hanging low, was abruptly lifted up into a diagonal slash, drawing a streak of cold light through the air.

This was a mid-range attack! While Ling Lan had been waiting, she had already considered things thoroughly — the only close-range weapons on her father’s mecha were his short swords, so he did not have a long cold weapon like *Regretless* to fight against her. This undoubtedly gave Ling Lan a slight upper hand in terms of weapons, and this was also her only advantage.

“Not bad!” Seeing his daughter choose to execute a mid-range attack with her long weapon, Ling Xiao unstintingly gave praise. Against such a formidable opponent like himself, with no chance of winning, Ling Lan could still identify and use her greatest advantage to strike out against a weakness of his — this was undoubtedly a testament to Ling Lan’s levelheadedness and strategic mind.

However, Ling Xiao was a god-class operator after all. Moreover, he was operating a formidable imperial mecha — both in terms of control skills and plain mecha advantage, his strength exceeded Ling Lan's by too much. The counterplan Ling Lan had worked so hard to execute simply would not work against Ling Xiao.

With an elegant slide-step, Ling Xiao operated his mecha to twist to one side, dodging this streak of savage light. At the same time, the arms of his mecha folded firmly over the gleaming blade, actually performing an empty-handed weapon grab with his mecha.

Even though Ling Lan's attack was already so fast that it was almost impossible to catch with one's eyes, for Ling Xiao, it was still a little slow. He easily caught Ling Lan's Regretless between his palms.

"Ling Lan, this move won't work against me," said Ling Xiao with a smile, "You'll need to come up with something else."

"Father, don't get too careless now." The right arm of Ling Lan's mecha suddenly shook and pulled back, and Ling Xiao felt that long sword between his mecha's palms slipping away like a slippery fish, escaping from his tight clasp.

Ling Xiao's heart jolted and he instantly dashed back, once again pulling a distance away from Ling Lan.

He stared curiously at Regretless in Ling Lan's hands and could not help but ask, "This weapon is very unique. What are its attributes?" This particular quality which let it escape was something even Ling Xiao had never seen before

"Its special attributes are high tensile strength and sharpness," replied Ling Lan.

Ling Xiao immediately opened up his mecha's palm, and an extremely faint line could be seen on it. This made even Ling Lan² exclaim in awe, for it should be known that the outer shell of an imperial mecha was so strong that even the Federation's strongest beam saber would not be able to leave a mark on it. Who would have expected this Regretless to be able to do so ...

"This weapon is very powerful," lauded Ling Xiao.

"This is the work of one of the seniors in the academy. As long as I keep it well, even when I upgrade to ace mecha, it'll still be useful," Ling Lan was indeed very fond of Regretless; her introduction of it clearly carried a trace of pride.

"Once that senior of yours grows up and reworks this weapon two or three times, perhaps you might be able to use it for even longer," exclaimed Ling Xiao.

"It can still be reworked two or three times?" Ling Lan was overwhelmed with curiosity — she had thought that all weapons were forged to completion in one go.

"Of course. That's why a mature mecha battle clan must have an outstanding mechanic. They can help a battle clan's combat power rise vertically." Of course, once one reached imperial level and above, all this talk was just passing clouds.

"Aren't mecha battle clans all made up of people from the mecha piloting specialization?" Ling Xiao's words confused Ling Lan. She had truly thought that mecha battle clans were organisations built by a group of people who specialized in mecha piloting.

“Of course not ...” Ling Xiao replied, astounded. Could it be that Ling Lan did not know about this? However, after a beat, Ling Xiao figured it out. Generally, it was the father’s job to teach about all this, but he had been missing for 16 years, and since coming back, he had been bogged down with various official duties. Thus, he had not had any chances to communicate properly with his daughter, much less even think about teaching her all this.

Of course, if the student’s father was not a mecha operator, hence not allowing them to receive such instruction from their father, when they advanced to the second year of school, there would be mecha instructors who would guide students in building their own battle clans or in choosing one to join. At that time, Ling Lan too would have learned about the composition of a battle clan. However, right now, Ling Lan was still a first year, so she had yet to have a chance to learn any of this.

At this thought, Ling Xiao apologised and said, “This is all my fault, not instructing you in these things in time.” At the heart of it, it was still his own dereliction of duty as a father.

