

## Crossing to the Future, it's Not Easy to Be a Man

### Chapter 22: A Life Free From Debt!

A year's time went by quickly, and Ling Lan was soon about to turn six. Ling Lan who had always complained that time moved too slowly was now singing a different tune, complaining that time was moving too fast instead.

Since she had officially started learning the Ling family martial arts at the age of five, Ling Lan had been able to freely practise the Body Refining Nine Stances. In this one year's time, she had managed to achieve three times more than what she had managed in the previous three and a half years — before the age of five, she had only barely mastered the fourth stance, but she had mastered the following three stances after that within this past year. It should be noted that the Body Refining Nine Stances only got harder the further you progressed, each stance requiring even more time and effort to master than the stance before it.

Unfortunately, Ling Lan did not have any room to relax despite that. In fact, her stress levels only increased from that point onwards. The deadline for her to master the Body Refining Nine Stances was fast approaching — she only had six months left, and she had yet to master the eighth stance, not to mention the even more challenging ninth stance.

She desperately wished that she could squeeze every second of her day into training, even holding combat poses during meal times and inhaling her food at top speed so she could get back to training sooner. This greatly dismayed her mother Lan Luofeng, who began to tearfully repent before a photo of Ling Lan's father. She felt that she had failed her husband by not raising their child right — Ling Lan had none of the decorum and grace of an established family clan member.

Amidst this chaos, the final deadline arrived. Although Ling Lan had successfully mastered the eighth stance, the ninth stance was still incomplete despite her best efforts.

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Ling Lan really did not want to face Instructor Number One. Unfortunately, the learning space was merciless and would not allow Ling Lan to escape. The moment the timer hit zero, Ling Lan's consciousness had been dragged into the learning space.

When she entered the learning space for her physical skills course, the first thing she noticed was that the air seemed colder than usual. Instructor Number One was already

standing in wait, his posture razor sharp, and he seemed to have been waiting for a long time.

Ling Lan rubbed her arms, trying to get her goose bumps to subside. It was impossible for Ling Lan to hold her composure against the menacing cold air emanating from such a formidable warrior.

Number One's aura was currently much, much colder compared to the other two times Ling Lan had met him. Even though his eyes maintained their usual calm, not a ripple of emotion in sight, Ling Lan could still clearly read the signs of Number One's deep displeasure.

Crap, Number One must be very unhappy with her performance this time. Ling Lan's sense of danger was very healthy — she immediately adopted a serious manner, head bowed and eyes lowered as she said, "Instructor Number One, I'm sorry, I've disappointed you."

Number One replied coolly, "There's no need for that. We are only here to guide and instruct. Whether or not you appreciate it means nothing to us. You are apologizing to the wrong person."

Although Number One said all this with his usual indifference and aloofness, Ling Lan could feel the underlying dissatisfaction running through his response.

Ling Lan felt like crying. Oh Instructor Number One, what do you really mean? What do you want me to do?

Although Ling Lan was complaining internally, her face showed none of this as she kept her head bowed in respectful silence.

Ultimately, Ling Lan was actually feeling somewhat guilty. She had really wasted a lot of time in the first three years of the given timeline. She had not practised seriously back then, although a large part of it could be blamed on her wariness of her watchful guardians in the Ling household. During that time, she would only practise in the depths of the night while her mother was sleeping, thus only managing about five to six hours of training each day. This greatly hobbled the speed of her progress. Although she had been free to train as much as she wanted after she started her training in the Ling family martial arts, she had not been able to make up for the time she had wasted in those first three years.

"Training in the Body Refining Nine Stances. Eight stances mastered, mastery of the ninth stance at 69 percent. Mission incomplete. Punishment options: One, a deduction of 200 honour points, lacking points can be compensated with other options. Two, corporal punishment, 200 jolts of electric shock! Three, exchange honour points for an extension of the deadline, punishment will be doubled if mission is still unable to be completed. Please make your choice!"

