

Crossing 401

Chapter 401: Honest Confrontation!

In a blur, three more days passed. In another three days, it would come time for the battle between the Lingtian Mecha Clan and the Leiting Mecha Clan.

Everyone thought that Lingtian would definitely seize the time left to practise their mecha clan's teamwork, but found instead that all the regiment commanders and team leaders of the Lingtian Mecha Clan, including Ling Lan, acted just as before, attending classes like normal. It was as if they were not at all worried about the coming grand battle that would determine whether their mecha clan lived or died.

This behaviour of the Lingtian Mecha Clan puzzled all the other major factions greatly. Even Qiao Ting was unable to figure out what the Lingtian Mecha Clan was plotting with this.

Frankly, Ling Lan had not assembled all the members participating in the battle for team training because she really did not want their participant name list to be exposed prematurely to the Leiting Mecha Clan. However, she did not waste these three days. Whenever Ling Lan was free, she would work with Little Four in her mindscape to simulate the battle between the Lingtian Mecha Clan and the Leiting Mecha Clan.

After three days of repeated simulation, basically all of the formations Qiao Ting could use as well as all the possible flukes and coincidences that could occur on the various members involved had been recorded down. If any of these situations appeared in battle, Ling Lan would have a countermeasure at hand.

Of course, Ling Lan did not believe that her battle team would be any weaker than the team Qiao Ting was sending. However, in order to guarantee victory, she still made sure she was fully prepared. Ling Lan knew very well that, in a fight, there were just too many factors that could change the course of the battle. Ling Lan did not want to lose this match because she had overlooked any of these factors. Since the members of the Lingtian Mecha Clan had chosen to put their faith in her, then she must lead the Lingtian Mecha Clan to the summit — only then would she live up to this heavy burden of trust.

On this day, Ling Lan still went to school on time. She had long made the decision that she would only gather the participating members on the last day before the battle and hold their one and only teamwork practice then. Ling Lan was so bold because she believed that these people she had chosen were all talented prodigies in mecha control — just one practice would be enough.

The morning's theory classes were soon over. Following the end of class, lunch time arrived. When the bell signalling the end of class rang, the students respectfully bid farewell to their instructor and then some of the starving students rushed out ahead of the pack ...

"Boss Lan, class is over." Seated beside Ling Lan, Luo Lang shifted closer to whisper softly to Ling Lan, even as his hands deftly helped her pack up her things.

Hearing Luo Lang's words, Ling Lan opened her half-closed eyes. During the lesson, she and Little Four had been conducting another round of simulation.

Right at that moment, a youthful and tall youth suddenly appeared at the doorway. He merely peeked through the doorway, and when he saw Ling Lan, his eyes lit up. He quickly knocked on the door, announcing his presence, drawing the attention of the students who had yet to leave the classroom.

“Ah, isn’t that that unlucky Chang Xinyuan?” The students could not help but whisper to one another at the sight. The news of Leiting’s oppression of Chang Xinyuan had long since spread throughout the whole military academy — many of the new students greatly admired Chang Xinyuan’s courage, but of course there were also many who felt that Chang Xinyuan was foolish for not knowing his own strength, actually daring to defy Qiao Ting. He had almost been expelled from the academy for it.

Still, it could not be denied that Chang Xinyuan was extremely lucky. At that critical final juncture, he had actually chanced upon a mecha expert who was willing to help him escape from the miscellaneous obstacles set up by the Leiting Mecha Clan. In the end, he had fortunately managed to extend his military academy life.

However, a majority of the cadets were still not optimistic about Chang Xinyuan’s future. Even if Qiao Ting left the academy today, as long as Leiting was still the number one faction in the academy and as long as Qiao Ting did not retract his decision to hinder Chang Xinyuan, Chang Xinyuan’s subsequent academy life would still be rocky. His final outcome might still very well be expulsion from the school. No one believed that Chang Xinyuan would still be so lucky to meet some powerful mecha clan again next time which would help him complete those harder team missions in Mecha World ...

For such a controversial person to suddenly appear before them, the second-year Mecha Piloting Special Class students naturally could not help but talk.

“Boss Lan, are you free right now?” Chang Xinyuan did not seem to hear the susurrations of voices in the classroom. His complexion remained steady as he shouted out towards Ling Lan.

Ling Lan glanced at Luo Lang beside her and found that he had finished packing up for the both of them. So, she turned to nod at Chang Xinyuan and then stood up and walked out of the classroom.

Luo Lang quickly followed, and seeing this, Qi Long and Xie Yi also tagged along without hesitation. When Ling Lan arrived at the doorway, she said to Chang Xinyuan, “Let’s go!”

Chang Xinyuan turned aside to let Ling Lan’s entourage walk first, and only then did he trail after Xie Yi to depart the 2nd-year Mecha Piloting Special Class classroom.

As soon as Ling Lan’s group left, the entire classroom became a raucous mess. Everyone else remaining could not suppress the busybody within them, turning to ask the other members of the Lingtian Mecha Clan still in the classroom why Chang Xinyuan would seek out Ling Lan.

“Wu Jiong, why do you think Chang Xinyuan came to look for Boss Lan?” Ye Xu could not help but be puzzled by what he had seen. In his eyes, Boss Lan and that unfortunate soul 1 Chang Xinyuan could not be connected in any way, but somehow, these two people from completely different worlds obviously seemed to have some connection.

It turned out that Ling Lan had not revealed the member name list of the Lingtian Battle Clan to the other regiment commanders of the Lingtian Mecha Clan. For one, the Lingtian Mecha Clan had been converted from the New Cadet Regiment, so the members inherently held some antipathy towards the

senior cadets. Ling Lan felt that before things became stable, this was better kept as a secret. Secondly, all of the battle clans within the Lingtian Mecha Clan never had to submit their detailed name lists to the mecha clan to begin with. Every clan leader only needed to report the number of members they had — they did not even have to report the members' names or mecha levels for the record. The reason for this was both to ensure the autonomy of the battle clans, as well as to prevent the other factions from getting a clear read on the true capabilities of the Lingtian Mecha Clan.

Wu Jiong said somewhat contemplatively, "Perhaps, Chang Xinyuan is trying to seek asylum." An individual had no way of standing up against a group — if Chang Xinyuan was smart, even if he was unwilling to submit to Qiao Ting, he would still need to find some solid backing to help him withstand Qiao Ting's oppression.

"It looks like Chang Xinyuan would also like to take a gamble and fight. Right now, in the entire academy, other than our Lingtian Mecha Clan who has the courage to fight against the Leiting Mecha Clan, which other faction would dare to shelter him?" From behind Wu Jiong, a mocking and haughty voice rang out.

Wu Jiong turned his head with a half-smile on his face to say to the person behind him, "Who'd have guessed that even you would understand this?"

Li Yingjie glared angrily at Wu Jiong in response. "What? You think I'm an idiot?"

Wu Jiong smiled and said nothing, but the ridicule in his eyes was obvious. This made the rage in Li Yingjie's heart build up, and he smacked a fierce palm down onto the table before him, bellowing, "Before this, I just did not want to stoop to your level!"

"I know. Before this, you believed that your strength was enough to settle everything, so you never had to worry about plotting or scheming." Seeing Li Yingjie puff up like an angry cat, Wu Jiong quickly raised his arms in the universal sign of surrender and tried to console the other.

"You better know it!" Li Yingjie lifted his head haughtily — he felt from the very bottom of his heart that Wu Jiong spoke truly. If not for the fact that the First Men's Military Academy had gathered all of the aberrant prodigies under one roof, piling up the pressure on Li Yingjie, he would not have had to compromise and consider things a little more thoroughly when doing things. This kind of mentally-taxing thing was something he really disliked. He loved speaking with his fists the most, using pure brute strength to beat down those people who had anything bad to say about their Lingtian Mecha Clan.

Ye Xu looked at the prideful and prickly Li Yingjie and suddenly dipped his head, his shoulders shaking uncontrollably. Catching sight of this, Wu Jiong surreptitiously kicked Ye Xu, asking him to get a hold of himself.

With great effort, Ye Xu finally managed to suppress his laughter and raised his head to say to Wu Jiong, "Leader, I have some matter to attend to so I'll head out first. Please continue your conversation without me." In order to avoid being found out, Ye Xu decided that he should just retreat.

Wu Jiong quickly said, "Ye Xu, I have something about the battle clan to discuss with you. Li Yingjie, excuse us for now, let's talk next time."

Taken aback, Li Yingjie nodded woodenly and said, "Okay, got it."

After Wu Jiong and Ye Xu left the classroom, Li Yingjie suddenly realised something and burst out howling, “Wu Jiong, you bastard, actually mocking me. Stand where you are ...!” That said, he charged out of the classroom after them ...

In the Mecha Piloting Special Class, several other Lingtian Mecha Clan members could only shrug in response to the questioning gazes of the other students. These kinds of scenarios often occurred between Regiment Commander Wu and Regiment Commander Li. However, their relationship was not negatively affected by this, instead becoming much more harmonious than with others who kept up a polite facade. This once again proved that verbal sparring was sometimes an effective method to improve friendships.

“Qin Yi, in your Lingtian Mecha Clan, for two of the regiment commanders to interact like this ... isn’t that a problem?” One of the students beside Qin Yi could not help but ask. He was used to seeing the other factions having a strict hierarchy and being wary of outsiders. Even if there were any dissent among the leaders and they could not get along, they would not show it so obviously in front of others. They would always present a harmonious and united front to outsiders, putting on fake smiles. This type of outright taunting among the leaders of the Lingtian Mecha Clan was so fascinating in comparison ...

As Qin Yi packed up his things, he smiled and said, “What problem is there? With Boss Lan on top watching over things, nothing’s going to go wrong under him. Besides, who among us doesn’t know what Regiment Commander Li is like? His lack of tact and straightforwardness is an open secret in our clan. Even he himself is aware of this.”

“Also, the other regiment commanders of our Lingtian Mecha Clan may perhaps have some friction with one another, but as soon as Boss Lan gives an order, we will not forget that we are all one clan. This is trust and friendship which has been built up over ten years. It will not break apart so easily because of all this ...”

How could the Central Scout Academy students forget the grand feats they had managed to achieve time and time again under Boss Lan’s lead? And now, they were about to face a new challenge head on — a fight against the strongest faction in the First Men’s Military Academy. The Leiting Mecha Clan was finally going to be their next target — it was exhilarating just thinking about it. Which freshman organisation would dare to oppose the strongest senior faction right at the start of school? And yet their New Cadet Regiment had managed to do so. Which newly established mecha clan would dare to fight against the strongest senior mecha clan? Their Lingtian Mecha Clan had dared to do so ... Every decision of Boss Lan’s ushered in a new record, and Qin Yi believed that this trend definitely would not stop here.

Chapter 402: Mecha Modification!

Looking at the confident and composed Qin Yi, it was as if he were not at all concerned about the fight with Leiting in three days’ time ... this person talking to Qin Yi was not a member of the Lingtian Mecha Clan, and he suddenly had the urge to join. Although everyone believed that the Lingtian Mecha Clan was sure to lose and that they would soon become a joke of a mecha clan — being the clan with the shortest lifespan in the whole of academy history — when this youth saw the calm and unruffled demeanour of the Lingtian Mecha Clan members, he felt that the outcome might not be as horrible for Lingtian as everyone was imagining.

However, this was just a momentary impulse — very quickly, he had calmed down again. He smiled at Qin Yi, then moved back to his own seat. Still, he had mentally made a decision — if the Lingtian Mecha Clan really managed to overcome this crisis brought on by Leiting, he would join the Lingtian Mecha Clan without any hesitation. No matter how badly he would be oppressed by Leiting in future because of this, he would still persist in following the Lingtian Mecha Clan.

After leaving the classroom with Chang Xinyuan, Ling Lan did not know about these things that happened behind them, not to mention that there would be people who would choose to join the Lingtian Mecha Clan over this.

Right then, Ling Lan's group was rushing to the large canteen for lunch. Along the way, she was finding out what Chang Xinyuan had sought her out for.

The canteen had a mass eating area, and it also provided several private rooms for capable students who wanted a quiet area to isolate themselves and rest. For ease of communication, Ling Lan naturally chose a private room. Everyone in their group had just sat down when the other members of the team arrived one after another. It turned out that, along the way, Luo Lang had already informed the other team members to hurry over for a group meal.

Of course, Luo Lang had taken the effort to do so because he needed to inform Lin Zhong-qing about the gathering. As the head of support for the Lingtian Battle Clan, he managed all of the credits the team owned. If they wanted to enjoy a good meal, how could they exclude Lin Zhong-qing?

In less than five minutes, everyone had arrived. Li Lanfeng, Li Shiyu, and Zhao Jun were the quickest to arrive — as fifth-years, they did not have many classes to begin with, and they had only been preparing some documents for their applications for enlistment in their respective dorms.

Seeing that everyone was here, after asking what everyone wanted to eat, Lin Zhong-qing dragged Xie Yi and Luo Lang along with him to place the group's orders. The private rooms of the military academy did not have any service staff — the students needed to go out and order whatever they wanted to eat and carry it in themselves.