“In fact, the members of a mecha battle clan are not solely from the mecha piloting specialization. It can encompass many specializations — it all depends on what route your battle clan wants to take. Generally speaking, a battle clan needs three types of mecha warriors — close-range, comprehensive, and long-range — along with logistics and support units, which includes a repairman, a doctor, and a quartermaster, etcetera. Thus, at minimum, a battle clan requires 6 people. However, this type of small battle clan is inadequate to support the logistics component in the clan for long, so now, a developed mecha battle clan needs at least 12 people — 8 mecha warriors and 4 support personnel.” Ling Xiao continued to explain, “With 2 warriors for each support personnel, a mecha battle clan will be able to continue running smoothly. Each person in the clan will be able to benefit and grow without any wastage.”

Support personnel required warriors to provide for them, otherwise they would not be able to procure any resources to improve their abilities. This was why smaller battle clans were gradually being eliminated. Of course, a battle clan could also abandon logistics and support, but this type of battle clan would definitely be unable to compete with other clans which had better allocation of roles, so their elimination was also inevitable in the long run.

Chapter 298: The Price of Fate!

“In other words, if I want to lead my companions further, I need to make sure to allocate my members’ roles within the battle clan in the most logical and perfect way?” Ling Lan scrunched up her brow. It looked like she had taken things too much for granted ...

At this time, Ling Lan finally figured out some things she had always found puzzling before — why Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jiyun had chosen to apply for other specializations in the military academy even though their mecha control standards were not much lower than Xie Yi’s, Luo Lang’s, or the others. In Mecha World, they were all already at the level of advanced mecha warrior. It turned out that they were already familiar with the composition of a battle clan, and so had made their choice early on for the sake of the future of their battle clan. In contrast, as the boss, she had been rather muddled and clueless till now — though she had known subconsciously that they had done it for the team, she had not understood their motives as deeply as she did now.

“This is absolutely necessary. For example, that senior who made this weapon for you would be a great candidate. You should know that for a person to create such an outstanding weapon, he must have reached the pinnacle in terms of his mastery of materials. He is most definitely a prodigy in engineering and modification. He’ll be able to help you greatly by increasing your battle clan’s strength by onefold or even more,” replied Ling Xiao, “If he hasn’t joined any other battle clan yet, I recommend you act quickly. This kind of prodigy is a truly rare and lucky find.”

“Hn, I’ll have to think well on this.” Regarding the composition of their battle clan, Ling Lan still wanted to check in with Qi Long and the others first. After all, even if she wanted to expand the team and take in new people, Ling Lan still hoped to receive their agreement.

Right then, Ling Lan could not help but think of that dux of the military medical research specialization, Li Shiyu. At first, she had only felt that the other’s medical skills were amazing, which had moved her to establish a good relationship with him in hopes that if her team members were injured in future, they would have a trustworthy doctor to rely on. Now, from the looks of it, she needed to change her strategy and redraw her plans.

Ling Lan also recalled that the students studying to become military doctors typically would not join any battle clans, strictly holding onto a neutral stance. She reckoned that this dux, Li Shiyu, would also be the same. Ling Lan decided that no matter what, she must manipulate ... er, no, force ... wait, that’s not right either ... snatch him for her clan! Ling Lan silently clenched her fists tightly. She could not let this type of prodigy slip away just like that from her hands.

Li Shiyu, who had initially been not really all that important in Ling Lan’s mind, had all of a sudden become Ling Lan’s top priority target. Right then, Li Shiyu, who was still immersed in medical research in the Military Medical Research Centre, did not know that his future had already been decided for him by Ling Lan without him being the wiser! Let us take a moment of silence to mourn for him!

“If you really want to establish a battle clan, you indeed need to think well on this.” When Ling Xiao had mentioned the first half of his sentence, he could already feel the endless cold air seeping out from within Ling Lan’s mecha, and he smiled wryly.

It was probably impossible for his daughter to cast aside those few little companions who had grown up alongside her. At this moment, Ling Xiao did not know whether to be proud or sad¹ — his daughter, who should have been a bundle of adorableness to be cosseted in the palms of his hands, had now become so cold, stern, and domineering, her boss aura even more formidable and fearsome than his had been while he had been thriving in the military academy back in his time ...

Say, had his wife really given birth to a daughter? Ling Xiao was suddenly uncertain. He had the impulse to immediately contact his wife to confirm — back then, had she really given birth to a girl? Could it be that his wife had wanted a girl so much that she had forcefully decided to treat their son as a daughter?

This notion was quickly dispelled by Ling Xiao because it was an absolutely impossible scenario. He was really too stupid to even consider it, certain to be chased out of the bedroom by his wife for half a year if he asked her ...

“Of course, there are two ways the members of a battle clan can join. One way is for them to be permanent members. These people must have gone through some testing and have earned your trust.

