

It's Not Easy to Be a Man After Travelling to the Future

Chapter 26: The Exam Begins

It was evident that the physical endurance of the bodies of children in this time period was very high. No matter how angry Luo Lang was, his stance was still tall and steady. The only sign of his building anger was the stormy expression on his face.

Seeing Luo Lang's expression, Ling Lan felt a little bad. After all, she was already over 30 years old if you counted the span of both her lives, which meant she could already be considered a weird auntie of sorts — how could she bully a young child like this?

A little remorsefully, Ling Lan smiled at Luo Lang and said, "I was just joking. Please don't be mad."

Ling Lan's smile startled Luo Lang, and her sudden submissive attitude also threw him for a loop. He stood there gaping, nonplussed, and the other children burst out laughing once again. There was no helping it really, for his bewildered look was just too adorable — even his sister had started giggling softly. She quickly stifled it, however, and lowered her head bashfully, chastising herself mentally for her actions. How could she laugh at her brother who had always watched out for her?

Meanwhile, Ling Lan was having a headache over her reflexive smile. It was so troublesome. After she had accidentally revealed her 'seductive' smile once again, Little Four had gone ballistic, and she now had her hands full trying to calm him down.

Leaving Ling Lan aside, who was busy with the ballistic Little Four, Luo Lang had been shaken out of his stupor by the others' laughter. When he found that he had once again embarrassed himself, two splotches of red flushed over his ivory skin, spreading all the way to the roots of his ears.

Then, he channelled his embarrassment into anger and lunged at Ling ... uh, Ling Lan's side where Qi Long was standing, and pushed him to the ground. Just like that, the two of them began to wrestle as they rolled around on the field.

Qi Long and Luo Lang were all tangled up with one another — Qi Long's friend Han Jiyun did not try to help, only pulling Ling Lan and Han Xuya aside to watch as they fought. Meanwhile, Luo Lang's sister had also silently retreated a few steps out of the way, but she continued to watch her brother with worried eyes.

With some difficulty, Ling Lan finally managed to calm Little Four, only to return to awareness to find that no one was trying to stop the fight. This baffled Ling Lan. In her past world, if any children started to fight, they would be pulled apart as soon as

possible to resolve their problems peacefully. But here, although there were staff members on the field not far from them, they just continued with what they were doing as if nothing was happening — what exactly was going on? Ling Lan felt that her world view was being challenged by this new world's order.

Ling Lan was not someone who could suppress her curiosity. She immediately turned to ask Han Jijyun about the situation, earning yet another appraising gaze from him. However, when he saw that Ling Lan really did not understand what was going on, he was rather stunned. This was pretty basic general knowledge that should have been taught by a father. Had Ling Lan's father not told him about it?

Even though Han Jijyun had his doubts, he still explained to Ling Lan, "This is a habit we've learned since we were little. If we need to resolve a problem with someone, fighting is permitted. However, no matter who wins or loses, the matter is considered closed after the fight."

What a strange way of educating their children ... are they not afraid of encouraging violence? Once again Ling Lan was struck by how different the values and principles of her previous education were compared to the survival of the fittest mentality of this world. For example, no matter the origins of a child – whether he was a commoner, an elite, or a noble – the first ambition of all the children here was to join the military. The second ambition was also to join the military, and the third ambition ... was still to join the military. Because strength was might, and military men were the strongest, especially if they managed to become a mecha operator. Only those whose bodies did not meet the requirements would give up on this dream of the military and reluctantly choose another profession.

Since young, the education Ling Lan received was geared towards preparing her to become a mecha operator, the strongest of the strong. Everything she learned worked towards this goal, while her mum and Chamberlain Ling Qin had never even thought to ask her whether she wanted to be one.

Honestly, she was rather apathetic towards the idea of becoming a mecha operator. She was a girl, after all, with very little interest in fighting. She could never have guessed that she would travel to this warring world where the people were militarised, and, even more unexpectedly, that she would have a mecha learning device as a contracted follower ...

Ling Lan couldn't help but rub her jaw thoughtfully. Could it be that this was fate? Was everything that had happened trying to tell her that she was destined to walk the path of a mecha operator?

Qi Long and Luo Lang were still fighting neck and neck — although Qi Long was actually slightly better in terms of fighting power, Luo Lang had stubborn determination on his side. So, although Luo Lang was slightly disadvantaged, he was still managing to hold his own against Qi Long.

Ling Lan really wanted to know the outcome of their fight, but when she saw that the staff member in charge of calling out the test groups was getting closer and closer to their numbers, she knew that there was no chance the fight would end in time. With some regret, she called out, "It looks like it'll be our turn soon. Are you guys sure it's alright to continue fighting like this?"

The two boys froze at the same time, but Luo Lang reacted faster than Qi Long. He shoved Qi Long aside and scrambled off the ground, and started to fix his clothing and appearance. Although he could no longer revert to his initial pristine princely presence no matter how hard he tried, his proper upbringing would not allow him to face the examiner in such a dishevelled state.