Fortunately, tea and water were provided in the room. Li Lanfeng did not dare to put on any airs of being a fifth-year senior — he diligently stood up and poured tea for everyone. For the sake of the rabbit, he would make nice and curry favour with the rabbit's team members ...

Chang Xinyuan picked up his teacup and took a sip, settling his mind before saying to Ling Lan, "Boss Lan, do you still remember that ace mecha you passed to me six months ago?"

Ling Lan, who had just raised her own teacup, paused abruptly and then nodded in sudden realisation.

On a particular day six months ago, Ling Lan had just advanced to ace operator status when Chang Xinyuan had suddenly contacted Ling Lan to tell her that he was studying the composition of ace mecha. Although he had already grasped everything in theory, without a physical mecha for him to take apart and analyse, there were some things he just could not figure out. Hearing that, Ling Lan instantly lent the ace mecha she had just received from the mainframe for her successful advancement to Chang Xinyuan for his research.

Ling Lan knew very well that only by combining theory and practice could one truly master the knowledge one learns. Chang Xinyuan, who had been stuck at the peak stage of intermediate mecha for all this time, would never have had the chance to obtain an ace mecha with his own power.

The conditions for redeeming an ace mecha were extremely strict — only those who had achieved an equivalent rank or above could redeem one. Oftentimes, a mecha mechanic would have extremely weak mecha piloting abilities, and thus would not be able to obtain the mecha they needed to tinker with on their own. This was also why a mecha mechanic would join a powerful battle clan — if they wanted to progress further, without a battle clan to help them obtain higher-level mecha, their modification skill development could only stagnate.

Of course, Ling Lan was so generous in lending Chang Xinyuan her mecha because she had enough confidence in herself. Taking part in cross-level challenges all the way, she had managed to earn a very large amount of points, enough to let her redeem yet another ace mecha. So, even if Chang Xinyuan was unable to put the mecha he borrowed back together after taking it apart, it would not influence Ling Lan's subsequent plans.

Just like that, that ace mecha was loaned out for over half a year. It had been so long that Ling Lan had already forgotten about it. Now, when Chang Xinyuan brought it up again, she was finally reminded of the matter. Ling Lan quickly asked, "You've already gotten a thorough comprehension of the internal structures of ace mecha?"

Chang Xinyuan nodded emphatically and said excitedly, "Yes, that mecha was right by my side every day. If I were not able to master its composition like this, that would truly be a shame." Saying this, Chang Xinyuan once again marvelled at his great luck in meeting such a good leader as Ling Lan. Just think, which battle clan leader would be so generous as to outright give a support mechanic an ace mecha just for research purposes? It was already not bad if a leader would even give you the time of day!

"Honestly, I was already pretty much done studying it about three months ago. For these last three months, I've been researching how I could make necessary modifications to an ace mecha ..." Chang Xinyuan pushed aside his feelings to say.

These words shocked the other team members who were drinking tea. Qi Long, in particular, could not stop himself from spewing out the tea in his mouth he had yet to swallow ...

Han Jijun levelled a vicious glare at Qi Long — seated right across from Qi Long, he was unfortunately sprayed with a faceful of tea ...

Qi Long quickly put down his teacup and pulled some tissue paper from the table top, offering it with an apologetic smile to Han Jijun, mouth spouting a continuous stream of apologies. It couldn't be helped. At this time, he could only humble himself and beg for his sworn brother's forgiveness.

In the midst of pouring tea, when Li Lanfeng heard Chang Xinyuan's words, he quickly set down the teapot, plopped himself down beside Chang Xinyuan, and asked with surprise, "For real? I've never heard that an ace mecha could be modified. Aren't mecha mechanics only able to modify mecha of special-class and below?"

Chang Xinyuan was originally a mild-mannered and reserved person, but when a professional problem was posed, he was extremely solemn. Li Lanfeng's words were obviously tinged with doubt — this

offended him, and his expression darkened as he retorted, “According to whom? In theory, as long as a mechanic’s modification skills continue to develop, even a god-class mecha is not beyond the scope of modification.”

“But there has never been any cases of a modified ace mecha before in the Federation.” In the face of Chang Xinyuan’s anger, Li Lanfeng acted guilelessly — he was merely stating the truth. It was still possible to see some partial modifications on special-class mecha, but ace mecha had always been limited to the five great unified models of the Federation. At most, individual ace mecha only differed in colour, and there might be some changes to the weapons equipped on them ...

“Truth is, when it comes to mecha at ace level, it is indeed already very difficult to make any modifications. Having been thoroughly researched and experimented on by countless generations of Federation people, these mecha are already pretty much perfect. Any unwise alterations would instead decrease the functional capacity of the mecha, and so it’s not really worth the trouble.” Li Lanfeng’s innocent-looking face and his very realistic words swiftly calmed Chang Xinyuan down.

“But in Mecha World, the possibilities are endless. There are some materials and weapons we would never dream of which can be found in Mecha World, and these can allow mechanics to break free from reality to conduct modifications on even higher level mecha.” Chang Xinyuan finally revealed the reason why he was able to modify ace mecha.

It should be said that Chang Xinyuan was truly very, very lucky. After completing a triple-S modification assignment, he had received a very generous reward from the mainframe. The reward included materials which only existed in legend in the real world and were extremely precious. It was all due to these materials that he was able to satisfy all the requirements needed to modify ace mecha.

Chang Xinyuan’s words made everyone fall into silent contemplation. Indeed, Mecha World was a virtual world. For example, even when it came to mecha operation, many ultra-difficult flying manoeuvres that were likely to result in a crash in the real world enjoyed a certain success rate inside Mecha World. Because there was no need to fear death, every mecha operator dared to attempt it. Even if they failed, they would at most lose a significant number of points — they just needed to start over again. It was also the existence of Mecha World which allowed mecha controls in the real world to diversify. Many moves which had been tried and tested in Mecha World by operators until their success rate achieved a certain guarantee would slowly surface in reality ...

Thus, if the possibility for breakthroughs existed for mecha controls, then it of course made sense that other specializations also shared this feature. Seated at one side, Li Shiyu began pondering deeply. Perhaps he should shift his medical research into Mecha World too; there were all sorts of miraculous agents in Mecha World which might help him find a cure for his eldest cousin brother’s constitution problem faster ...

Right then, Han Jiyun finally finished wiping away all traces of the tea Qi Long had spit all over his face. Only then did he have the heart to ask a question that had been bothering him. “But why have we never seen modifications of ace mecha in Mecha World before this?”

Everyone else agreed with his point, because regardless of whether it was in reality or the virtual world, they had really never seen any modified ace mecha before.

Chang Xinyuan was stunned at his words. Thinking about it now, he too had never seen a modified ace mecha before in the virtual world ... did that mean that none of the other mechanics had ever discovered that ace mecha could actually be modified?

“Could it be because of fixed thinking? No, no ...” Chang Xinyuan shook his head sharply. As a brilliant mechanic, one would never set restrictions on one’s imagination. A mechanic’s thoughts must be free to wander — this was the firm tenet of mechanics. Then, how could so many mechanics and those grand masters involved in more advanced research have overlooked this point? At this time, Chang Xinyuan suddenly thought of the outer appearance of the ace mecha he had modified, and in a flash of insight, he figured it out ...

“Is it because when we see modified mecha in Mecha World, we subconsciously believe that those cannot be ace mecha, and so take them to be mecha of other levels?” asked Chang Xinyuan, beside himself at the epiphany.

Chang Xinyuan’s words were like a bolt of lightning, blowing apart the constrained mindset of all the others there. Yes, ace mecha which had been modified were sure to look different from the initial ace mecha. At one glance, there would be no way at all for them to know if they were ace mecha, so they might have directly assumed those mecha were special-class mecha or even mecha below that ...

Everyone was stunned by the possibility. Ling Lan had noticed the shift in Chang Xinyuan’s expression throughout, and a thought tumbled through her mind. She asked, “Chang Xinyuan, have you succeeded in your ace mecha modification?”

Ling Lan’s self-assured and composed demeanour astounded Chang Xinyuan. In shock, he said, “Boss Lan, how did you know?”

Chapter 403: Black!

“Only if your modification was successful would you know that the outer appearance of a modified ace mecha is different from that of official ace mecha. Only then would you realise this issue,” explained Ling Lan indifferently. This kind of demeanour where it seemed like everything was according to plan received the deep admiration of the battle clan members — as expected of their Boss Lan; nothing could be hidden from him.

Chang Xinyuan nodded, thoroughly convinced. “Boss Lan, you’re completely right. I have indeed finished modifying the ace mecha successfully. Today, I’m just here to tell you this news. I would like for you to go online to test it out so I can conduct a data assessment and make some final adjustments to the mecha.” At this point, Chang Xinyuan scratched his head bashfully, becoming somewhat embarrassed. “Although I think that I’ve modified it successfully, without feedback from an operator, I can’t be sure whether my modification is truly successful.”

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s all go take a look!” Qi Long was the first to leap up in excitement. This was the first time he would see a modified ace mecha! It was truly too exciting!

Qi Long’s words received hearty approval from everyone. At this moment, Lin Zhong-qing, Xie Yi, and Luo Lang had finally brought all their food over. Before they could even set down the dishes, everyone was rushing at them like hungry wolves.

The three of them did not have enough time to react before the dishes had been snatched away, leaving them with only the large empty trays in their hands. They stared at each other in bewilderment, eyes filled with incomprehension. It had only been several minutes and their companions had become so hungry to this extent?

Frankly, after learning the truth, the members did not wish to waste time eating here. If they hadn't had to eat lunch to replenish their strength, they would have long left the canteen to return to their respective dorms and logged in to the virtual world ...

Even though he was eating rapidly, Han Jijyun still maintained his usual graceful air. Catching sight of the dumbstruck three at the door, he sighed softly inside his heart and said, "Eat quickly. Later, log onto the virtual world. There'll be a great surprise."

Beside Han Jijyun, Qi Long raised his head at Han Jijyun's words to nod emphatically at Lin Zhong-qing, Luo Lang, and Xie Yi, confirming that his sworn brother was telling the truth. His gaze was obviously telling them that they would regret it if they missed out.

Although Lin Zhong-qing was unsure what the so-called surprise Han Jijyun had said could be, he also knew that for their companions to be so worked up, the surprise must not be some trivial thing. And so, he threw Xie Yi and Luo Lang a pointed look, and then turned into a ravenous wolf like the others to join in the scramble for the food.

In less than three minutes, they had finished off the meal. In contrast to the others' messiness, Ling Lan was the most composed, but moving the swiftest, she had certainly been the one to eat the most ... this caused the team members' eyes to express an extremely mournful sort of gaze. Boss, when can you share this ultimate skill with us? Speaking of which, they still were not full yet ...

Soon, the battle clan members assembled at top speed in the large main base camp of the Lingtian Battle Clan in Mecha World. As they had accomplished an SSS-rank mission, the Lingtian Battle Clan possessed their own camp grounds. And in order to support the intensive cultivation of Chang Xinyuan, Ling Lan had spent an exorbitant amount of financial and materials resources to build a mecha modification research centre for him in the camp.

As soon as everyone entered the research centre, they were automatically discharged from their respective mecha. In the spacious and empty research centre, there was no sense of crowding even though there was suddenly ten more people within it. The crowd had yet to get over their shock at how vast the research centre was when their attention was drawn to the grand and mighty-looking mecha standing tall in the centre of the space.

This mecha was currently still in the original steely-grey colour of mecha steel, and because Ling Lan's original choice was a close-combat mecha, Chang Xinyuan's modification direction was also heavily focused on close combat. The whole mecha's appearance had become extremely ferocious — in contrast to the typically graceful long lines of ace mecha, this mecha had veered away from this characteristic to pursue a sort of ultimate barbarism. In particular, the mecha's arms and legs were obviously much thicker.

"Holy sh*t, this form, so powerful, I like!" The moment Qi Long set eyes on it, he was utterly besotted by the mecha. Red hearts bloomed in his eyes as he rushed forwards uncontrollably to stroke the mecha

carefully, as if he were caressing the body of the woman he loved. That intoxicated expression on his face prompted goosebumps all over the others' bodies.

Qi Long, who had been chasing in Ling Lan's footsteps all this time, had also inherited Ling Lan's style when it came to mecha combat and operation. He preferred thrilling and dangerous close-combat attacks, so he had no defence at all against this type of powerful close-combat oriented mecha.

Zhao Jun and Qi Long's feelings for the mecha were almost identical. If not for the fact that he had only joined the clan not too long ago, Zhao Jun most probably would have added one to the number of people molesting the mecha. Luckily, in order to retain his good impression in his clan leader's eyes, he managed to restrain himself. Of course, it was worth mentioning here that the primary hero which had enlightened Zhao Jun in time to stop him from committing such a mistake was Li Lanfeng's unmerciful stomp from beside him. It had almost fractured the bones in the back of Zhao Jun's foot.