And then there are some talents who may not be so reliable, who you can choose to sign on into your clan temporarily. For example, you could take in some battle clan members temporarily, just for these few years at the academy, and once you all graduate, the contract automatically ends.”

Ling Xiao shoved aside all those messy thoughts in his mind, continuing on with the previous topic and listing the rest of the key information about battle clans, “Aside from a few necessary permanent members, a typical battle clan is primarily made up of contracted members, because no one can guarantee that in future, there won’t be better team members who come along. One more thing — permanent team members who are not united in spirit, who do not trust each other unconditionally, may very well choose differently when the time comes to choose their army division in the future. This would not create much difficulty for those team members themselves, but for the battle clan leader, the departure of a permanent member could be devastating. This would indicate that this team leader does not possess great leadership abilities and may also have problems with his judgement of character. In the army divisions, this would significantly impact that leader’s future progress. Of course, this point won’t influence you much. As long as you think they’re alright, just take in whoever you want. You don’t have to worry.”

Ling Lan would definitely be in Ling Xiao’s army division in the future. As long as she did not commit any major fault, ascending the ranks step by step would certainly be no issue. Besides, Ling Xiao and Lan Luofeng were already in tacit agreement — they would gradually weaken the presence of the male Ling Lan, not allowing her to stand out too much in the division. Therefore, even if her battle clan really split apart in future, there would not be much impact on Ling Lan’s future.

“A battle clan usually only stabilises properly after the clan has entered an army division. That’s why the clan leader who organised the clan would mostly choose to have temporary contracts with the members, waiting to properly establish the battle clan after he has chosen and entered an army division.” Ling Xiao went through all the important parts of building a battle clan.

Ling Lan nodded pensively, and then Ling Xiao asked, “Right, are the specializations of all those companions of yours in Mecha Piloting?”

“Hm, Lin Zhong-qing chose Logistics, Han Jijyun chose Starship Command, while Qi Long, Luo Lang and Xie Yi chose the same as me, Mecha Piloting.” Ling Lan responded to Ling Xiao’s question by listing out all the specializations of her companions.

Ling Xiao’s eyes sparkled at this response. Inside, he was happy for his daughter’s sake — these little fellows had truly been aiming for the perfect establishment of a battle clan. “Are Qi Long, Luo Lang and Xie Yi particularly strong in terms of combat ability? And are their awakened innate talents more suited to mecha piloting?”

“Yes, compared to Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijyun, it is indeed so,” Ling Lan nodded and said.

Pleased, Ling Xiao nodded and said, “From the looks of it, your battle clan is still lacking a strategic adviser, a doctor, and an engineer-mechanic. High level engineer-mechanics are generally in high demand. If you can’t find a particularly exceptional one, I recommend you look for a skilled mecha repairman. That would be more useful than an average engineer-mechanic. The extra slots you have on your team can be filled with several other strong mecha operators.”

“There’s no need to look for a strategic adviser. That’s Han Jijyun’s secondary specialization. He was already exceptionally gifted in that area, only choosing Starship Command for the future of the battle clan,” Ling Lan conveyed the situation with Han Jijyun to Ling Xiao.

Ling Xiao found himself speechless. He really had no words to describe how lucky Ling Lan was. Actually having such an exceptional prodigy among the companions she grew up with, able to take on two roles ... this way, the battle clan would have one less support member to provide for, and the pressure would be much less. It could be said that in comparison to other similar 12-man battle clans, Ling Lan’s battle clan would definitely be much stronger because of this ².

“Ling Lan, you need to cherish these companions well. They’re really very good,” said Ling Xiao seriously. Since the members were giving their all to contribute to the formation of the battle clan, as the clan leader, Ling Lan needed to live up to their contributions.

Ling Lan’s lips quirked up at these words, and she nodded solemnly and said, “Don’t worry, father, they are the most important friends of my life. I will definitely treasure them.”

That said, Ling Lan’s gaze narrowed in contemplation, silently considering a candidate for the engineer-mechanic of her team. No matter what, getting to know [No Mecha Unrepaired] in Mecha World was indeed a stroke of luck, plus the other was also from the First Men’s Military Academy — he was truly the most suitable candidate. At first, she had only thought to establish a good connection with the other, but now, this idea of taking him in was indeed a good one. It would resolve the problem of finding an extremely important support member for her battle clan.

Right then, [No Mecha Unrepaired], who was in the Suncreed City Library engrossed in researching all sorts of blueprints and reference materials, felt a sudden chill go through his body. He lifted his head warily, silently observing the other fellow aficionados in the library who were similarly bent over their own blueprints and diagrams in focused study. After all, he had offended the Thunder King before; who knew whether the other would send people to trouble him here in Suncreed City ...