The learning space announced all of Ling Lan's punishment options in its unforgiving flat tone. The options were both a shock and a relief to Ling Lan. What shocked her was the harshness of the punishments — between the large deduction of honour points, and the shocking corporal punishment, she did not want to choose either unless she had no other choice. Honour points had proven to be supremely precious, so she was unwilling to lose them this way, while the corporal punishment was ... ahem, ahem, she really had no masochistic tendencies ...

On the other hand, Ling Lan was relieved that the system provided a chance for her to fix the situation. The only catch was the possible doubling of the current punishment — just thinking about it made Ling Lan's little heart shudder in terror, and she could feel a chill creeping up her spine.

Tone icy, Number One asked, "Speak. Which do you choose?"

Ling Lan asked carefully, "Instructor Number One, could you please explain the third option to me?" If she did not have to spend much honour points in exchange, she was willing to try it.

Number One gave her a cool look as he said in clipped tones, "You can use 10 honour points to extend your deadline by 30 days. In those 30 days, you may continue to practise the Body Refining Nine Stances. If you can master it in that time frame, the punishment will be cancelled. If you fail, the punishment will be doubled."

Ling Lan's heart leapt. 10 honour points were an acceptable loss in her opinion, although it was a little harder to decide whether she could really master the final ninth stance within 30 days. Truthfully, Ling Lan was not at all confident of her chances — she may really only need one more month to master the stance, but she could just as easily require two months or three months, or perhaps even one more year. Ling Lan remembered very well that Instructor Number Nine had told her that mastering the ninth stance required a certain degree of chance and enlightenment; mastery would be impossible without one or the other.

Should she take the risk and try? Ling Lan hesitated, but in the end, she just could not sacrifice the precious honour points she had earned, nor could she convince herself to take the corporal punishment, so she decided to take the plunge and chose the third option.

The moment Ling Lan stated her choice, she felt the temperature of the room rise to a more comfortable degree. Number One decisively processed her choice for her, and before Ling Lan could ask any more questions, she had been summarily kicked out of the physical skills learning area.

All Ling Lan could remember was a final cold stare, full of threat — a clear warning that she had better complete her mission properly this time.

Back at the general learning space, Ling Lan did not even spare the time to greet Little Four before hurrying back out to the real world to train.

Although Ling Lan had no idea what Number One's final threat-filled gaze was meant to convey, she knew down to her very bones that if she did not manage to master the Body Refining Nine Stances by this new deadline, she would die a very gruesome death

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And so, Ling Lan trained like a demon possessed in the subsequent month. Every day, she would train until she only had enough energy left to keep breathing before she dared to stop. Under this brutal routine, Ling Lan finally succeeded in mastering the ninth stance.

When Ling Lan entered the physical skills learning space and found that there was only ten seconds left till the deadline, she broke out into a cold sweat. Honestly, till the very last moment, she herself was unsure whether she would be able to complete the mission in time. All she could think of was to keep circulating her internal energy, and push her body into the motions of the Body Refining Nine Stances over and over again.

A rather stupid approach perhaps, but this reckless method may have led to the final push that Ling Lan needed. Ling Lan had trained to the point where her consciousness had started to blur, when she felt like a mental wall on the edge of her mind had crumbled. Her body had started going through all the poses of the Body Refining Nine Stances involuntarily, imprinting all the hard work she had put into learning the nine stances firmly into her body.

Just like that, Ling Lan resolved the sword of Damocles [1] hanging by her neck, and finally returned to a life free from debt.

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[1] Having a sword of Damocles over you means you're facing an imminent threat, usually one involving great peril.

## Chapter 23: The Scout Academy's Test

"Little Young Master, are you ready?" Standing before the room where the strength test was taking place, Ling Qin's expression was even more nervous than Ling Lan's who was about to be tested.

Ling Lan's lips twitched. This grandpa chamberlain had completely lost his usual calm ever since they had entered the scout academy. Did he really have such little faith in her?