The others, such as Luo Lang, also revealed envious looks. However, though Luo Lang was envious, he was not as worked up as Qi Long and Zhao Jun. This was because he knew that close-combat mecha had nothing much to do with him. He knew his own body well — although it looked like it was similar to Boss Ling Lan's body type, slender and lean, in terms of strength, his body was considerably weaker than his boss's. If not for Li Lanfeng still being worse off than him, Luo Lang would have even suspected whether being part of a pair of twins had affected his constitution ...

Seeing how fascinated everyone was with his modification, Chang Xinyuan was unbelievably excited. He said to Ling Lan, "Boss Lan, because I didn't know what colour you like, I haven't painted the outer armour of the mecha yet. Now you just need to say the word. What colour would you like it to be? Or perhaps you would like a combination of colours?"

Ling Lan had been studying the outer appearance of the mecha. Sure enough, the modified mecha looked very different on the outside from normal ace mecha. If Chang Xinyuan had not said that this mecha had been modified from her ace mecha, she would probably have been unable to determine the level of this mecha at short notice. When she heard Chang Xinyuan's question, an idea sparked in her mind and she said, "Black will do."

"Black?" The other members of the battle clan could not help but exclaim at Ling Lan's choice. Even Chang Xinyuan was gobsmacked — the Federation military had regulated that black was the specified colour for special-class mecha. Generally, modified mecha, unless they were special-class mecha, would avoid this colour and choose some other hue.

"Won't that be interesting? Since no one believes that ace mecha can be modified, then let's just use the colour set for special-class mecha and fool Leiting into thinking that it's a special-class mecha," said Ling Lan coldly. Her composed demeanour belied how cunning and sneaky her words were; this was obviously a scam ...

"What a great idea." Li Lanfeng was the first to step up and express approval for the plan. The fellow was a black-bellied sort to begin with, liking to snare and set up others, and this decision of Ling Lan's was obviously meant to trick Qiao Ting, so of course he would approve with his entire being.

Frankly, Ling Lan's meaning was already very clear — all those who were not the slightest bit slow-witted in the team quickly picked up on the subtext, and their eyes began to shine. Although Chang

Xinyuan was focused on research so he was much more naive than the others, he had also picked up on Ling Lan's obvious connotation. Additionally, he had suffered so much at the Thunder King's hands, so now that he found that his modified mecha could be used to trick the Thunder King, he was instantly pumped up. Loudly, he replied, "Understood, Boss Lan, leave it to me. I definitely won't let the other suspect that this mecha isn't a special-class mecha." Thrumming with excitement, he immediately went to his experiment panel and began to mix and test colours ...

The others surrounded him with interest, putting forth suggestions to Chang Xinyuan to try and make this mecha look as much like a special-class mecha as possible, with no care about whether the nonsense they were spouting would bother Chang Xinyuan.

Ling Lan saw the excitement and enthusiasm in everyone's faces and once again found herself astonished at how unpopular the Thunder King was. There were so many people here who wanted to see him stumble — being too arrogant truly resulted in bad outcomes ...

Only Zhao Jun did not join the crowd surrounding Chang Xinyuan. He glanced at the calm and composed Boss Lan, and then turned his gaze towards Li Lanfeng who was busy helping Chang Xinyuan with a face full of scheming intent. He finally understood why Li Lanfeng had wanted him to join Boss Lan's battle clan. Hells, these two were birds of a feather! In contrast to Li Lanfeng's obvious surface cunning and sneakiness, Boss Lan was the true master of black-bellied masters ... right then, Zhao Jun profoundly realised that this seemingly cool and aloof Boss Lan was someone he absolutely could not offend.

Chang Xinyuan had a thorough understanding of all aspects of knowledge with regards to mecha — even with so many inept advisers interfering with his work, it took less than 20 minutes for him to finish formulating that black dye used for special-class mecha; all that was left was the actual production.

Setting down the work in his hands, Chang Xinyuan asked Ling Lan to board the mecha and test it out for fine-tuning adjustments. Over the course of half a day, Ling Lan basically obtained a preliminary understanding of this modified mecha.

This mecha almost abandoned all long-range power — only the most basic long-range weapons were retained. However, its close-combat capabilities were much enhanced. The strength of its arms was now 1.5 times stronger than before. Do not underestimate this tiny 0.5 increment — the moment mecha clashed in actual battle, if the opponent really believed this mecha was a special-class mecha, or even if they knew the truth but was unprepared for this extra 0.5, this additional strength would be enough to strike the opponent's weapon from their hands. At that time, how could a weaponless mecha still be taken as a serious opponent? This would pretty much decide the final victory.

Not just that, the mecha's mobility had also seen a breakthrough improvement. Although its outer form was savage and fierce, the mecha's mobility and adaptive ability had become nimbler than other ace mecha, perhaps even exceeding that of the most agile speed-type ace mecha. Ling Lan found that other than the requisite main engine and two secondary engines, Chang Xinyuan had added an additional row of miniature auxiliary engines at the back of the mecha. Though the thrust of these engines was very small, they could still assist the mecha in making fine adjustments during high-speed movement.

In the past, there had been others who had suggested similar designs, but the research had ground to a halt due to the lack of appropriate miniature auxiliary engines. After Chang Xinyuan had completed that triple-S modification mission, the most valuable among the miscellaneous rewards were these legendary

miniature auxiliary engines. They had allowed him to successfully upgrade the close-combat ace mecha's mobility and made it even more responsive. This would undoubtedly allow Ling Lan to design and execute countless super challenging combination moves other mecha could not, perhaps even producing more powerful combo attacks.

Chapter 404: Betrayal!

Overall, Chang Xinyuan's modification was successful. However, to truly dig out the full potential of this mecha, one day was not enough. Ling Lan knew that she had to take some leave now even if she did not want to. In order to complete the final adjustments on the mecha as soon as possible, she would need to hole up with Chang Xinyuan in their battle clan's mecha modification research centre for these last three days.

In this manner, aside from Ling Lan, who took a sudden leave of absence, the other members of the Lingtian Mecha Clan continued to attend classes as usual. Of course, Li Lanfeng bravely volunteered to be Ling Lan's sparring opponent. And so, every day, he was abused so terribly one could hardly bear the sight of it, and yet, he took joy in it and showed no intentions of retreating. This resilience caused Qi Long and the others to be profoundly awed — they who had been tormented by Boss Lan all this way knew very well how gruelling it was on both mind and body to be Boss Lan's opponent ...

On the last day before the great fight, the thus far calm Lingtian Mecha Clan finally stirred. All of the regiment commanders and the various team leaders requested leave from their respective instructors. As the mecha battle between Lingtian and Leiting had already been set as an open fight, the administrators of the academy gave the green light to both mecha clans, requesting the instructors to cooperate fully. Thus, the instructors gave them no trouble; everyone had their leave requests approved.

Right then, Qiao Ting, who was in the mecha training hall in Mecha World training on his own, suddenly received an emergency call from outside. With a flicker of his mind, Qiao Ting logged off.

Outside the virtual login pod, his confidant was already waiting. The hatch to his pod had just opened when his confidant attentively offered him a towel.

"Have you received proper news?" Qiao Ting accepted the towel and asked lowly.

"Yes, Regiment Commander, we have obtained the actual participant list of the Lingtian Mecha Clan." The confidant's expression was rather grim. They had always thought that the representatives of the Lingtian Mecha Clan would consist of only the regiment commanders and some of the team leaders, but unexpectedly, the other side had successfully accepted two fifth-year cadets into their fold with none the wiser. And one of them was ranked within the top five of the campus-wide combat power ranking. This made his heart feel somewhat heavy.

"Anyone we did not expect?" Qiao Ting walked into the washroom, and seeing his confidant's complicated expression in the reflection of the mirror, he knew that something had come up.

"Yes, I've already sent the detailed name list to your communicator, Regiment Commander. Take a look later and you'll understand," said the confidant.

Qiao Ting nodded in response. Washing his face, he sobered up a little more, and he then turned on his communicator and clicked on the Lingtian Mecha Clan name list his confidant had sent to him.

The first on the list was, without question, the number one regiment commander of the Lingtian Mecha Clan, Ling Lan. He would also be the leader of the battle team this time.

The second was Qi Long. This was also someone they had managed to predict. Since the other was strong enough to be the second regiment commander of the Lingtian Mecha Clan, he must certainly be the second strongest under Ling Lan.

The third and the fourth also did not deviate from their predictions, being the third regiment commander Wu Jiong and the fourth regiment commander Li Yingjie. All four main regiment commanders of the Lingtian Mecha Clan would be participating in this mecha fight. It looked like the other side was going to give their all in this challenge and was not at all planning to just submit and admit defeat.

At this point, Qiao Ting was smirking in his mind. This was the best — for the Lingtian Mecha Clan to try their hardest only to be crushed easily by his hand ... only this way could his strength be proven!

However, the subsequent names on the list made Qiao Ting frown. They were not the team leaders Leiting had expected. Other than Luo Lang whom he had some memory of due to his involvement in the previous New Cadet Regiment fight, the other names were all rather unfamiliar to him. Qiao Ting very quickly realised that these people should be members from Ling Lan's battle clan.

At this point, Qiao Ting found his estimation of Ling Lan rising considerably. Knowing to set aside the stronger team leaders in favour of his own battle clan members with better internal rapport — this would undoubtedly let the battle team learn how to work together within the shortest amount of time, and would also increase the combat power of the battle team. It was a masterful decision.

Even though, other than the five or six names they had managed to guess, the other names within the first ten names on the list had surprised them, Qiao Ting still did not feel pressured. Even if the opponent's battle team had better rapport because of this, these people were after all still freshmen. Their mecha control skills and experience were totally incomparable to that of the members representing Leiting. Qiao Ting could not comprehend why his confidant would reveal such a grave expression.

However, Qiao Ting soon learned the reason. Seeing the final two names on the list, even someone as composed and confident as Qiao Ting could not help but be shaken.

"Zhao Jun, Li Lanfeng!" Qiao Ting shouted. "Aren't they part of Wuji? Why have they gone to Lingtian now?"

Although Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun had already refused Han Yu's invitation at the start of the academic year, this news had been kept under wraps by Han Yu all this while. Despite his anger and hatred of the two, Han Yu also did not want his rivals to find out about this news and somehow manage to recruit those two into their ranks. This was also why Leiting had remained completely oblivious about this.

In the military academy, even though there was the possibility of members switching factions, this mostly occurred among the lower ranks. The true upper ranks of the factions would never have cases

where members transitioned to other factions. Furthermore, Zhao Jun was a primary combat force of Wuji, while Li Lanfeng was the head adviser of Wuji — in Wuji, they held absolutely key positions. Normal people would never willingly let go of the power they wielded, and even if the conflict they had with the faction was too deep and they really wanted to leave, the faction would also use any means at their disposal to stop it from happening.

It should be said that the true details behind Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun's collaboration with Wuji were unknown by the other factions, which was why such a misunderstanding could occur. From the start, Li Lanfeng had taken advantage of Wuji's desperation to retrieve its position as the number three faction. In negotiations with Wuji, he had ensured that the conditions set were advantageous to himself. Therefore, there was nothing at all within their contract which Wuji could use to restrict Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun from leaving. This was also why although Han Yu was filled with rage and frustration, he could only watch helplessly as the two left.

"Who'd have expected them to actually have something like this up their sleeves?" Qiao Ting frowned slightly. It looked like his plan to finish off the Lingtian Mecha Clan in a split second had been foiled. With Zhao Jun there, he would certainly have to put in some actual effort. And with the addition of that wily and resourceful Li Lanfeng, who liked to scheme and set up traps in secret, this fight would probably not be as simple as he had imagined it to be.

"Call all the members to assemble. We need to make some arrangements," ordered Qiao Ting decisively.

Although the Lingtian Mecha Clan had managed to get Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng, making this fight a little more difficult, so what? With him, Qiao Ting, around, victory was certain to belong to Leiting, certain to belong to him, Qiao Ting!

Still, he wanted to accomplish a beautiful win. He wanted to win cleanly and efficiently, and as such, he needed to make some preparations. Qiao Ting had chosen this time to challenge the Lingtian Mecha Clan because he wanted to use his strength to shock all the factions in the academy into submission — he would tell them with his victory that the king of the military academy had appeared.

"Yes, Regiment Commander!" Seeing the bright gleam in Qiao Ting's eyes as well as the unrestrained ambition within them, the confidant was once again deeply moved by his regiment commander. This was the strong person he had chosen to follow — only someone like this had the right to his submission.

"Also, get someone to notify the person who leaked this name list to us. As soon as the battle ends, give him the elevated position of first line team leader!" Qiao Ting did not mind giving the person who betrayed their original leader what they wanted. He was even more unafraid that this kind of person would do the same to him in future, because he believed that as long as he was strong enough, no one would ever dare to betray him.

"Yes, Regiment Commander. I will notify him," replied the confidant, head bowed. A swift flash of envy passed through his gaze — he had not expected just the simple leak of a name list like this could net a first line team leader position in the Leiting Mecha Clan. That person who had betrayed his mecha clan was truly wise. Instead of staying put in the Lingtian Mecha Clan with its uncertain future, he might as well take a gamble — now, his gamble had paid off in the form of a meteoric rise.