He looked left and he looked right, however, no matter how he looked, he could see nothing strange ... could it be that he was too tired lately, thus messing up his sense of perception? [No Mecha Unrepaired] decided to finish up with the diagram he was studying and then take a good rest so that he could avoid this sort of paranoia messing with his productivity ...

At this thought, Ling Lan involuntarily turned her head to glance at the two people watching the fight. Could these two people also be serendipitous acquaintances for her? Ling Lan’s mind stirred, and she turned to ask Ling Xiao, “Father, what are the IDs of those two mecha?”

“Why do you ask for their IDs? Has something happened?” Ling Xiao frowned. He had allowed those two to spectate because he wanted to show them a kindness, but he did not want them to distract his daughter from learning.

“No, I’m just wondering whether they could be a fated connection for me. They could turn out to be a member of my battle clan in future,” said Ling Lan coolly, “Fated meetings are not so easy to come by; perhaps they should pay some price for this ...”

Er ... is this his daughter? Isn’t this too sly and cunning? Ling Xiao could not help but glance at those two innocent mecha who were still clueless about what was happening. In his heart, however, he firmly gave his daughter 32 thumbs ups ³ : *D*mn, as expected of a daughter of mine, definitely never taking a loss if she can help it.*

“The black mecha is called [Forge the Future] ⁴ , while the advanced mecha is called [Self-Defined Destiny] ⁵ ,” Ling Xiao revealed their IDs to his daughter without any hesitation, using action to show his support for his daughter’s decision.

Seeing the two mecha on the stage stop fighting to turn and look at them one after the other, Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun felt their hearts skip a beat. Was the other side about to kick them out now? In his mecha’s cockpit, Zhao Jun even began to pray with his palms held together: *Oh God, please no!*

In the midst of Li Lanfeng’s and Zhao Jun’s worrying, the two mecha on the stage turned back in silent unison, and then the intermediate mecha suddenly leapt backwards, pulling away once more from the imperial mecha to put some distance between them. It looked like a new fight was about to begin.

“That scared me! I thought we were really about to get kicked out of here!” Only then did Zhao Jun lower his palms with the sense of relief of a survivor, exclaiming to Li Lanfeng with some lingering fear.

“For some reason, I still feel somewhat uneasy.” Li Lanfeng did not know why, but a strong sense of danger was spreading within his heart.

Chapter 299: Advanced Mecha Warrior?

“What’s wrong? Could it be that they truly intend to kick us out?” Zhao Jun, who had relaxed, was once again anxious as he asked with a look of concern.

“No, since they have yet to kick us out, I doubt they would do that after this. However, I have a hunch that we might have to pay a huge price if we continue observing ...” Li Lanfeng’s voice was extremely soft, seemingly talking to himself. He was unable to come up with a reason at the moment as to why he had that hunch.

“Even if we have to pay a price, are you willing to abandon this opportunity?” Zhao Jun did not believe Li Lanfeng was willing to take the initiative and leave.

“Of course not. Even if I have to pay a huge price, I will still stay and observe.” Li Lanfeng replied decisively and smiled bitterly afterwards.

Being a number one elite family, the Li Family naturally had a few imperial operators serving them. However, no matter if it was his current identity or his other unpresentable identity, he did not have the right to obtain pointers from those people ... He was thus unable to reject the temptation before him, especially because he wanted to become a winner who could dictate his own destiny and that was why he was all the more unable to reject this opportunity.

“Therefore, why should we think about the future? What we should do now, is to grasp the opportunity to observe and study what’s before us.” Zhao Jun smiled, being of the same mind.

“You’re right!” Li Lanfeng laughed soundlessly and started to reflect on his mentality of overthinking things. It was just that this bad habit had been ingrained in him from a young age and was impossible to correct even if he wanted to. Thinking of this, Li Lanfeng sighed softly and appeared at a loss.

“Quick, take a look, the intermediate mecha is moving!” Zhao Jun’s shout suddenly sounded beside his ears. Luckily they were using their private comms or else, with Zhao Jun making such a big disturbance, they would have definitely been chased out by the room’s owner.

Li Lanfeng hurriedly curbed his thoughts and focused on the arena. The intermediate mecha had indeed moved but it did not choose to attack immediately. Instead, it hopped around the imperial operator by the edge of the arena at high speed. Its speed increased to the point where the mecha’s silhouette turned blurry.