Uh ... well of course there were things that were out of her control, like, who knew that the test of intelligence would be so incomprehensible ...

Recalling her shame in that part of the test, Ling Lan's face darkened. Still, to reassure her grandpa chamberlain who truly loved her from the depths of his heart, she said, "Relax, Grandpa Qin. I promise I will complete the mission."

If not out of sincere worry for her, why would Ling Qin lose his usual composure? He was a trained combat expert!

At her words, Ling Qin seemed put at ease. "That'll do, that'll do."

Ling Lan was standing here now because it was finally time for little Ling Lan to enter a scout academy. According to Federation law, every child must enrol at a scout academy at the age of six, and receive ten years of mandatory schooling there.

So even if Lan Luofeng was reluctant, she had no choice but to bring Ling Lan to the scout academy to take the enrolment tests which would decide which class she would be in.

There were four parts to the enrolment tests — intelligence, strength, stamina, and speed.

The first part, the intelligence test, was easy. It was so easy that most did not even consider it a real test, as all they did was let the child being tested talk to the appointed examiner for 3 to 5 minutes, and then the results were out.

Ling Lan only scored 80 marks in this test. Placed among the sea of 90 marks scored by the other children, this score was humiliating, leaving Ling Lan speechless. Till now, she still could not figure out how her mature mentality honed over 30 over years of life had lost to the intelligence of those 6 year old brats. How did that even make sense? Who knew how those examiners determined the scores — there did not seem to be any basis whatsoever.

Regardless of how wronged Ling Lan felt, she had no choice but to accept this result. According to regulations, any objections about scoring could only be raised after all parts of the enrolment test had been completed.

The second test was the test of strength. Ling Lan grimly swore that she would redeem herself in the following tests. No way would she let those little brats continue to beat her. The learning space in her mind was no joke!

Finally, Ling Lan's name was called. As she prepared herself to enter the testing room, Ling Qin pressed lightly on Ling Lan's little shoulder. "Do you remember what the mistress told you? You must not disappoint the mistress!"

Lan Luofeng was waiting for them outside the academy. Perhaps worried that her agitation would affect Ling Lan's performance, she had decided to remain outside and wait for them to come tell her the final results.

Ling Lan obediently nodded her head. "Yes, Ling Lan will do it. Mummy should relax, Uncle Qin too." Acting cute was rather embarrassing, but this was the only way to reassure these people who loved and cared for her, so Ling Lan had learned to ignore her shame and just do it.

Under Ling Qin's fond gaze, Ling Lan stepped into the examination room.

In the area set aside for the strength test, two soldiers in military uniforms were seated in one of the rooms. One of the officers was flipping through Ling Lan's intelligence test results and its accompanying examiner comments. The shockingly low 80 marks stood out starkly, causing him to frown, but he could not help but exclaim in surprise when he saw the examiner comments written below it.

Curious at his partner's reaction, the other officer asked, "What's up?"

"Calm and collected, no sign of leaps of logic, lacking imagination ... we've been in charge of testing children for almost three years, but I don't think we've seen these sort of comments before."

After listening to these comments, the other officer said with some dissatisfaction, "I'm not going to comment on the rest, but what's wrong with calm and collected? In battle, only the calm survive. Isn't this scoring a bit ridiculous?"

"Who do you think is in charge of intelligence testing? They would never let this sort of child who's hard to brainwash and hard to win over into the special classes and waste their resources." The officer who had read out the comments curled his lips, full of scorn for the examiners of the intelligence testing.

"Hehe, that's true. Those great clans are only concerned with recruiting talent for their clans for their own profit, having long forgotten about the good of the Federation. Quite a few promising talents have been shunted into the regular classes because of them, losing the chance to be cultivated with better resources, and in doing so losing the Federation some great talent," the other officer said with some regret. Unfortunately, those people had both power and authority, and held a lot of influence and decisive power. For example, they have claimed priority in arranging the enrolment classes of the scout academy, letting them place students loyal to them in the better classes. The other common soldiers involved in the process were powerless even if they wanted to help some of the unaffiliated talents.