On Ling Lan's end, after leading away the 11 people participating in the fight, they entered a combat training hall in Mecha World, heading straight for a pre-booked private room to conduct some final adjustments. Meanwhile, the other team leaders opened another private training room under Ling Lan's instructions and held a practice session of their own.

Over the course of the day, all 11 participants finally understood Ling Lan's instructions thoroughly. Only then did Ling Lan dismiss everyone, and the next time they gathered would be at the life-or-death fight against the Leiting Mecha Clan tomorrow.

After watching the other team leaders leave Mecha World one after another, Ling Lan led the 11 participants to leave as well, returning to the real world.

By the time she opened her virtual login pod, the other five in her villa had already sat up. Qi Long was the first to jump out of his pod to say, "Wu Jiong just told me that he'll be coming over here soon with Li Yingjie."

Ling Lan's eyes flickered at these words, but she only nodded and said, "Understood." That said, she walked out of the virtual login pod room to return to her own bedroom and took a good shower. Refreshed, only then did she go down to the hall below.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie had already arrived; they must have sprinted straight for Ling Lan's place immediately after logging off. Li Yingjie brought over some freshly-brewed coffee and poured each of them a cup. Then, again from the kitchen, he brought out a cup of plain water for Ling Lan.

Wu Jiong lifted his coffee cup and took a sip. The bitter flavour quickly spread across his tongue, as bitter as his current mood.

"Coming here so urgently, has something happened?" Ling Lan drank a sip of her water, placed her cup down, and then asked with a calm expression.

"Our name list has been leaked," said Wu Jiong bitterly, a trace of pain flashing through his eyes.

Ling Lan interlaced her fingers and, after a few beats of silence, she asked, "Who is the traitor?"

Wu Jiong reflexively looked towards Li Yingjie. At this moment, Li Yingjie still had not touched his cup of coffee — his face was dark, hands clasped tightly. His long and slender fingers were almost digging into the back of his hands, his entire person trembling uncontrollably.

"It's one of Li Yingjie's." It was clear with one look — what else was there for Ling Lan to figure out? She had initially thought that those who might waver would be those not from the Central Scout Academy, but unexpectedly, it was one of their own who had stepped wrongly.

"I did not think he would do something like this ..." Li Yingjie suddenly lowered his head. Even though they could not see his expression, they could hear the pain in his voice, like that of a cornered animal. Even the most arrogant and overbearing person would be gravely hurt when they were betrayed by someone they trusted; they may even be unable to bear it.

Chapter 405: The Battle Begins!

Li Yingjie's dispirited appearance caused the hall to fall silent again. In contrast to Wu Jiong's concern, Ling Lan's expression was indifferent. She only tapped on the cup in her hands, as if considering something.

Not long after, Lin Zhong-qing reappeared from the kitchen where he had been clearing things up. He came to stand before Li Yingjie and placed a cup of ice water which was still radiating cold air onto the tea table. Compared to before, Lin Zhong-qing seemed to set the cup down rather heavily — the sound of the cup slamming onto the tea table was loud and jarring.

"You too are laughing at me, aren't you?" Li Yingjie was startled by this noise. He jerked his head up and glared at Lin Zhong-qing with red-rimmed eyes, expression stubborn as he snapped this question at the other.

With a tray in his hands, Lin Zhong-qing placidly leaned over to collect that cup of hot coffee in front of Li Yingjie. He did not get angry, only tossing out the following statement. "What is there to laugh at? Judging by your previous methods, I'm not surprised that someone would betray you."

These words of Lin Zhong-qing's hit Li Yingjie right where it hurts; Li Yingjie became livid, the sadness and frustration shrouding his heart being chased away in an instant. Pointing indignantly at the coffee in Lin Zhong-qing's hands, he yelled, "Even though I used some bad methods in the past to bully you, you can't take my coffee away! Also, you are actually giving me ice water on such a cold day? Are you abusing your position to take revenge 1?"

Lin Zhong-qing's lips quirked at these words. He pointed at the cup of ice-cold water and said coolly, "I think, that it's best for you to use this to cool down a little right now. So there's been a traitor. Is that worth becoming so melancholic 2? Seeing you like this ... you're really not at all like the Li Yingjie who only knows how to bully me and push me down."

That said, he did not even turn his head back to look at the other as he stormed back to the kitchen with a stony expression. That manner showed clearly that he was not at all taking the now furious Li Yingjie seriously.

Li Yingjie had always been arrogant — even though the traitor had appeared from his team, indeed dealing him a heavy blow, and from young, he had eaten crow many times by Ling Lan's hand ... overall, his life had been smooth sailing. He was loved by his family and constantly praised by his subordinates — this had cultivated his haughty and arrogant temperament. Now, actually being mocked by someone he used to look down on, he felt greatly insulted and could not stand it.

Therefore, he actually ignored Wu Jiong and Ling Lan, charging after Lin Zhong-qing impulsively into the kitchen, thinking to argue with Lin Zhong-qing until he saw reason. Did this godd*mn Lin Zhong-qing not have any bit of comrade-like compassion? Striking a man when he's down 3 ... that, that, that's just too bloody despicable!

Wu Jiong stared in astonishment at Li Yingjie who had still been moping in self-recrimination and frustration a while ago. Now, he was actually spiritedly chasing after someone else into the kitchen and had begun an intense debate with Lin Zhong-qing. He looked towards Ling Lan who was sitting on the sofa, his expression completely nonplussed. He had just been thinking how he could console that punk just a moment ago!

Ling Lan narrowed her eyes slightly, set down the cup in her hands, and said calmly, "Li Yingjie's matter, let's not bother with it. I believe he knows where his problem lies." Otherwise, Li Yingjie would not have been so shaken. He actually knew very well where his problem lay; he just did not want to admit it.

Wu Jiong had also calmed down now. He nodded and said, "Makes sense. I just don't know whether this incident will affect tomorrow's battle." Wu Jiong could not help but worry.

"No matter. The reason why I did not want the name list exposed before the fight was to avoid complications. Frankly, even if Leiting knows now, it won't be an issue." The true killing blow had never been the name list to begin with. Ling Lan had only been misleading the opponent with a smokescreen of carefully cultivated truth and omissions, letting Leiting truly believe that Lingtian's trump card was the two unexpected additions on the name list.

After hearing what Ling Lan had to say, Wu Jiong's heart finally settled. Boss Lan would not make a promise unless everything was within his control.

Wu Jiong and Ling Lan continued to discuss things they had to note for tomorrow's battle. When they suddenly noticed that Li Yingjie's initially loud and energetic voice in the kitchen had gone silent, the two of them turned with surprise to look in the direction of the kitchen. Then, they saw Li Yingjie huffily scrubbing a cup in his hands with a clean rag, the force with which he was doing so making it seem as if the cup was his archenemy.

Wu Jiong felt that that cup seemed extremely familiar. He reflexively looked down at the coffee cup in his hands and immediately realised what it was.

"Wu Jiong, do you still want more coffee?" Lin Zhong-qing noticed Wu Jiong's glance at his cup and briskly walked out of the kitchen with the coffee pot to ask seriously.

"Uh, uh, um, okay ... er, that, just a little." Lin Zhong-qing's sudden question made Wu Jiong respond reflexively. He thrust out the coffee cup in his hands only to find that he had barely taken two sips from his cup. It was still almost full, and so, he could only quickly amend his answer.

Lin Zhong-qing did not seem to notice Wu Jiong's embarrassment. He very carefully poured a little more coffee into Wu Jiong's cup and then carried the coffee pot back to the kitchen ...

"I'm done cleaning this. Like this, you can finally give me coffee now, right?" Li Yingjie saw Lin Zhong-qing return and quickly raised the spotless cup he had wiped, showing Lin Zhong-qing that he could pour him some coffee now.

Lin Zhong-qing cast a cold glance at him and put the coffee pot back on the shelf, saying coldly, "If you want to drink, pour it yourself!"

"Why? Wu Jiong is a regiment commander, and I'm also a regiment commander. Why can you pour for him but not for me?" Li Yingjie was enraged once more.

"You were the one who made a mistake. Do you still have the right to get others to pour coffee for you?" Lin Zhong-qing calmly dropped this sentence and then stopped paying any more attention to Li Yingjie. Li Yingjie was flushed to his roots with anger; his hands were balled up into fists and he looked like he was on the verge of punching Lin Zhong-qing.

“This logistics head of yours has finally gotten his revenge.” At this point, Wu Jiong could not help but shake his head and comment with a wry smile, feeling somewhat speechless at how Li Yingjie was mindlessly serving himself up for this abuse.

Ling Lan raised her head to look at Wu Jiong and said evenly, “Zhong-qing is not taking revenge.”

Wu Jiong was bewildered. Ling Lan said with a half-smile, “What? Don’t you feel how Li Yingjie has turned back into the Li Yingjie of before? Arrogant, overbearing, somewhat unreasonable?”

Wu Jiong was enlightened. He cast a searching look at Lin Zhong-qing who was still ignoring Li Yingjie in the kitchen. Once again, he found that, in terms of understanding people, he was truly no match for Boss Lan. In his eyes, Lin Zhong-qing’s behaviour had obviously been meant to taunt and mock Li Yingjie, revenge for Li Yingjie’s oppression of him in the past. However, after Boss Lan’s hinting, he realised that Lin Zhong-qing was just goading Li Yingjie to motivate and encourage him so that the disheartened and lost Li Yingjie could be revived.

It made sense when he thought about it. If Lin Zhong-qing were really so petty and short-sighted, how could he be worthy of following Boss Lan till now? He had still underestimated Lin Zhong-qing.

Leaving aside the sense of failure in Wu Jiong’s heart, Li Yingjie was feeling as if he and Lin Zhong-qing were truly archenemies in their past life. Their enmity must have carried over into this life, dictating that they could not coexist peacefully for even one day. Worked up by Lin Zhong-qing almost to the point of exploding, it was lucky that he still remembered that he was in Boss Lan’s territory. He finally managed to control his anger with much effort, and only then did he leave Ling Lan’s villa with Wu Jiong, expression still indignant.

Right then, Li Yingjie could only think that he absolutely could not let Lin Zhong-qing look down on him. He, Li Yingjie, was naturally born as an arrogant person — hells, wasn’t it just one traitor? He would let the other know that betraying him, Li Yingjie, would result in no so-called future.

Thus, he must win in the big mecha fight with Leiting tomorrow. He would let the other know that, if they wanted to make the Lingtian Mecha Clan disappear, if they wanted to see Li Yingjie out of sorts and miserable ... there was absolutely no way!

Li Yingjie, who had always been somewhat breathless from the oppression of Thunder King Qiao Ting, actually managed to sweep away the burden in his heart due to this betrayal and Lin Zhong-qing’s goading. Right now, Li Yingjie had once again reverted to that fearless and arrogant ‘I’m number one’ mode — the Li Yingjie now would be able to rip a chunk of flesh off even someone as powerful as Thunder King Qiao Ting out of sheer fearlessness.

A night passed in silence. The time soon arrived at one in the afternoon. The military academy made the unprecedented decision of declaring the day a school holiday, allowing all the students to spectate the mecha fight between Lingtian and Leiting. The instructors of each class even set an assignment for the students to write a reflection after viewing the fight ...

The mecha fight between Lingtian and Leiting was a virtual battle. As such, the venue was in Mecha World. However, this match was set as an internal event by the mainframe, which only allowed people coming from login points in the First Men’s Military Academy to enter and spectate.

In Mecha World, both Leiting and Lingtian were already primed and ready. They were only waiting on the mainframe's notification to enter the map of the mecha fight.

In order to ensure fairness, the mecha fight's battlefield map would be randomly selected by the mainframe. Therefore, neither team knew which map they would be fighting in. Compared to the Lingtian Mecha Clan, Leiting was obviously more confident in this regard. After all, having been through countless virtual mecha fights, they had a pretty decent understanding of all the various maps of Mecha World. It could be said that, from the very start when both teams entered the map, they would definitely have an advantage over the Lingtian Mecha Clan in deciding how to adapt and handle the situation.

In the waiting room of the 12 participating members of the Lingtian Mecha Clan, when Ling Lan operated the mecha Chang Xinyuan had modified to appear before the group, those who did not know the full story were filled with awe. Just as Ling Lan and her team expected, Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and the others all thought that Ling Lan's mecha was a special-class mecha. Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and the rest were both admiring and in awe that Ling Lan was the first to become a special-class mecha master in the Lingtian Mecha Clan. As expected, Boss Lan was the strongest of them all.

As the Lingtian Mecha Clan now had three special-class operators on the roster, Wu Jiong and the rest found themselves a lot calmer. Although Ling Lan had always stressed that Lingtian was not certain to lose in the fight against Leiting, they had still been uneasy deep inside. Now, they finally felt a little more confident.