“How is this possible? This shadow slidestep is a technique only an advanced mecha warrior would know.” Looking at this scene, Zhao Jun cried out in disbelieving surprise.

Li Lanfeng’s expression instantly stiffened. Could it be that the operator of this intermediate mecha was an advanced mecha warrior? There were numerous techniques that could only be executed with a compatible mecha, just like the shadow slidestep which was an exclusive technique of an advanced mecha. Did an intermediate mecha have the capability of allowing the operator to execute such a technique?

For some reason, the rabbit mecha of that time surfaced in Li Lanfeng’s mind at this moment. It had clearly been a trainee mecha, yet the other party had executed many movements which exceeded the limit of a trainee mecha, pushing the mecha to its extreme limits. Wait, it was to the extent of even exceeding the limit ... Could it be that this intermediate mecha operator was another outstanding aberrant operator?

“No, it’s impossible ... the rabbit mecha operator is unique and unmatched.” Li Lanfeng shook his head and expelled the thoughts in his mind. He would never admit that someone could be mentioned on equal terms with the rabbit in his heart.

Just as both spectators were bewildered, the intermediate mecha finally launched another attack after circling several times around the arena.

The shadow slidestep was simultaneously an evasion and confusion technique that would cause illusions to appear before the opponent. An afterimage of the mecha would be displayed through the external recording device, and although this would only cause several seconds of delay, it could perhaps lead to an important turning point to obtain victory during a high-speed mecha fight.

Therefore, by the time Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng could see the attacking movement of the intermediate mecha clearly, it had already appeared behind the imperial mecha, and the sharp, shiny, black tangdao in its right hand chopped down, making a sound of tearing through air. This showed that the attack was both powerful and fierce, but while facing this attack the imperial mecha did not move in the slightest.

Even though Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng knew that it was impossible for the attack to land, seeing the intermediate mecha's tangdao about to chop down on the imperial mecha's shoulder made them involuntarily cry out "ahh!" in alarm as the mecha was so close to danger.

With a resounding 'bang', the imperial operator merely leaned slightly to the side and, raising his right hand, stopped the tangdao that was about to strike the shoulder of his mecha. So it turned out that the beam shield on the imperial mecha had quietly activated while the tangdao had struck the beam shield, which generated a powerful rebound and directly sent the intermediate mecha bouncing backwards into the air.

Both of them were under the impression that the intermediate mecha would retreat after having made an ineffective attack, but it suddenly rallied itself and renewed its onslaught. After the intermediate mecha was sent away by the rebound, its originally silent engine abruptly exploded with noise and using its thrusters as opposing force, it directly neutralized the powerful rebound force.

The mecha's engine ceased once again after neutralizing the rebound force. Having maintained its position, the intermediate mecha suddenly began to rotate rapidly like a spinning top before following up by launching a fierce kick towards the imperial mecha below it.

"Whirlwind Garotte!" Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng once again cried out in surprise as this was another advanced-level technique exclusive to advanced mecha warriors.

Seemingly having anticipated this move, the imperial operator once again easily broke through the move. The operator was only seen to decisively raise both arms of his mecha, easily grasping firm hold of the intermediate mecha's powerful kick from among the flurry of afterimages of the spinning leg.

There was a loud 'bang' as the intermediate mecha was firmly smashed onto the ground and slid out several meters.

The instant it was smashed onto the ground, even Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng, who were standing at the edge spectating the fight, could feel an intense vibration from where they stood. This terrifying impact caused their expressions to faintly change, believing that the advanced mecha warrior who had received the brunt of this force would not be feeling any better than what they imagined.

Both of them were under the impression that the intermediate mecha would halt all its movements. Even if its body was sturdy, usually one would choose to lie down on the ground to recover their conditions for a few seconds upon receiving such a powerful blow. Unexpectedly, while the mecha was sliding out several meters and had yet to stop, it moved once again as its right hand suddenly slammed the ground and using the rebound force, the entire mecha soared into the air.

At the same time, the mecha's engine turned on again and this time round, it took advantage of its speed to fiercely pounce towards the imperial mecha in a flash. The cold weapon in its hand carried the momentum of a violent storm as it chopped towards the imperial mecha. Seeing the intermediate mecha dashing around the imperial mecha, no one could guess at the intermediate mecha's direction of movement. This type of irregular movement style caused Zhao Jun's and Li Lanfeng's countenance to change once again.

Currently, they were certain that the operator controlling the intermediate mecha was absolutely not an intermediate mecha warrior as they had previously believed and was undoubtedly an advanced mecha

warrior. Reason being, this type of irregular movement style required the execution of numerous hand movements at a frightening speed in an instant; it was definitely not something an intermediate mecha warrior could accomplish.