“Hopefully this child will perform better in the following tests, or else he will have no hope of getting into Special Class-A.”

“Class-A? He should thank his lucky stars if he gets into Class-B. He might just end up being pushed into one of the regular classes ...” The other officer did not think highly of Ling Lan’s chances with such a low intelligence score.

“Hello, examiners. Ling Lan is here for testing,” said Ling Lan loudly. When she had entered the room, the two officers were in deep whispering conversation, so she had walked up till she was about 2 meters from them before standing at attention and announcing her presence.

“Oh, he’s got presence.” One of the officers laughed. They were used to seeing nervous and timid children, so it was rather refreshing to meet one so brash and unafraid.

At heart, Ling Lan was an adult, and she had also had to withstand Instructor Number One’s terrifying killing aura more than once — the weak presence of the two officers before her was really no threat at all in her eyes.

The other officer smiled kindly, and pointed over to a row of barbells at one corner of the room, saying, “Lift the barbell that you can lift. Don’t force yourself. This is just a test, not a competition.”

Hearing this, Ling Lan nodded. She walked over to the barbells, and saw that each barbell was labelled with their weight. Ling Lan knew her body well — she had finished learning the foundational stage of the Ling family martial arts, and had now moved on to train in combat techniques, so she was very clear on the limits of her strength.

Ling Lan did not choose immediately, but turned to ask, “Could you tell me which weight would give full marks?” Her abysmal intelligence score meant that Ling Lan needed to get as much marks as she could in the remaining three tests, because she just had to qualify for the special classes. This was also the mission given to her by her mom.

It wasn’t that Lan Luofeng wanted the glory, but only those students enrolled in the special classes had the right to build their own study plans, select their preferred instructors, and choose to stay at home. For the sake of protecting Ling Lan’s secret, this was the only option.

The two officers glanced at each other. This child was certainly full of himself — even now they would not dare to claim that they could lift 500 catties 1 . And this child wanted to take on the 100 marks challenge?

“500 catties!” one of the officers finally replied.

At this, Ling Lan strolled over casually to stand before the 500-catty barbell. She clenched her fists over the bar, considering — 500 catties was already slightly over her

best established record. If she were to brute-force it, she could be injured if she was unlucky. Still, Ling Lan wanted to try. After all, it was not like there was no chance of success, and she had her reliable Qi exercises to fall back on if she really did get injured, so she was not afraid of the consequences.

Of course, another reason why Ling Lan wanted to try was that the strength test was a section where points were easy to get. The marks in this section were all objective — how much you could lift equalled how much score you would get, unlike in the following tests of stamina and speed where there was some room for interpretation. Although Ling Lan also had confidence for the next two tests, she was also wary of inexplicably losing marks again like in the intelligence test.

Still, Ling Lan would not recklessly go ahead and lift the barbell. She wanted to protect her body as much as she could, so she surreptitiously circulated her Qi once and filled her entire body with energy. Only then did she grab hold of the bar with all her might, lifting up the barbell with a mighty bellow.

She waited till the monitor rang out with the signal sound of success before placing the barbell down again. The heavy thud of the barbell hitting the floor roused the dumbfounded officers from their stupor.

“He really did it ...” The two officers’ shock and disbelief were writ all over their faces. One of them even ran over to the monitor display to take a closer look. When he saw the distinct word of ‘SUCCESS’ on the screen, he was instantly too excited for words.

“Who’d have thought that after three years, I’d have a candidate come out of my hands with a full strength score.” The officer was both moved and proud — this wasn’t the intelligence test, where the score could be manipulated due to its black-box workings. This result was a direct reflection of strength. He was actually witness to the birth of a new combat genius! (The higher the strength, the easier training would be — approximately half the effort for the same results.)