The only one who was calm was instead Li Yingjie. Lin Zhong-qing's goading might have worked too well — Li Yingjie's eyes were filled with fighting spirit, as if planning to use strength to prove that he, Li Yingjie, would never be beaten down.

Very soon, everyone received the alert from the mainframe. Three minutes later, they would be automatically pulled into the battlefield by the mainframe.

Ling Lan swept a cold gaze around at the 11 people in the room and said, "Later once we get in, if everyone is together, split up into the teams as we arranged previously before acting. If we're split up, the first thing is to hide yourselves well. I'll find a way to contact you all. At that time, it's highly likely that you all will have to team up with the three people closest to you. Team coordination might not be as good, so be mentally prepared, everyone."

Ling Lan's warning made everyone's heart clench, but they immediately replied, "Roger, Boss Lan."

Chapter 406: Hidden Machinations?

Three minutes passed swiftly. Everyone felt themselves being tugged by a powerful force into a black hole — the power behind the pull made everyone groggy, unable to maintain their clarity of mind for a beat.

Only Ling Lan was an exception. She had long gotten used to this sort of pulling force and so still retained her mental awareness. Compared to the brute pulling force of the learning space, this tug by the Mecha World mainframe was clearly much gentler.

As soon as Ling Lan entered the battle map, without any delay, she was conscious and aware.

Every mecha which entered the map had 10 seconds of protection time — the entire mecha would shine with a white light, marking its invincibility. This was also an example of Mecha World's fairness mechanisms. After all, the time everyone needed to adjust to this pulling force varied — some only needed two to three seconds to adjust, while others might need seven or eight seconds. Perhaps some might even need over ten seconds to regain their consciousness, but for those people, the mainframe would judge them as unworthy to operate mecha. For them to be killed in a sneak attack after ten seconds were up was perfectly acceptable.

Because the moment one's mecha operation level entered lower mecha operator tier, one would require the support of the minimum level of spiritual power. Those who regained their clarity of mind slower were typically the type to have extremely low spiritual talent. With little potential to develop, it was pretty much a declaration that your future in mecha operation was unpromising.

Taking advantage of her mecha's invincible state, Ling Lan quickly scanned her surroundings. This was a large map combining both a desert and an oasis — other than some small shrubs, there were no so-called majestic trees or mountain rocks for mecha to hide.

With unhindered yellow and green as far as the eye could see, as soon as a mecha approached, it would be very easily discovered. It should be said that there was very little chance of a mecha executing a successful sneak attack. Thus, to a large extent, this map was more suited for those mecha with vast experience and adequate strength.

"This map ... is advantageous for the Leiting Mecha Clan." The cadets spectating the fight saw the map displayed before their eyes, and all of them came to the same conclusion. Anyone who understood the Leiting Mecha Clan knew that this time, Qiao Ting had brought experienced senior cadets with two or three years' worth of mecha battle experience with him. As such, how could the Lingtian members who had just started using mecha for not too long compare?

Even those who mentally supported Lingtian could not help but swear and be alarmed when they saw this map. Lingtian was just too unlucky for the mainframe to actually draw this map.

At this time, in one of the VIP rooms inside the military academy, a large screen was broadcasting the fight. Inside the room, there were about 20 people watching the screen avidly. When this map appeared, quite a few of them smiled, but there was also a small number who frowned.

"Tang Yu, what do you think?" asked an old man sitting beside Tang Yu. He was the principal of the First Men's Military Academy, and was presently attending this viewing arranged for the administrators and the mecha instructors.

"Principal ... this map ... did the academy really not have a hand in this?" asked Tang Yu with a grim expression.

"I only set it so that this match is an open fight," replied the principal calmly. "But you know that the authority to designate the battle map does not lie solely with me."

Tang Yu did not answer, but a trace of disgust flashed through his eyes. Hidden machinations ... regardless of the outcome, this was a disgrace to them mecha operators.

“Are you not happy about this? Leiting’s regiment commander, the team leader of his side in this match, Qiao Ting, is the student you are so proud of, isn’t he?” said the principal jokingly.

“Ling Lan, Qi Long, Luo Lang, Wu Jiong, and Li Yingjie will likewise be my students starting next month. I believe that three years later, they too will be students I will be proud of ...” Tang Yu suddenly turned his head, quirked an eyebrow, and said, “Besides, this time, all the students I’ve accepted are from the Lingtian Mecha Clan, unlike the previous batch where, out of the five students I took in, only Qiao Ting was from the Leiting Mecha Clan. Five versus one, don’t you think I should stand on the side of the Lingtian Mecha Clan more?”

“Are you trying to protest the injustice being done to your students now?” The principal’s lips curved into a smile. This was why he admired Tang Yu the most. Qiao Ting had been with him for three years — undoubtedly, Tang Yu should favour Qiao Ting more — but this did not mean that he could accept this sort of secret manipulation. It was unconscionable even if his student would be the one to benefit.

“I just want to see a fair and exciting match,” answered Tang Yu. “However, I don’t think the Lingtian Mecha Clan will really be so helpless.” Thinking back to one year ago, in order to obtain victory, these children had managed to stand their ground on the arena stage with their steadfast determination despite the multiple wounds they received. Their tenacious spirit had earned Tang Yu’s approval and respect, which was why he had ignored the objections of the school administrators and broken the faction balance by insisting on accepting five students from the same clan.

“I also do not think that Lingtian will lose just because of a map.” The principal surprisingly agreed with Tang Yu’s words, shocking Tang Yu into whipping his head around to stare at him.

The principal smiled meaningfully, a subtle gleam in his eyes. Tang Yu’s heart clenched; it looked like the principal was planning to use this match to do something ... he turned his gaze back to the large screen in front, his heart heavy.

Ling Lan waited as her ten seconds of invincibility passed by. During this time, within the range of her radar, Ling Lan did not pick up anyone other than herself. It was as Ling Lan expected; she and Little Four had guessed correctly. This mecha fight which the academy attached such great importance to was indeed unlike previous mecha fights where both teams were given time to assemble and prepare before hashing it out in proper teams. It would not be so simple.

“Little Four, can you find the coordinates of the other members? And contact them as well?” Seeing this, Ling Lan immediately asked Little Four.

This map which seemed disadvantageous to the Lingtian Mecha Clan was instead most advantageous for them with the omnipotent cheating device Little Four on their side. In contrast to Leiting’s true situation of fighting blind and solo, with Little Four’s help, the Lingtian Mecha Clan could locate their own companions within the shortest amount of time.

“No problem!” responded Little Four. Once they entered a virtual world, he would become an omnipotent god with everything under his control. This was also why he especially loved virtual worlds.

“Also, get me the enemies’ coordinates as well,” added Ling Lan.

Ling Lan stood in place as she calmly waited for Little Four to find what she asked for.

Meanwhile, all the cadets spectating the fight had already chosen the viewing perspective they wanted to view this sensational battle from.

There were three viewing angles to choose from — Challenger view, Defender view, and God view.

Viewing from Challenger view was, indeed, choosing to watch from the challenger's perspective. In this fight, that would be Leiting's battle team. Those who selected that viewing angle would be offered the selection of Leiting's 12 mecha. They could then freely choose whichever they liked and view the battle from that mecha operator's perspective, and could even experience the coping ability and mecha control ability of the operator second-hand.

Almost more than half of the cadets chose Challenger view, and 70% among these chose the ace mecha Thunder King Qiao Ting was piloting. To the cadets, this was a rare opportunity for them to experience the control methods of an ace operator and learn from it. They just could not resist this temptation.

Meanwhile, those who chose Defender view, that is to view the battle from the Lingtian Mecha Clan's perspective, similarly had 12 mecha to choose from. However, those who chose the Lingtian Mecha Clan were very few. Other than those members of the Lingtian Mecha Clan who were not participating and those other freshmen factions who were supporting the Lingtian Mecha Clan in secret, there were not many others.

Those who chose to view from Lingtian's perspective were also not as concentrated under one operator. Instead, the viewing distribution was quite spread out, but overall, those who chose to view from the team leader Ling Lan's perspective was still the majority. After all, the team leader should be the strongest one in the battle team, and the Federation had always taught the students to honour the strong.

Aside from that, those who chose God view, which was in fact the full map perspective, could choose any of the 24 mecha to zoom in on. Of course, even after zooming in, their viewing angle would still be that of an outside observer, able to take in the entire scene as well as the distribution of the other mecha on the map. That said, it would not shift automatically like the other viewing angles, but relied on the viewer to search and adjust on their own.

All of the cadets entered the match under their respective viewing angles ...

"Boss, I've found it!" Little Four projected the locations of the members he had gathered into Ling Lan's mindscape. Twelve green dots appeared, the one marking her position closer to the right side of the map. Of course, Little Four did not forget to mark down Leiting's coordinates as well with red dots.

This time, the mainframe had scattered the members of both teams as expected. From the distribution of green and red dots, the two sides were interspersed all over the map. Each member not only had comrades by their sides, they also had enemies around them. This also showed that, if Little Four did not exist, whether the members of either team would encounter friend or foe would have depended solely on luck.

"Little Four, send all members the coordinates of our members and our opponents, and choose an assembly point nearest to the members and tell them to focus in on it at the same time," ordered Ling Lan. Being able to gather before the opponent could would give Lingtian a huge advantage. "Also, help me find Qiao Ting's position."

Right now, the most important thing was to isolate and neutralize Qiao Ting. As long as Qiao Ting did not have the chance to attack her members, Ling Lan believed that even if they met the other members of Leiting, it was not impossible for her members to win.

“Found it, Boss.” Little Four quickly highlighted Qiao Ting’s position. Ling Lan’s forehead scrunched up — it turned out that she was very far away from Qiao Ting’s position; they were almost on completely opposite ends. If she wanted to meet Qiao Ting, she would need to cut through many other members of Leiting first. Similarly, for Qiao Ting to fight her, he would have to go through some trouble as well.

It looked like the mainframe did not want the two team leaders to meet so quickly, and so had positioned the both of them so far from each other ...

“Is this so that Qiao Ting has more chances to show off?” sneered Ling Lan. It looked like the mainframe was still biased towards Leiting. Lingtian’s three special-class operators were all very far away from Qiao Ting and were spread out at three distant points. Judging by the distance, by the time they rushed over to Qiao Ting’s area, Qiao Ting would have had more than enough time to defeat the other members of Lingtian.

“In that case, let’s see who’ll remain till the very end.” Ling Lan decisively scrapped her initial plans. Since the mainframe intended for Qiao Ting to shine, then she would just let Qiao Ting show off a little. Besides, Ling Lan also hoped that her team members could go up against an ace operator once. This was also a type of experience — even if they would be badly defeated in Mecha World, it would still be worth it.

Chapter 407: Lingtian No.7!

Having obtained the coordinates from Little Four, the Lingtian members changed their initial cautiousness and all began to move. This made those cadets who had chosen Defender view and God view to cry out in surprise.

“Unexpectedly, the Lingtian Mecha Clan has actually started to move.” The first-years who had just entered the school and the second-years were all exhilarated at this development. Compared to the Leiting Mecha Clan, the first and second years liked the New Cadet Regiment turned Lingtian Mecha Clan better. The deeds of the New Cadet Regiment motivated these juniors to a large degree. So juniors too could fight back when they were oppressed and even obtain success.

In contrast to those joyful first and second years who were unable to control their emotions, the third-, fourth-, and fifth-year senior cadets were silently shaking their heads. They all felt that the members of Lingtian were still a little too inexperienced, actually acting blindly before figuring out the true situation.

Those cadets who had chosen God view were well aware that there were one or two Leiting members around the locations of the Lingtian members. If the Lingtian members accidentally entered the range of Leiting, they might really be taken by surprise and be attacked by the opponent. This scenario was extremely disadvantageous to the Lingtian people.

However, the performance of the Lingtian members after that left the senior cadets flabbergasted, because they found that the two or three mecha closest to one another were actually sprinting in

unplanned unison towards the same spot. Of course, those who could notice this were all those who had chosen God view. Using their bird's eye view to analyse the situation, they knew that as long as these Lingtian members did not change course, they were sure to bump into each other eventually ...

Of course, as there were Leiting mecha around their meeting point as well, Lingtian might already encounter these opponent mecha even before they met up with their teammates. After all, no one could be certain whether the Leiting people would unintentionally move to the spot they were converging towards.

“D*mn, is Lingtian cheating?” Those who witnessed this scene all exclaimed. They could not comprehend the situation — if they weren't cheating, how could the Lingtian Mecha Clan head in the same direction so accurately, two to three of them simultaneously at that?

Those cadets quickly submitted their suspicions to the mainframe, and the mainframe rapidly returned with a response. It turned out that the Lingtian battle team possessed a powerful piece of equipment which could pinpoint the coordinates of their own members and display it to all the members. This was why the Lingtian mecha battle team could respond so swiftly and move unerringly in the same direction.

Of course, this was the answer Little Four had supplied to the mainframe. After all, this was an open fight — some things needed to be given a proper explanation. Fortunately, Chang Xinyuan had already modified Ling Lan's mecha in advance, so Little Four used his own simulation methods to add this legendary heaven-defying equipment of Mecha World to this modified mecha. It was a member-locator that only powerful clans of star-rank 1 and above could equip.