Li Lanfeng could not help but think to himself, that if he were to operate this intermediate mecha, could he accomplish those practically non-stop hand movements like the other party could? Considering the limitations of the intermediate mecha, Li Lanfeng realised that it would be very difficult. Perhaps he might be able to accomplish it, but it would not be possible to perform it so brilliantly and smoothly and at the same time with such ease like the other. Did this mean that the other party's control skills were better than his?

Thinking of this, Li Lanfeng felt faintly disappointed inside. Genius operators had appeared around him one after another — with his average control talent, would he truly be able to change his fate as he challenged heaven's will?

“Hey, talent is indeed important, but foundations and hard work are of more importance than talent. If you were to train all levels of foundational controls to perfection, I believe that you will not be inferior compared to those geniuses ...” The words left behind by that rabbit mecha surfaced once again in Li Lanfeng's heart and he was suddenly jolted to his senses. That's right, maybe he was lacking in talent, but he would continue working hard and practice every foundational control skill until they became part of his instinct. Although the difficulty increased with each level, he had never forgotten the warning words of advice the rabbit had given him, and this had always been his psychological pillar!

“Rest assured, I will not be defeated by those geniuses. I will be more hardworking than them and when we meet, I hope I will no longer be looking up at you.” Li Lanfeng secretly clenched his fists as his confidence, which had received a setback due to the intermediate mecha, once again recovered.

He could lose to his rabbit friend, but he could not lose to others. Even if the intermediate mecha warrior before him had an aberrant talent in control, it could not cause his confidence to crumble.

He would never lose to the other party!

On the arena, the sounds of fighting had never stopped, and at times the rhythm of those sounds even seemed as if they were well planned and methodically arranged. Even though the battle was somewhat indistinct from Zhao Jun's and Li Lanfeng's perspective, they knew that the imperial operator had without a doubt intercepted all the advanced mecha warrior's irregular attacks.

Just like that, the intermediate mecha continued to launch fierce attacks for approximately one minute. Although it might not seem long, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng understood that during this one minute, the hand speed of the intermediate mecha operator had been in a state of high speed. Even Zhao Jun, who was classified as a special-class operator, could not help but tremble internally, hands starting to throb in pain as he imagined himself being the one doing the operating.

These movements had high requirements of an operator's hand speed and for an ordinary intermediate mecha to execute those high-level techniques, it would require the operator's control skills to match. Therefore, Zhao Jun even suspected that the operator's hands were currently cramped and had become numb.

When the intermediate mecha landed, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng could not help but breathe out, thinking that they should be able to relax and rest for a moment now. Unexpectedly, the intermediate mecha had just landed when it once again moved and executed a shadow slidestep, the exclusive technique of advanced mecha, while dashing towards the imperial mecha ...

“What the f*ck, does he never get tired?” Zhao Jun could not help but curse. Could it be that the operator of the intermediate mecha was a robot?

“What if the other party’s true level is at mecha master level?” Li Lanfeng replied unperturbedly.

From the control skills displayed by the intermediate mecha, Li Lanfeng did not think that the other party’s real skills were only that of an advanced mecha warrior. He even believed that, perhaps, the other party might have already reached the level of a special-class operator, or even possibly the level of an ace operator.

Chapter 300: Ling Lan’s Mistake!

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Although these conjectures caused discomfort in Li Lanfeng’s heart and made him feel that the huge difference between them would be difficult to make up for, he would not disregard the other party’s strength due to this.

“It couldn’t be ...” Zhao Jun replied in astonishment. When fighting against an imperial operator, even if it was just a guidance match, it was undoubtedly an insult towards that operator by using an intermediate mecha to take up the challenge.

“Perhaps there might be a deeper meaning to it.” Li Lanfeng touched his chin and started pondering.

“What deeper meaning?” Zhao Jun asked in puzzlement.

“Could using a lesser mecha to execute advanced-level techniques help in comprehending those advanced-level techniques?” Li Lanfeng had indeed overthought things; he would always come up with some reasonings to convince himself, just like now. He decided to go redeem an intermediate mecha again after he finished spectating the fight, and experiment using advanced-level techniques on that mecha to see if it would be of help in improving his control over advanced techniques.

Based on Li Lanfeng’s current strength and hand speed, he had already achieved the standard to advance to special-class operator level. The reason he had yet to advance was that he felt there were some fundamental movements that he was unable to execute exactly as he willed. He had always borne in mind the words that the rabbit mecha had consoled him with, so without perfecting those techniques, he was unable to convince himself to enter the next level.