The two officers wrote down Ling Lan’s score with excitement and added their comments at the bottom. Their comment consisted of only two words: Combat genius! Only these two words could represent what they felt at this very moment.

In their excitement, they did not notice Ling Lan’s strange pensive expression when she put down the barbell. Of course Ling Lan was puzzled — she actually still had strength to spare when she lifted the barbell. She had initially thought that 500 catties would be a little beyond her limits, but when she actually lifted the weight, it was rather easy.

Gee, could it be that she had eaten some sort of strength-enhancing pill without her knowledge?

Unable to figure it out, Ling Lan could only let it go for now as she walked out of the room and got ready for the next test.



## Chapter 24: The Overly Friendly Little Boy

Ling Lan assumed that the following tests would still be conducted individually, but unexpectedly, she found that that wasn't the case when she arrived at the site of the next test.

Both the stamina test and the speed test would be held at the same place — the academy's large field.

When Ling Lan and Ling Qin arrived at the field and tried to enter, Ling Qin was immediately stopped by one of the waiting staff members at the entrance. He told them that parents and guardians were not allowed to accompany their child into the testing area.

Ling Lan did not need Ling Qin's company to begin with; she had only let him tag along since she wasn't able to refuse his kind intentions. Now, seeing Ling Qin's worried eyes, she hurried to reassure him before saying a firm goodbye and entering the field. These thoughtful actions were noted by the staff member escorting Ling Lan into the field.

"You are surprisingly considerate ..." praised the staff member. Among the many children who came for testing, he had seen many who cried and fussed, threw tantrums, or clung to their guardians — in contrast, Ling Lan's mature handling of the situation amazed him.

Ling Lan merely smiled without saying anything in reply. She couldn't very well say that she was already over 30 years old, which was why she wasn't going to cling to her parents like other children, right?

Ling Lan's calm and even-tempered attitude may have endeared her to the staff member, for he decided to provide an explanation as he pointed out the other children waiting ahead on the field grounds. "There are the children waiting to be tested. That group on the far right with less people is the commoner children, the middle group consists of children from military backgrounds, while the largest group on the left is made up of the descendants of the elite families."

Ling Lan looked towards where he pointed, and saw that there were already a lot of people gathered on the grass, all of whom were children enrolling for the year.

On the planet of Doha, there were countless scout academies just like this one; however, the one Ling Lan was trying to enrol in was reputed to be the best in Doha, with no close competition. Just to qualify for the enrolment tests, one had to either be from an elite family or a military family with a reserved spot, or else they would have to be like Ling Lan, who was an inheritor of premium military benefits. Those who inherited

premium military benefits could come from commoner families, elite families, or even military systems, so the children on the field had knowingly or unknowingly drifted into three distinct camps.

Of course, if any of them failed the enrolment tests here, they would have to settle for the scout academy closest to their residence. This was the harsh reality of the matter — the Central Scout Academy of the Planet of Doha only accepted the best; they would not lower their standards just to boost their enrolment rates.

However, it should be noted that a large majority of the children who failed were those from the commoner families. The academy had released a statement to the public explaining that these children's physical fitness was not up to the academy's standards. Whether that was true or if there was something fishy behind the matter, we will never know.

Because every year, this academy which claimed to only accept the best would still open two 'Exception Classes' for enrolment ... to qualify, you'd have to have wealth, power, and status!

Ling Lan knew the staff member was trying to help her, so she responded with a bright smile. "Thank you!"

It should be noted that Ling Lan had a beautiful smile. This smile had been deeply ingrained into her bones, and as long as someone treated her well and with sincerity, she would be generous with it. In her past life, this smile had earned her the good will and affection of all the doctors and nurses who had treated her. And now, combined with the attractive face born from her good genes in this life, the sweetness of her smile had only intensified.

The staff member stared for a long moment, besotted. And then, he rubbed his nose lightly, peering around to the left and right. When he saw that no one else was paying attention, he said to her, "Little boy, don't smile like that in the future. It's for your own good."