“F*ck, the Lingtian Mecha Clan has prepared really well for this showdown!” Many old players of Mecha World had heard rumours of this equipment before, a legendary clan equipment that only super strong clans of star-rank and above had the right to equip. Rumour had it that it was extremely difficult to get one — not only were the tasks that needed to be done extremely complicated, it was impossible to complete this mission without a certain level of strength.

Who would have expected the newly established Lingtian Mecha Clan to be so lucky? Actually possessing such a nature-defying treasure. The senior cadets did not believe that Lingtian was capable of earning this equipment from a direct mission. It was far more likely for them to have obtained it by sheer overwhelming luck during a reward lottery draw for some random mission.

After completing a Mecha World mission, the methods of choosing a reward were all kinds of strange — it was not unheard of for some super lucky people to receive legendary equipment or weapons. Thus, the cadets did not suspect anything, only envious of Lingtian's tremendously great luck.

It looked like this match would not be the one-sided fight they imagined! Right then, all the spectators changed their original opinion in silent unison. This shift in attitude stirred up the excitement of the senior cadets who had initially been forced into coming to spectate despite their lack of interest. They liked watching suspenseful fights, and not those kinds of boring fights where the outcome was already known before the fight even began.

Soon, the silence of the venue was broken by some of the spectating students. They actually could not help but cry out — it turned out that, on the way to its destination, the number seven mecha of the Lingtian battle team had very unfortunately stumbled upon the number nine Leiting mecha. However, as

the distance between the two mecha was more than 3 kilometres (the maximum range of an advanced mecha's radar was 3 kilometres), they were both oblivious to the presence of the other.

Still, the spectators quickly found out under the mainframe's hinting that it would only take a few seconds for the two to get within 3 kilometres of each other. At that time, they would inevitably discover each other's presence.

'It looks like the exciting first match is about to come.' Those who had selected God view clenched their fists in excitement, thinking to themselves.

Sure enough, several seconds later, almost simultaneously, both mecha received warning alerts from their respective mecha's radars that an unidentified mecha had appeared around 3 kilometres from where they were.

Both operators chose to zoom in on the captured image of the other mecha, and when they saw that the other mecha was emitting the light sheen marking a different faction, they knew for certain that the other mecha was an enemy.

Lingtian No.7 did not decrease his speed — still travelling at high speed, he controlled the hands of his mecha to pull a quick draw from behind the mecha's shoulders. Then, with a beam gun in his left hand and a beam saber in his right, he was prepared for battle. Likewise, on the other end, Leiting mecha No.9 had also discovered the enemy and was making battle preparations of his own. Other than one standing still in place while the other was moving at high speed, both mecha's battle prep actions did not differ by much.

"Who'd have expected that the Lingtian Mecha Clan members could also react so quickly ..." From the time they each registered the presence of an unidentified mecha, to the time they confirmed whether the other was friend or foe, both combatants' reaction time was almost the same. This drew shocked exclamations from the spectating cadets once more — it was very unexpected that these relatively green Lingtian members were performing much better than they had imagined.

In one of the VIP rooms of the military academy, Tang Yu saw this scene and the light in his eyes brightened. He could not stop himself from turning on the communicator on his wrist to begin searching for the information on this Lingtian Mecha Clan number seven member.

The students might mistakenly believe that the reaction times of the two were roughly the same, but as an instructor, Tang Yu could see things much clearer. The Lingtian member was able to execute the same battle prep as the Leiting member who had been standing still while moving at high speed, and his actions were clean and efficient, with no sign at all of any delay and stiffness. Undoubtedly, the control skills of the Lingtian No.7 was definitely a bracket higher than that mecha operator of Leiting's. For a junior student to carry off this series of movements much more perfectly and swiftly than a senior, the mecha operation talent of this Lingtian No.7 was most certain to be at the level of a prodigy. Tang Yu could not help but be interested at the prospect of a promising student.

"Lingtian No.7; Name: Lin Zhong-qing. Status: Free Commoner. Age: 17. Physical skills: Advanced level Refinement stage 2 . Mecha Piloting Level: Advanced; Intermediate to Advanced advancement results, excellent!" Frankly, there was not a lot of info that could be obtained using this type of simple search —

for truly detailed information, one would need to receive clearance to browse the restricted files of the military academy.

However, this simple information was already enough for Tang Yu. He could barely restrain his excitement as he commented, "It is really unexpected that, other than those five in the Lingtian Mecha Clan, there is still such an excellent member." Able to level up to advanced-class operator at age 17 and have his advancement results judged as 'excellent' by the Mecha World mainframe, this meant that the other's basic controls must be extremely solid. This would definitely be a great advantage to his future development. What surprised him the most was the other's status as free commoner. The average commoner's mecha piloting talent would not be that good — it looked like this was probably some form of genetic mutation.

This reminded Tang Yu of himself. Even though he was not a commoner but a citizen, which was a rank higher than commoner 3, his success at becoming an elite ace could also be ascribed to genetic mutation. He had the sudden impulse to take Lin Zhong-qing as a student as well — he wanted to see if Lin Zhong-qing could become an ace operator like he had, perhaps even surpass him.

"You are willing to give up one of the other five?" asked the principal.

At his words, Tang Yu smiled wryly and sighed. Although he really wanted to, he could not give up any of those five he had chosen from the start. Those five children who were about to become his students were all very gifted in mecha piloting, not at all weaker than this Lin Zhong-qing and perhaps even better. "There are just too many prodigies with mecha piloting talent in this year. I wonder which mecha mentor he will choose?"

Tang Yu felt that such an excellent prodigy must be from the Mecha Piloting specialization. Furthermore, only those from the Mecha Piloting specialization could choose a mecha mentor at the start of their second year. The other specializations had to wait till the second semester of the academic year to begin their mecha study, and then, it would only be an elective for them. Thus, mecha mentors did not pay much attention to these students.

Curious, Tang Yu typed in the query to search for Lin Zhong-qing's mecha mentor on his communicator, but he received an unexpected response — unable to find any relevant answers. This shocked him, because he knew that all of the mentors for the students of the Mecha Piloting specialization had already been confirmed. He had originally wanted to find out who was the mentor of Lin Zhong-qing so he could advise that instructor to properly cultivate Lin Zhong-qing. After all, even he was tempted to teach this kind of prodigy; he would not want to see such a gifted child be ruined from a mentor's neglect.

"How can this be?" Tang Yu could not help doubting this answer. The principal suddenly thought of something and prompted Tang Yu, "Try checking what specialization the other is in."

The principal's suggestion made Tang Yu pause in mute shock for a moment, but he soon began to search for Lin Zhong-qing's specialization. The answer was revealed very quickly, and this answer left Tang Yu instantly dumbfounded as he stared blankly in disbelief at the words — Mecha Logistics! This specialization which everyone thought only rubbish students would take up was an absolutely rubbish specialization on the outermost fringes of the First Men's Military Academy 4 .

The principal saw Tang Yu's stunned reaction and was instantly curious as well. He took a peek and was instantly dumbfounded as well. Such a talented genius in mecha piloting was actually a student specializing in Mecha Logistics ... this could not be true, right?! This made even the generally composed principal feel unsettled.

"I think, our First Men's Military Academy's method of assigning specializations is very flawed. Principal, you should really think of a good way to solve this issue," said Tang Yu, looking up with a grim expression.

Mind you, the application requirements for the Mecha Logistics specialization in terms of results and physical fitness had always been very low. Perhaps, this Lin Zhong-qing had been assigned to Mecha Logistics by the mainframe due to a problem with his results (because Mecha Logistics was really too horrible an option, almost no one would select it by choice, so the academy mainframe had no choice but to forcefully assign it to students based on results).

Furthermore, the Mecha Logistics specialization had very low requirements on mecha control skills as well; students need only pass. All of the mecha instructors were completely perfunctory in their teaching when it came to the Mecha Logistics students. It could be predicted that, if Lin Zhong-qing continued to remain in Mecha Logistics, his mecha piloting talent would definitely go to waste, and this was something he could not allow.

The principal nodded in agreement. He too was deeply grieved that such a prodigy of mecha piloting had been shunted into Mecha Logistics by mistake. "When this match ends, let's look for him and ask him about this. If he agrees, we can make an exception for him to transfer into the Mecha Piloting specialization ..." Since the administrators had collectively pleaded with him to make an exception previously to use his authority as principal to set this mecha fight as an open fight, then those people should have no reason to object if he used his power now to let one student transfer to a specialization better suited for him.

"If possible, I would like you, sir, to allow another exception. I want an additional student slot." Tang Yu was very satisfied with the principal's decision, and at this time, he also put forward this request earnestly.

The principal smiled wryly. "Even you cannot bear to see such talent go to waste and are willing to break convention, how can I refuse your request?"

With the principal's promise, Tang Yu could finally put aside his worries to focus his full attention on the incipient battle between Lingtian No.7 and Leiting No.9.

Chapter 408: Reversal!

At this time, Lingtian No.7 was just like a ferocious beast which had broken out of its cage. Facing the more experienced Leiting No.9, he showed no hint of fear. The speed of his mecha's sprint did not slow down at all due to the emergence of the enemy — those with keen eyesight could even tell that Lingtian No.7 had actually become faster and nimbler than before.

Meanwhile, after preparing his weapons, Leiting No.9 saw Lingtian No.7 charging at him fearlessly. This move clearly carried a whiff of taunting — this made Leiting No.9 rather angry, thinking that he was being looked down on.

So that he would not lose in terms of force of presence, Leiting No.9 did not hesitate to send his mecha sprinting towards Lingtian No.7 as well. Both combatants chose to speed towards each other — about 10 seconds later, they finally entered the effective range of their respective long-range attacks.

The hearts of the audience were raised in suspense, all of them wondering which side would react faster and be the first to open fire. “Leiting is attacking.” Now, from the looks of it, Leiting No.9 had more experience in attacking while running, thus managing to beat Lingtian No.7 to the punch. He aimed the beam gun in his right hand at Lingtian No.7 and pulled the trigger.

A powerful beam of energy burst out from the muzzle to hurtle wildly at Lingtian No.7.

“Ah, watch out!” In the audience, in contrast to the composure of the seniors, the new students as well as those who were concerned for the Lingtian Mecha Clan could not help but cry out.

Right then, the attention of the entire audience, both juniors and seniors, was focused on Lingtian No.7. If Lingtian No.7 could not find a way to handle this shot properly, whether or not he was hit, he would still be forced into a passive position. Then, it could be expected that Leiting No.9 would inevitably be the final victor in this clash. On the mecha battlefield, being the first to gain the upper hand would basically determine the final ownership of victory, unless the power gap between the opponents was really too wide.

“Alright!” The entire audience burst out in wild applause and cheering.

This was because Lingtian No.7 had handled the attack beautifully, leaving everyone speechless with amazement. Lingtian No.7 did not panic and choose to use his beam gun to fire back in an attempt to neutralize the other’s attack, nor did he let himself be forced into a passive defensive position by swerving to avoid the opponent’s attack. He had calmly controlled his mecha to execute an evasion manoeuvre, allowing that beam to brush past him mere millimetres from the outer shell of his mecha. The beam struck the ground and sent up a spray of dust and dirt, instantly making his figure hazy.

Seeing the other’s figure suddenly being partly concealed by the dust and dirt in the air, Leiting No.9 paused for a beat but did not give up on his offence. He predicted the possible angles the opponent might dodge to and frantically shot a cascade of beams from his gun.

“Bang bang bang!” Consecutive gunshots sent even more dust and dirt into the air, and Lingtian No.7’s figure was now completely obscured. The Leiting mecha found that its attacks were ineffective and only then did he begin to feel that something was not right. He immediately retreated, thinking to pull some distance away. While he could not be sure of the opponent’s position, pulling a sufficiently safe distance away was one of the best ways of protecting oneself.

Unfortunately, he had still reacted too late. He had just mobilized his mecha when a shadow abruptly appeared on his left. By the time he could see clearly, he found that that Lingtian Mecha No.7 had already come up beside him. There was a cold flash of light, and the opponent’s beam saber came at him from a position he could not block, stabbing in at a strange angle ...

“What’s going on? How could he have appeared before me in an instant?!” Although Leiting No.9 could not believe what he was seeing, he still operated his mecha calmly. He pushed his mecha’s engines to maximum power, attempting to evade at top speed and dodge this unexpected attack from the opponent.

Those who are closely involved cannot see clearly 1 — Leiting No.9 had not been able to see Lingtian No.7’s movements, obscured by dust as the other was, but the spectating cadets could choose to erase all visual obstacles and had seen Lingtian No.7’s actions without any obstruction. Just as Leiting No.9 had been using his beam gun to attack, Lingtian No.7 had suddenly performed a movement that could not be explained by normal logic. The strange and unsettling footwork he executed allowed a certain distortion to appear in the area around Lingtian No.7, and in the very next second, he had already appeared at the opponent’s side, creating an illusory sort of teleportation effect.