He had originally assumed that this problem was due to insufficient practice, but from the current situation, he felt that perhaps it might be because of his lack of thorough understanding and that it was time to change and try another method.

At this moment, Ling Lan was unaware that her execution of techniques surpassing her level had caused Li Lanfeng, who was spectating the fight, to have a different train of thought, hence opening up a

different type of training method. This fortuitous misconception gave him new insight towards foundational control.

“Ling Lan, are you still not aware that there’s a problem with your control?”

Just as Ling Lan executed a shadow sidestep to continue attacking Ling Xiao, her father’s indifferent voice suddenly sounded out in the cockpit. Ling Xiao’s voice had always contained indulgence and acknowledgement, yet his current tone actually contained a hint of coldness and reproach.

Hearing his words, Ling Lan was alarmed, but her attack was already a nocked arrow that had to be released. Ling Xiao’s counterattack was efficient this time — he launched a palm strike which, with a snapping sound, struck the crook of the arm of the mecha that Ling Lan was operating. It directly destroyed the mecha arm’s control system, which basically meant that the right hand of Ling Lan’s mecha had been crippled.

With a ‘clang’, the cold weapon Regretless in Ling Lan’s hand dropped to the ground. The right hand which had lost control obviously did not have any means of holding onto that heavy weapon, and so the weapon was naturally dropped.

Ling Lan immediately leaped backwards, increasing the distance between them, and quietly stood stationary while starting to decipher the meaning of Ling Xiao’s questioning words.

“Ling Lan, after launching attacks for so long, haven’t you noticed your problem?” Ling Xiao’s voice once again rang out in the cockpit, asking the same question.

“Is there a problem?” Ling Lan pondered aloud. Indeed, she had not noticed any problems with her own control. Although executing advanced-level techniques which were distinctive to advanced mecha on an intermediate mecha was quite strenuous, she had undoubtedly increased the combat power of the mecha several times over. Otherwise, based on an intermediate mecha’s capability, it would have been impossible to exchange blows with an imperial mecha for such an extended period of time and she would have long been knocked down.

“Are you thinking that you’ve increased the mecha’s combat power?” Ling Xiao could make out Ling Lan’s thoughts at a glance and so bluntly asked her.

“Yes,” Ling Lan replied honestly.

“But are things really what you believe them to be?” Ling Xiao’s questioning stunned Ling Lan. Using higher level techniques would of course allow a mecha’s power to be greater. Or was she mistaken?

“What’s the current damage level of your mecha?” Ling Xiao sighed and could not help but rub at his brow.

As a father, he had lacked severely in fulfilling his obligations. If Ling Lan had not proposed to have him guide her in mecha piloting, he would not have known that his daughter’s understanding of mecha piloting would have actually entered a diverged route. It seemed like there were too many things he had to learn to become a competent father. However, it was not serious as it was not considered too late for him to have realised this.

Ling Xiao took a glance at the silent intermediate mecha displayed on his screen and felt certain. As long as Ling Lan realised her mistake, her control skills were bound to improve. Thinking of this, Ling Xiao could not help but feel proud once again. Take a look, this is my, Ling Xiao's daughter. Even though she's a female, she has still managed to inherit my exceptional control talent, and she'll definitely be the best female mecha master.

Ling Xiao had high hopes for Ling Lan and believed that she would inevitably become an ace mecha master. Of course, under his wholehearted nurturing, it was not impossible for her to become the number one imperial operator in the Federation. Thinking of this possibility, Ling Xiao could not help but tremble. Despite being a god-class operator, he was still so moved at the thought of possibly witnessing his daughter ascending to the pinnacle that he could not be calm.

Alright, please forgive a father's feelings. Even if Ling Xiao was a god-class operator, at this moment, he was still an ordinary father who dearly loved his daughter.

Upon hearing Ling Xiao's words, Ling Lan did not delay in asking Little Four, who was currently in control of the mecha, about the mecha's condition.

Little Four replied that although he had tried his utmost to maintain the mecha's balance, its current damage level was already at 32.77% due to Ling Lan overextending the mecha by repeatedly executing advanced-level techniques. That was to say, if Ling Lan were to continue fighting in this manner, the mecha would only be able to sustain itself for another three minutes before it would completely fall apart.

"Damage level is at 32.77%." Ling Lan had not expected that the mecha's damage level would be so high. She somewhat dejectedly relayed this answer to Ling Xiao.