If this child did not have enough social and political clout, it was better if he was more careful with his smile. Perhaps it wasn't as dangerous now due to his young age, but in another five or ten years, this smile of his could very well be a problem.

Ling Lan was taken aback by this unexpected advice. But before she could ask about it, they had arrived at the fringes of the crowd and it was no longer safe to ask. Ling Lan could only wave goodbye under the staff member's fond and worried gaze.

"Little Four, what do you think that person wanted to say?" asked Ling Lan with a slight frown on her face.

Little Four said nothing, but played a recording of Ling Lan's previous smile within her mind. Till now, Ling Lan had never seen her current smile, though she knew that her original smile had been sweet enough to make people lower their guard and ease their spirits. However, looking at her smile now ... she finally understood why that staff member had tried to warn her.

Dammit, looks like beauty is also a burden. In the past, she could only be considered pretty at most, with a sweet smile that could warm people's hearts. But now, her androgynous appearance and her very attractive face somehow made that same sweet smile even sweeter, adding an almost seductive quality to it. And this was still as a six year old, if she were a little older ...

Ling Lan was not so naïve as to believe that gay relationships did not exist in this era. Although she was a girl in reality, she still did not want a gay man to confess feelings for her.

Right then and there, Ling Lan decided that she could never smile like that again.

As Ling Lan neared the three groups, the children in all the groups started looking over at her curiously. As mentioned earlier, Ling Lan was a really good-looking child — even among the multitude of handsome men and beautiful women in this world, she would still be considered a top-notch beauty. With the honesty of youth, the children directly expressed their appreciation of her beauty with their focused attention. A pretty child was always popular.

In this manner, before Ling Lan could decide which group she should join, a well-built boy from the middle military group had started waving enthusiastically at her, shouting, "Here, here! Come quick!"

Ling Lan was nonplussed. Who the hell was this passionate fellow? He didn't look familiar to her at all.

Still, his greeting helped her solve one of her worries, so she started walking slowly in his direction. Her slow pace was intentional — what if she had mistaken his greeting when he had actually meant it for someone else behind her? She wanted to avoid that embarrassment if possible.

However, it was soon proven that Ling Lan's caution was unnecessary. That boy really had been calling out to her, because he had already run over to grab her hand in impatience before she had covered half the distance.

Ling Lan stared at the hand that covered her own with some consternation. Who the hell was he? How could he just grab her hand without asking as if they were familiar friends?

Hehe, don't judge Ling Lan for her reaction. In the history of both of her lives, this was the first time a strange man, erm ... little boy, had held her hand. Our intrepid little student Ling Lan was actually feeling shy.

They entered the group to the place the boy had run out from, but before the boy could say anything, a sulky voice could be heard saying, "Qi Long, who's he?"

Ling Lan looked towards the voice and saw that it was a plump little girl who had spoken. The girl glared at her fiercely, as if she had taken away her favourite possession.

Ling Lan was rendered speechless once again. Did all children in this time go through puberty so early? This girl had already learned how to be jealous? That aside, shouldn't she take a closer look before getting jealous? Couldn't she see that 'he' was a little boy right now?

Ling Lan was also a little puzzled, as she felt that she probably looked better than Qi Long in her current body. Why did the plump little girl not seem to notice this, but had chosen without question to be jealous of her instead of wanting to get close to her? Could it be that she was just not the girl's type?

What Ling Lan did not know was that this world was no longer like her previous world where leanness was considered attractive. Here, the children were all raised with the understanding that stoutness, bulk, and health were beautiful, so Ling Lan's weak and fragile bean sprout look was not going to appeal to most of the female population, no matter how attractive her features were.

Qi Long had no idea that his little follower was jealous, focusing instead on introducing Ling Lan to his friends, "He was the one who was being tested before me in the strength test. Don't look down on him 'cause he's skinny, he's really strong!" Qi Long liked to befriend those who he felt were stronger than him, as he felt that he could become stronger by mingling with them.