“This is the nature-defying technique that advanced mecha warriors are most unlikely to master — Erratic Flicker!” Everyone was shocked; some cadets who recognized this technique could not help but exclaim.

Compared to the miscellaneous footwork that advanced mecha warriors practised, such as Figure-8 Step, Z-shaped evasion, or whatever else, this Erratic Flicker was a top-class technique which advanced mecha warriors dreamed about. To carry off the Erratic Flicker, one needed to be completely proficient in all of the basic steps, perhaps even to the point where they had become instinct. But this was still not enough — Erratic Flicker also required extremely high comprehension and perceptiveness. Without this type of innate intuition, no matter how thoroughly one mastered those basic moves, they still would not be able to convert these into the Erratic Flicker.

The evolved version of the Erratic Flicker was the Irregular Flicker 2 , which was an important milestone to advance to ace operator status. Consequently, in the world of mecha operation, there is this one saying — *if you have mastered the Erratic Flicker, you basically already have half a foot inside the realm of ace.*

Unfortunately, a majority of advanced mecha warriors were often unable to master this nature-defying technique. There were even many mecha operators who had entered special-class operator level who would not dare to say for certain that they had mastered this top-class skill. This was also why the number of ace mecha masters were so few. To a large extent, many excellent seedlings were wiped out on this point.

This was also something that could not be helped. If one was unable to master the Irregular Flicker, even if they were allowed to move on and pilot ace mecha, once they arrived at the battlefield, an operator who could not execute an Irregular Flicker was pretty much just there to die. Therefore, in the world of mecha operation, there was no such thing as making do. The advancement of each level had stringent requirements — an operator must achieve the regulated stats, or else they would never be permitted to advance.

Tang Yu saw this move of Lingtian No.7’s, and his eyes once again shone with an unnatural brightness. If the principal had not already agreed to his request to take on another student, at this moment, he was likely to cast aside his earlier reservations and abandon one of his initially determined students just so he could take in this Lingtian No.7.

No matter how gifted a prodigy of mecha piloting was, if they did not have formidable intuition, their future development would also be hindered in the end by the barriers of advancement. For this Lingtian No.7 to be able to come so far, he must have already entered Mecha World at thirteen to train in mecha controls. By all calculations, for him to have mastered the heaven-defying Erratic Flicker in these 4 years' time, it was clear to see that his intuition and comprehension skills were truly outstanding. And this aspect was even more precious than his talent in mecha piloting, which was yet another reason why Tang Yu was greatly moved.

"Clang!" Mecha and beam saber collided violently. Leiting No.9 felt his mecha judder violently, and the lights in his cockpit dimmed for a moment before being restored to normal again almost instantly.

Experienced as he was, he could immediately confirm that he had been hit. His evasion manoeuvres had not helped him to escape the opponent's strange and sneaky attack. What's fortunate was that he had activated his mecha's beam shield even as he had dodged. Under the protection of the beam shield, the opponent's saber had not caused much damage to his mecha.

However, this did not mean that he was out of danger. Even though he was piloting his mecha in a swift retreat, the opponent was on his tail like a shadow. The other's beam saber was still viciously pressed to his mecha's cockpit, drastically whittling away the power of his beam shield. As soon as his mecha's beam shield ran out of power, that beam saber would pierce through his cockpit without mercy. At that time, he would certainly face death and dismissal from the field.

"Warning! Mecha's power only enough to hold out for 10 seconds. 10, 9 ..." The A.I. began to report the time frame left for the remaining power the mecha had. Leiting No.9 did not dare to gamble that the opponent's saber would run out of power before his beam shield. He could only accelerate further to try and distance himself from the opponent's unrelenting beam saber, as only then could he salvage the situation.

Just one move had been enough to turn the tables in this fight. Leiting No.9 had seemed to have grasped the upper hand at the start, but anyone with a discerning eye could now see that the one who was in a passive and desperate state was him and not Lingtian No.7.

"Who would have guessed that Lingtian No.7's close-range offensive capabilities would be so strong?" At this point, the spectating cadets could not help but sigh in awe. This was because, judging from the external appearance of Lingtian No.7's mecha and the equipment he carried, he was more inclined towards long-range attacks. This was also why the spectating cadets had believed that this would be an intense long-range battle at the very beginning.

The spectating students naturally did not know that this was because this Lingtian No.7 had been following a close combat maniac of a boss all this while. The long-range attackers in the team such as Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijyun, after over a year of ruthless torment under Ling Lan's hands, had all seen their close-combat skills improve tremendously. Their close-combat standards were not much weaker than those actual close-combat mecha operators — it could even be said that they were even better in terms of close-combat reflexes.

It couldn't be helped — up against their boss, Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijyun had had no chance at all to execute any long-range attacks. Boss Lan's speed was just too fast — no matter how much distance they put between them and their boss, their boss would have caught up to them in the blink of an eye to

attack from close range. In this kind of situation, they could only weave around their boss in close range. This was also one of the reasons why Lin Zhong-qing and the others who favoured long-range attacks would have such high close combat standards — after so much torment, it was impossible for their close-combat skills not to become strong.

Under this desperate situation, Leiting No.9's forehead was already dripping with sweat. He revved the engine of his mecha in a frenzy, pushing it to the extreme. Not just that, his two secondary engines also began to roar. The mecha's engines suddenly revved beyond capacity, causing the mecha's speed to go up a notch. Lingtian No.7 did not seem to have taken this into consideration, his reaction a beat too slow. Leiting No.9 successfully pulled a distance away, escaping the threat of Lingtian No.7's beam saber ...

Leiting No.9 saw that he had managed to pull away, but before he could breathe out a sigh of relief, his mecha's A.I. suddenly emitted a jarring alarm. "Warning, evade! Warning, evade ...!" Shocked, Leiting No.9 looked at the indication on his mecha's screen. His mecha had actually been locked onto by the opponent's long-range weapon. The fine hairs on his body stood up as his fingers danced madly in an attempt to evade this great crisis.

Chapter 409: Disciple!

Being locked onto meant that Leiting No.9's mecha had already been fixed as a target for Lingtian No.7's long-range weapon. If he could not break free of the opponent's target-lock before the other fired, Leiting No.9's mecha was sure to be hit. And with the 17% power he had left, even if Leiting No.9 activated his mecha's beam shield, it would not be enough to withstand one long-range attack from a mecha of the same level.

Right then, Leiting No.9 realised that he had been set up by the opponent from the start. Even his desperate retreat had been calculated — it was not that the opponent could not chase after him; the opponent had long decided how he would deal with him next.

"Boom!" Lingtian No.7 calmly pulled the trigger. The beam gun in his hand released a powerful beam of energy in Leiting No.9's direction.

Leiting No.9's eyes bulged, perhaps out of anger, and there was actually a trace of redness in them. He yelled, "Dodge, d*mmit!"

The battle had just begun — he did not want to be the first person to fail and leave the scene. Furthermore, he could not accept leaving after being completely dominated by the opponent. When he had first seen Lingtian No.7, he had thought that he would be able to finish the other off easily. The opponent's reckless manner in charging at him drew his contempt, leading him to believe that this operator who was an advanced mecha warrior like him was just an impulsive boor. How could this kind of simple-minded mecha operator be his opponent?

Yes, from the beginning, he had underestimated his opponent. He had loosened his guard, and so had not taken time to seriously plan and strategize during the fight, only blindly attacking from long-range. Even when his first shot had struck air, he had just assumed that the opponent had gotten lucky, and he had not chosen to pull away as soon as he could. This was his greatest failing, and his subsequent

attacks had been an even greater display of idiocy. His foolishness had given the opponent the opportunity to draw in close ... all the advantage he had at the start was lost in one go, and he was thrust into a dire situation in the blink of an eye.

Leiting No.9 was filled with regrets — if he could do it all again, he definitely would not let the opponent draw so close, because he was a long-range attacker ...

A loud “Kaboom!” rang out. Lingtian No.7’s beam shot unerringly struck Leiting No.9. Despite his desperate struggles, Leiting No.9 had not been able to salvage the situation. His entire mecha exploded instantly, becoming countless flaming parts in the air, scattering in different directions.

At the moment his mecha exploded, Leiting No.9 was declared dead by the mainframe and chased out of Mecha World. He needed to wait for the penalty for death to pass before he could log into Mecha World again and choose a new mecha and start over.

“F*ck, from discovery to the end of the fight, it only took a little more than a minute? Isn’t that way too fast?” The spectating cadets were all gobsmacked. For context, it should be known that a fight between mecha of the same level was unlikely to be ended without at least 10 minutes to half an hour. After all, both sides were of about roughly equal strength, it was very difficult for either side to defeat the other.

Of course, if the winner of this fight had been Leiting No.9, the cadets might still have been able to justify it. Lingtian No.7 was a junior after all, without much battle experience. If he had panicked, it would have been no surprise for him to be killed in a split second. However, it was precisely the newly established Lingtian Mecha Clan which had won this first encounter ... the cadets really could not find any reason which could help them make sense of this reality.

Just as the cadets were mired in confusion, seated in the VIP viewing room, Tang Yu’s eyes held a trace of a smile. He could see things very clearly — Lingtian No.7 had been able to finish this match so swiftly because he had utilised the opponent’s psychology well. It should be said that, from the very moment the two sides had met, Lingtian No.7 had already been laying his trap.

“This fight was well done.” The experienced principal naturally could see the intricacy of this fight as well. A gratified smile appeared on his face — he was extremely pleased that such an outstanding student with both brains and brawn had emerged from the academy.

“Yes. Almost taking all of the opponent’s possible reactions into consideration ... Leiting No.9 underestimated his opponent from the very start. Of course, this effect was partly encouraged by Lingtian No.7 on purpose. Lingtian No.7 ... truly a mecha operator with a tactical mind,” said Tang Yu, smiling as well.

At this time, he had already decided that regardless of whether Lingtian No.7 could transfer to the Mecha Piloting specialization in the end, he would still train this talented youth. The other’s combat style was really very similar to his; for the first time, the notion of taking in a disciple stirred in Tang Yu’s heart. Yes, the present Tang Yu not only wanted to take Lin Zhong-qing in as a student, but even wanted to make the other his true disciple so he could eventually inherit his mantle.

“You’ve really been tempted.” Tang Yu’s expression caused the principal to chuckle knowingly. Ever since Tang Yu had transferred to the First Men’s Military Academy to be an instructor, even though he had taken countless gifted students under his tutelage, he had never ever considered taking in a true

disciple. And now, the other had obviously been tempted. This made the principal extremely happy. It should be known that it was extremely difficult to find a true disciple that one found suitable. Not only did the candidate have to be talented, they had to catch the instructor's fancy, and there was also an element of serendipity to it all.

Even if Tang Yu had felt that Qiao Ting, Ling Lan, Qi Long, and the rest were all abnormally gifted prodigy mecha operators, because he had not felt a sense of affinity with any of them, he had not been moved to take them in as true disciples. Only Lin Zhong-qing had caught Tang Yu's eyes, prompting him to start thinking about taking the other in under his sect for focused cultivation.

"Hn. I think, if I have such a disciple, my master will also be happy for me." The principal's words made Tang Yu's expression even warmer. Since he had been moved, then he should immediately take action. Otherwise, this disciple he had decided on might be snatched away by someone else if he delayed. Tang Yu had noticed that Lingtian No.7's exceptional performance had already drawn out admiring gazes from quite a number of the instructors around him ...

"Haha, then I should congratulate you." Seeing that Tang Yu was about to obtain a satisfactory disciple, the principal was also very happy for this disciple of his old friend. Frankly, for a period of time, the principal had been very worried for Tang Yu. He was afraid that the knowledge and techniques of Tang Yu's sect would be lost due to Tang Yu's high standards. Mind you, someone as exceptional as Qiao Ting had still been unable to move Tang Yu. The principal had even believed at one point that there would never be a child who would move Tang Yu in this world. Unexpectedly, several years after that, this person had still finally appeared, and his appearance was so sudden but also so matter of fact.

Lingtian No.7 finished off Leiting No.9 so simply, and then, amidst the audience's exclamations, he continued to pilot his mecha to head towards his original intended destination. Very soon, he met up with two other members of Lingtian. Unlike Lin Zhong-qing's misfortune, the other two Lingtian Mecha Clan members had come here unhindered, without encountering anyone from Leiting. After the three of them met up, they seemed to have a brief discussion, and after another minute of rest, the three mecha arranged themselves in a triangular formation, chose a direction, and departed swiftly.

This purposeful assembly of Lingtian was occurring at the other places as well. Due to the actions of Lingtian, there was now a higher chance of them encountering Leiting mecha on this large composite map of desert area and oasis land. In the next ten minutes or so, several clashes between Lingtian and Leiting broke out all across the map.

Both teams incurred losses in these clashes, but overall, Leiting's losses were a little greater. In these fights, they lost five members while Lingtian only lost three.