Ling Xiao quirked his brows, somewhat surprised. He had assumed that, with Ling Lan frantically overextending the mecha, the damage level was sure to be more than 40%. Unexpectedly, it was only slightly over 30%. It seemed like his daughter normally took great care of her mecha and made sure that every function of the mecha was adjusted to near optimum levels, thus being able to keep the damage level this low.

Ling Xiao was very satisfied by this. Only a mecha operator who truly cherished their mecha would be able to understand the significance of a mecha to an operator, and thus be able to bring out the true potential of the mecha without restraint. Without him having to bring this to her attention, his own daughter had been able to naturally comprehend this aspect. This proved that his daughter was a natural-born, outstanding mecha operator.

Ling Xiao, who was filled with appreciation for his daughter at this moment, was not aware that his daughter was absolutely not as great as he imagined. The mecha's low damage rate was completely due to Ling Lan's cheat, the omnipotent Little Four, who had done his utmost in preserving and maintaining the mecha. However, Little Four was exclusively Ling Lan's and could be considered as part of Ling Lan's ability, so Ling Xiao could not be considered to have been joyous for nothing.

"According to this damage rate, you'll only be able to continue for another three minutes. Do you perhaps think you can defeat me during those three minutes?" Even though Ling Xiao was very satisfied with his daughter, his tone was still cold. At this moment, he was not playing the role of a gentle father

but a strict teacher. Since a problem with Ling Lan's mecha piloting had surfaced, then Ling Xiao needed to let Ling Lan understand her problem and keep it in mind.

"No, I've never thought so. Even if father were to abandon your defences and stand there like a sandbag for me to attack as I wish for three minutes, I would still be unable to defeat you." Ling Lan was clear about the difference in strength between her and Ling Xiao. She had merely had the extravagant hope of landing an attack on him once ... only now did Ling Lan realize that her wish was actually so insignificant. From the start, she had been so oppressed by her father's powerful aura that she was somewhat breathless.

"I was only hoping to let father witness the techniques I have mastered. Of course, were it possible, I very much wished to land a strike on you." Ling Lan honestly revealed her own thoughts.

"Do you think you can achieve that?" Ling Xiao snorted and used the tip of his mecha's toe to point at his current position. Ling Lan subconsciously looked over, and what she saw caused Ling Lan to be transfixed. Her expression which had still been quite calm and collected suddenly froze.

"Have you understood?" Ling Xiao asked coldly.

"Yes, I was too egotistical," replied Ling Lan with a bitter smile; she saw that despite all her advanced attacks that she had racked her brains to think up, it had all been insignificant to her father Ling Xiao. Because from the start, the feet of Ling Xiao's mecha had never moved; he had stood there all along. Currently, he was still standing in the same spot and even his feet had not lifted once.

"It's not a problem wanting to win, but the problem lies in you. After executing those ineffective advanced-level techniques, why did you obstinately persist in using them? You clearly knew that if you were to repeatedly execute those techniques, not only would it be a huge burden on yourself, it would be the same for your mecha ... Ultimately, there would have been no need for others to defeat you as you would have caused your own defeat. Is this something a qualified mecha operator should do?" Ling Xiao questioned with a grim expression.

Ling Xiao's questioning caused Ling Lan to lower her head in shame. He was right — other than having talent and capability, a cool head could not be lacked as this was related to the decision-making and methods of coping during a battle. A rash action could very well bring about an extreme crisis for a mecha operator and, at the same time, implicate their comrades. Earlier on, she had been too excited, agitated and rash. There had only been one thought in her mind at that moment and that was to successfully land a strike on her father as, after all, he was a god-class operator ... In the world of mecha, a god-class operator was equivalent to a god-like existence.

"You've forgotten something more important. In my legacy, I should have repeatedly emphasized that the foundation is of greatest importance for any techniques." Seeing that Ling Lan understood her own mistake, Ling Xiao sighed gently and his tone softened.

"Wasn't I using the foundational controls for advanced mecha?" Ling Lan asked in astonishment.

"Were they foundational controls? They should be a set of foundational controls built on other foundational controls, techniques specially developed for advanced mecha. If you were currently using an advanced mecha, I could have just barely agreed with your viewpoint. However, are you using an advanced mecha at this moment?" Ling Xiao once again answered her question with a question.

Ling Lan was left speechless by Ling Xiao's questioning and knew now that her viewpoint had been wrong. Perhaps for an advanced mecha, the techniques she had used were more or less the same as foundation controls and not particularly difficult. However, when using an intermediate mecha, they were undoubtedly challenging advanced-level techniques and indeed could not be related to foundational controls.