Ling Lan blinked. So that's how Qi Long knew her.

## Chapter 25: Companions in the Same Group

Ling Lan couldn't suppress her curiosity. "How did you find out?" The results were supposed to be confidential, only known by the examiners. Also, those examiners had been enlisted from various military regions, and so knew how to keep their mouths shut.

With some embarrassment, Qi Long replied, "Actually, when I went in for my test, the two examiners were talking about you, saying that you were a rare genius with

unparalleled strength. I figured that if even the examiners said so, your strength must be ginormous!"

Fine, looks like the examiners got carried away in their excitement and accidentally revealed some hints. But this gregarious fellow was also surprisingly observant, having managed to grab hold of the most important information immediately.

"Oh right! What's your name? I'm Qi Long, he's Han Jijyun. We grew up together, and he's the bestest of my best friends." Qi Long had no sense of the typical first-time reservations when meeting strangers; he had jumped straight into an enthusiastic introduction of the little boy standing beside the plump little girl. His expression as he spoke seemed as if he were showing off, causing Ling Lan to throw a curious glance at this boy who Qi Long seemed proud to know.

The little boy seemed very serious, giving no outward reaction to Qi Long's enthusiasm other than to slightly nod at Ling Lan, although his eyes held an unmistakable trace of appraisal. Of course, this was due to his young age — if he had been just a bit older, he might have been able to do so more subtly.

However, his assessing gaze did not make Ling Lan uncomfortable, because Ling Lan knew that he meant no harm by it, and that he was only trying to decide if Ling Lan was someone worthy of being befriended by his good friend Qi Long. Thus, Ling Lan was instead touched by this act of concern, proof of the deep friendship between the two boys.

Looking at the beaming Qi Long standing at her side, Ling Lan recalled the novels she had read in the past. So it was true that every happy-go-lucky boy would have a cautious and thoughtful bro by his side — even now, she could see the strong bromance between the two little boys ... God was indeed fair and kind, and would protect those who were pure of heart.

As her impression of Qi Long and Han Jijyun rose, Ling Lan's demeanour softened considerably. She greeted Han Jijyun amicably, "Hello, I'm Ling Lan, it's nice to meet you."

"Ling Lan, she is Jijyun's younger cousin Han Xuya. She always likes to hang out with us, don't take her words too seriously." Qi Long did not wait for Jijyun to respond, interrupting to introduce the plump little girl.

Qi Long did not notice that his words had irritated the plump little girl so much that she was gnashing her teeth, while Han Jijyun threw a somewhat apologetic look at Ling Lan. Looks like he was used to playing the mediator for his best friend and his cousin sister.

Ling Lan smiled but did not respond in any way to Qi Long's words. This somewhat placated the angry little girl, who felt that that Ling Lan at least knew his place, and as

such didn't find him as annoying as before. The emotions of girls were truly a fickle thing, regardless of their age.

And so the group of children conversed like they were little adults, but they hadn't conversed for long before they heard one of the other children yell out, "The exam is starting!"

It turned out that the examiner for this test had appeared on the field, and the staff members had begun separating the children into smaller groups.

The way they grouped the children was simple — according to their registration number, every ten numbers became one group. Ling Lan looked at her number, 7253, and then turned to look at the numbers of the children in Qi Long's group, and was immediately struck dumb. Dammit, wasn't this too coincidental?! Their numbers turned out to be right behind hers — 7254, 7255, 7256 ...

Ignoring Qi Long's excitement, Han Jijyun's surprise, and Han Xuya's mild discomfort, Ling Lan could do nothing but look up at the sky, the corners of her mouth twitching. Was this the rumoured Laws of Dimension Travel? Would anyone fated to connect with her be naturally drawn to gather around her? Just like how Qi Long had just bulldozed his way into her life?