"I didn't expect the fighting to be so intense right from the start." The spectating cadets felt their blood begin to boil with excitement. Originally, a majority of students had favoured the Leiting Mecha Clan, but now they also began taking a shine to the Lingtian Mecha Clan. There were even many people who changed their minds and began hoping that the ultimate victors of this match would be the Lingtian Mecha Clan.

Of course, they knew that this was just wishful thinking. With the ace operator Qiao Ting in their ranks, Leiting would be able to turn things around even if Qiao Ting was the only one left on their side in the

end. There was still no one in Lingtian capable of contending with Qiao Ting's strength — even their three special-class operators would not be able to change this outcome.

Despite knowing that Leiting was certain to win, what could have changed the minds of the spectating cadets so drastically within these ten minutes? This was because in the fights within these ten minutes, the Lingtian Mecha Clan's members performed much better than the members of Leiting. The three members of Lingtian who had been defeated and forced to leave had thoroughly convinced the spectating cadets with their indomitable spirit.

These three members who had been 'sacrificed' could not actually be said to be defeated. Two of the three had taken down their opponent with them under disadvantaged conditions, so Leiting had not gained anything from their defeat. What was even more surprising was that, though the participants were all advanced mecha warriors, anyone who paid attention could tell that this third member of Lingtian was clearly the weakest of the 24 people on the field. And his luck was even worse — the Leiting member he encountered was very experienced; among the 12 members of Leiting on the field, his strength ranked in the top 5. With such a large gap between the two, everyone thought that the Leiting mecha would defeat this member easily.

However, under this sort of obvious disadvantage, the Lingtian member had actually fought till the opponent's mecha had been half-damaged. Although he was still defeated in the end and had been unable to take the Leiting member down with him, all the spectators knew that the opponent was no longer able to continue fighting. A half-damaged mecha would be easily eradicated by any single member of Lingtian on the field. In other words, although Leiting officially only lost five members on the scoreboard, in reality, they had lost six members. That one lucky survivor was actually just a participant in name now, unable to contribute anything for his team, and he may even become a burden on his team.

"The members of Lingtian are too savage." The spectating cadets were thrilled by Lingtian's methods and tenacity in taking their opponents down with them even if they perished, but at the same time, they also viewed it with trepidation. On the battlefield, this kind of opponent was the worst kind of encounter — even if one's strength was a hair better than the opponent, there was no guarantee of winning unscathed.

In the meantime, the moment he had entered the map, Leiting's team leader Qiao Ting had done exactly as Ling Lan had, carefully observing the terrain around him. When he found that it was an endless desert plain interspersed with grassland, he felt a thrill of joy pass through his heart. He was well aware how advantageous this map was to them seniors. It could be said that they had used this map many times before and basically knew which areas had traps, which spots would prompt accidental situations, and which areas made good hiding places ... this made him even more confident of victory.

However, his good mood was quickly interrupted. One minute later, he was notified by the mainframe that the Leiting Mecha Clan had already lost one member, dropping their member count from 12 to 11.

Chapter 410: Discovery!

Qiao Ting's heart clenched, and his first reaction was to check on the Lingtian Mecha Clan's numbers. The other side still had 12 people. His brow furrowed as he wondered whether his team members were just unlucky enough to bump into one of the three special-class operators of Lingtian.

Qiao Ting was not particularly frustrated or regretful that one of his members had fallen — on the battlefield, anything could happen; luck was also a major factor. Still, for one of his members to be done in by the opponent in just one minute, Qiao Ting was rather disgruntled. He felt that even if his team member was only an advanced mecha warrior, they should still be able to hold out for at least two to three minutes. Being finished off in less than a minute was like a slap in the face for him.

Right then, Qiao Ting still did not know that his team member had only encountered an advanced mecha warrior of Lingtian's. He had only been defeated so swiftly because he had underestimated his opponent and fallen for the other's trap. On the other hand, it was fortunate that he did not know this, otherwise he would have definitely blown his top.

Qiao Ting knew the importance of morale; he could not allow the morale of Lingtian's battle team to blaze higher from this. Thus, he decided to take action and begin searching for opponents. He wanted to eliminate a few members of Lingtian to push down the other side's numbers and suppress their morale.

However, this map was too vast — Qiao Ting could only choose a random direction and skim across the land rapidly as he used the radar of his ace mecha to scan his surroundings.

The radar on an ace mecha was two ranks higher than that of an advanced mecha's. It could pick up conditions within 5 kilometres. Qiao Ting believed that as soon as they were discovered by his radar, Lingtian's members would never be able to escape his grasp. In terms of speed, advanced mecha were utter trash before ace mecha.

Just as Qiao Ting was conducting his search, the situation shifted drastically. The numbers on both sides began to change constantly — for almost every two or three minutes that passed, Qiao Ting would receive another notification that a Leiting member had been defeated and eliminated from the field. Ten minutes later, Leiting was actually down 5 members, his team's overall member count dropping to 7, almost half of their initial number.

Luckily, Lingtian had also suffered some losses in these ten minutes, losing three of their own. Still, Qiao Ting's mood had already been significantly soured. It was very obvious that in the frontal clashes between the two teams thus far, Leiting was now at a disadvantage.

"Bloody Lingtian." At this point, Qiao Ting could no longer maintain his composure. He could not help but curse.

Right then, a warning rang out from the A.I. of Qiao Ting's mecha. "Beep! Caution, three unidentified flying objects discovered ahead!"

This alert made Qiao Ting's spirits rally. Perhaps because the map was too large, and Qiao Ting's luck also did not seem very good, within these ten minutes, Qiao Ting had not encountered a single Lingtian mecha, nor had he come across any of his teammates. Qiao Ting was rather disappointed by this. Even though he really wanted to hack and slash at the opponent to suppress the other side's morale, he was truly helpless against the empty vastness of this map.

Qiao Ting's first decision was to close the distance between him and the three unidentified objects. Clearly displayed on his mecha's screen, from about 5 kilometres away, three mecha were approaching him in a triangular formation. The three mecha's bodies were exuding the red light marking an enemy faction, and Qiao Ting was extremely familiar with one of the mecha. From its appearance alone, Qiao Ting could tell that it was an old rival of his, that boorish special-class mecha operator Zhao Jun. There were two other advanced mecha behind him; it looked like the three mecha had formed a battle column.

Seeing this, Qiao Ting vaguely understood how his team members had been eliminated within such a short amount of time. They were very likely to have been surrounded and beaten to death by the opponent's greater numbers. Rage surged in Qiao Ting's heart. The mainframe was obviously biased towards the Lingtian Mecha Clan for this scenario to happen. It was likely that some of the Lingtian members may have already been grouped together when they first spawned on the map.

"Hmph, how despicable! Thinking to use this kind of method to prevent me, Qiao Ting, from becoming the king of the military academy? No way!" Rage blazed in Qiao Ting's eyes. He felt that this was an obstacle the academy had intentionally set in his path. He had no idea that the side that had truly been favoured by the mainframe was his Leiting. However, no one could have foreseen that Ling Lan would have the heaven-defying cheating device Little Four, forcibly turning Lingtian's disadvantage into an advantage, causing the scales to tip in favour of Lingtian.

Furious, a trace of coldness emerged in Qiao Ting's eyes. Since everyone was against him, then he would have to pull off an even more impressive performance. He would use true strength to tell everyone that no one would be able to stop him, Qiao Ting, from becoming the king of the military academy.

Qiao Ting's killing intent-filled eyes fell upon that black special-class mecha in the lead on his screen. As long as he eliminated Zhao Jun, the only one in Lingtian capable of withstanding ten to twenty moves under him, this match's final outcome would basically be determined.

Qiao Ting's aberrant control talent had indeed been the main reason he had been able to become the first student of the military academy to advance to ace operator at his age. However, his ability to control his emotions was also a large factor. Regardless of the fury in his heart, after Qiao Ting became determined to eliminate Zhao Jun, his entire being became unbelievably cool and collected. This was a point that Tang Yu greatly admired in Qiao Ting. To develop into a strong person capable of holding one's ground, though talent was extremely important, rationality, mental fortitude, and accurate battle judgment were even more important than raw talent. Without those other qualities, even the most aberrant prodigy would be shot down on the battlefield due to sheer blind recklessness.

Qiao Ting did not choose to rush forwards immediately. Instead, he sneakily closed in on Zhao Jun, carefully maintaining a 4-kilometre distance between them to travel in sync with the other. The search limit of a special-class operator's radar was 4 kilometres — as long as he kept a distance of 4 kilometres between himself and Zhao Jun, the other would never be able to discover him.

Qiao Ting was so careful because he wanted to confirm that there were no other Lingtian members around. Qiao Ting still remembered a case study Instructor Tang Yu had told him once. He did not want to fall into a trap of Lingtian's out of impulsiveness; it had to be said that Qiao Ting was extremely careful.

It turned out that in the history of mecha combat, there had been such an example — an ace mecha of some nation had once encountered a team full of advanced mecha warriors from an enemy nation. Based on common sense, even though the side with the advanced mecha warriors had greater numbers, due to the natural suppression of mecha levels, as long as the ace operator handled things properly, he could definitely break the other side's battle formation apart and obtain victory in the encounter.

However, the outcome was the complete opposite. Perhaps that ace mecha too believed that victory was assured, for he underestimated the battle fervour of these advanced mecha warriors, accidentally falling into the other side's ploy and ending up heavily surrounded. The ace operator thought that even if he could not kill all of the advanced mecha warriors around him, it should still be extremely easy for him to run away in his mecha. But unexpectedly, some of the advanced mecha warriors had chosen a horrific method to prevent his escape — self-destruction!

Yes, those advanced mecha warriors had not cared about their so-called lives, each of them throwing themselves forward one after another. They did not even choose to attack, nor did they dodge — they did not use any beam gun or beam saber, simply using their mecha's two arms to grab hold of the ace mecha desperately. Right after that, they would self-destruct — even if they were hacked to death while holding onto the ace mecha, they would make sure to press their self-destruct button in time. Whether or not it was of any use, they wanted to leave some bit of damage on the opponent.

This was how this group of advanced mecha warriors used the combined power of their self-destructs to exhaust the power of the ace mecha's powerful beam shield. In the end, the final outcome was that the ace mecha was forcibly kept in place by those advanced mecha warriors using that brute self-destruct method. At the end of it all, just like those advanced mecha warriors who had self-exploded, he became a speck of dust in the starry skies.

The example of this fight struck fear into the hearts of all ace operators. Fortunately, not all advanced mecha warriors could view death like coming home, so such an occurrence of trading their own lives for the life of an enemy was not commonplace. Unless death was truly inevitable, only then would most advanced mecha warriors choose to do such a thing. However, also due to this case study, all ace operators became exceedingly cautious. When battling advanced mecha warriors, they would be wary of letting themselves be surrounded, afraid they would also fall victim to that self-destruction method.

Qiao Ting had learned of this case study right after he had advanced to ace operator level. Tang Yu had made him watch the recording of said battle in order to let him understand that, on the battlefield, ace operators were not the only ones who could contend with ace operators.

Only the Huaxia Federation had a recording of that battle, because that group of fearless self-sacrificing advanced mecha warriors was one of the platoons of the Huaxia Federation. Meanwhile, that unfortunate ace operator was from the Caesar Empire. Out of this platoon comprising of 30 advanced mecha, only 7 survived. In order to take down that one ace mecha, the Federation paid the price of the lives of 23 advanced mecha warriors, clinching the victory of that battle. And the recording of the battle was captured back then by these 7 survivors.

This battle was the pride of the Huaxia Federation, but was also the sorrow of the Huaxia Federation. This was because at that time, the Huaxia Federation had considerably fewer ace operators than the Caesar Empire. It couldn't be helped — in order to obtain the final victory, The Huaxia Federation could

only resort to this type of methods to plug the gap. However, this also caused the Federation to sacrifice countless advanced mecha warriors. At one point, even the mid-range forces were rather thin, and had required a whole 20 years for the deficit in manpower to be compensated.

This was also why the Federation took it so seriously whenever they discovered any promising sprouts who showed possibility of advancing to ace. After that historic battle, the Federation had no longer wanted to revisit the grief of using numbers to bridge the gap of power ever again.

Qiao Ting was also afraid that Lingtian would choose to use such methods against him. After all, in Mecha World, death was not true death. If the Lingtian battle team really wanted to obtain the final victory in this challenge fight, Qiao Ting believed that this was the only avenue they had.

Thus, although Qiao Ting really wanted to finish off Zhao Jun, he still had to be on guard against the other in case he used such a method against him. If he accidentally fell into the opponent's trap, became surrounded, and was then finished off by the opponent under such despicable methods, he, Qiao Ting, would never be able to live it down.

Qiao Ting followed Zhao Jun's group of three for approximately a minute, and finding no other Lingtian people around, his heart settled. He could basically confirm that the other had set no traps for him now. But just as he was about to make a move, Zhao Jun's group suddenly changed directions. Taking a sharp right angle, they rapidly pulled a distance away from him. Their abrupt actions made Qiao Ting's heart skip a beat — had he been exposed?