Besides the four of them, the six other people who belonged in their group had also gathered around them. This was only natural as their group had the most people to begin with, so the others who were scattered had automatically come to join up with the largest party.

The newcomers consisted of five boys and one girl, and one of the boys looked very similar to the girl, so they were probably twins.

Although there were hardly any ugly people left at this time, the twins were still extremely good-looking by current standards. They were like porcelain dolls, with clear skins glowing with health — the boy looked dignified and confident, while the girl looked shy and adorable. Two almost identical faces with two distinctly different dispositions — Ling Lan couldn't help but steal a few extra looks.

Ling Lan's gaze was perhaps a bit too intent, for the twins seemed to sense it and looked over. The princess-like girl smiled at Ling Lan bashfully, which Ling Lan returned on reflex. When the boy saw this, he glared at Ling Lan, as if warning her not to even think about flirting with his sister.

Ling Lan rubbed at her nose, speechless. Fine, so she had been labelled as a little lecher with just one smile. Still, wasn't this little boy's guard a little too high at this age? Wasn't it a little too early to even worry about defending his sister's honour from lechers?

Qi Long noticed the boy's glares, and glared back fiercely in return as he tried to comfort Ling Lan, "Ling Lan, don't mind it. Luo Lang's just like that, his sister is the centre of his universe."

Looks like Qi Long was also familiar with the twins, or else he wouldn't have been able to call out the boy's name so easily.

Ling Lan said helplessly, "Oh, so he has a sister complex! A sis-con!"

"Sis-con?!" Qi Long paused for a moment, bemused, before bursting out into laughter. "Ling Lan, you're just too talented. How did you manage to describe it so perfectly? Sis-con ... why didn't I think of that?"

Qi Long's exaggerated reaction surprised Ling Lan. The term 'sis-con' had been so popular back in Ling Lan's original world that it had almost become a cliché, so almost everyone knew it. Who knew that it didn't exist in this generation ...?

A thought rose up in Ling Lan's mind. Could it be that, over the years, due to several catastrophes and major disasters, there had been some heavy losses in culture? In that case, the books and other reading materials Little Four had saved might truly be an invaluable pot of gold ...

Qi Long's unusual reaction piqued the interest of the other children, who quickly asked him what was going on. Soon, the term 'sis-con' spread like wildfire among the kids, until everyone in the group except the twins had learned about it, and were giggling behind their hands.

Though they tried to hide it, their laughter was still obvious enough that Luo Lang, the male twin, couldn't pretend not to see it. His face grew darker and darker, until finally, he could bear it no longer and went right up to Ling Lan to ask, "Hey, what bad things did you say about us?"

Ling Lan, face full of angelic innocence, pointed at herself and said, "Me? Say bad things about you? Why would I do that?" She wasn't even laughing with the others — if he was looking for someone to blame, shouldn't he look for Qi Long? Without his big mouth, how would the other children have found out and started laughing at Luo Lang?

"Then why are they laughing at me?" accused Luo Lang angrily. He had seen very clearly that the whole thing had started with Ling Lan. It was Ling Lan's words that caused Qi Long and the others to start laughing at them.

Ling Lan really didn't know what to do with this accusation. "... Do you have paranoia syndrome?"

"Paranoia syndrome ..." Pfft, stifled laughter once again broke out from behind her. From the moment Luo Lang started talking to Ling Lan, the other children had been

paying attention to them, and as expected, they once again heard something really interesting. They discovered that this weak-looking little fellow before them was a great wordsmith, using strange terms they had never heard of before but which fit perfectly with the situation, causing them to laugh uncontrollably. Heavens, he was really too talented.

Qi Long was laughing the hardest, while even Han Jijyun couldn't help but smile like the kid he was, breaking up his usual serious façade.

This new bout of laughter made Luo Lang even angrier. He pointed at them all, so angry that he couldn't even speak — Ling Lan heartlessly wondered if he would get angry enough to faint.