Qi Long was caught unprepared and was sent tumbling twice over by Luo Lang's push. He quickly clambered up as well and said huffily, "Wait till the test is over, let's continue our fight then." He was utterly unconcerned with his mussed up appearance, only swiping at his forehead twice to get rid of some sweat before letting it be.

Naturally, Luo Lang refused to back down as well, so the two agreed that they would determine the true winner after the testing ended.

Oh, such spirited and competitive young children! Ling Lan felt old, for she could not find any sense in their random fight. By this time, Ling Lan had forgotten that she was actually the culprit who instigated Luo Lang's fight with Qi Long.

The testing proceeded rapidly — Qi Long and Luo Lang had barely caught their breath when their group was already being called up by the staff member. The ten people in Ling Lan's party dared not dawdle and quickly ran over.

The ten of them stood on the race track and made their final preparations. Then, an examiner walked over to explain how the testing would go. He asked them to get ready to run from the start line, and explained that they would have to safely arrive at the end line to complete this test. As for scoring, that would depend on how much time they took to complete the course.

As Ling Lan got ready, she did not forget to keep an eye on the group of testees before them. This was a habit she had developed after multiple encounters with Number One — every time Number One appeared, his every action could be a test, so Ling Lan always had to be on her toes, making sure she caught every little hint in his actions and his words. This strict caution had become a part of her basic instincts.

Ling Lan saw the previous group speed off at the examiner's command, and soon she could no longer see their silhouettes ...

"Do you see it?" Han Jijun leaned close and whispered to her. He had also noticed something strange.

“Hn, even though the sun is shining brightly in the sky, there is fog on the track ... ” Ling Lan pointed out the problem, which explained why the group before them had disappeared so quickly before their eyes.

“Looks like the track here is under some area-of-effect illusion technology — this test is not as straightforward as it seems.” Han Jijyun was an intelligent boy who had a deep understanding of advanced technology which other kids (like Ling Lan) may not have.

Han Jijyun’s warning made Ling Lan secretly raise her guard.

Very soon, the examiner at the starting line called Ling Lan’s group over. Once he had confirmed they were ready, he gave the command, and they were off.

Qi Long immediately rushed forward at the head of the group, with Luo Lang close on his heels. It seemed like the two of them were determined to make a competition out of this as well.

Ling Lan was third, and Han Jijyun was right behind Ling Lan. This strategic child had the same idea as Ling Lan — they were planning to follow behind Qi Long for now as they observed their surroundings. Meanwhile, the other kids were all following at various paces behind Han Jijyun.

Chapter 27: The True Intention of the Test
Translator: ryuxenji Editor: H2dH2mr

They hadn’t run for long when the sunny skies above them turned dark and foreboding. Storm clouds gathered, and thunder rumbled ominously. Right at the front, Qi Long cursed, “Damn our luck! Why did it only start to rain when it’s our turn? Hurry up, everyone, or else it’ll be even harder to run once it really starts raining, and our results will definitely be affected.”

After he finished speaking, Qi Long was just about to speed up when Han Jijyun called out from behind, “Long, don’t speed up. Just keep your current pace.”

Qi Long was confused. He didn’t understand why Han Jijyun wanted to stop him from speeding up; if it really started to rain, they would have to expend much more energy running through the rain, and the rain would affect their speed as well ... Their score in this test was based on how quickly they could arrive at the end point, so shouldn’t they try to cover more ground now before it rained?

Although Qi Long’s mind was full of doubts, one of his strengths was self-awareness. He knew that his blood-sworn brother Han Jijyun was much smarter than him, so much smarter that he could only look on in envy. Since his sworn brother had said so, there must be something that he missed — it had been proven enough times in the past that it was never wrong to listen to Han Jijyun, so he would put his faith in his brother.

And so Qi Long decisively dismissed his worries, and kept running at his original pace. It had to be said that none of the children in Ling Lan's group were particularly competitive in nature, other than Luo Lang. And although Luo Lang was prideful, he was also an intelligent boy, so when he heard Han Jijyun's advice to Qi Long, he also decided not to speed up, merely keeping pace behind Qi Long.

Among their peers, Han Jijyun's intelligence was publicly acknowledged. Even Luo Lang admired Han Jijyun for his intelligence, but unfortunately, Han Jijyun had befriended that idiot Qi Long before he could get to know him. He was full of regret that he had moved too slowly and felt that it was such a waste — if he had managed to get to Han Jijyun first, Qi Long would never have had a chance.

The other kids also maintained their original pace, keeping close to the group so that they weren't left behind. Anyone who could attend the enrolment tests of the Central Scout Academy of Doha was no idiot — Qi Long and Luo Lang's fight had shown them that the two were much stronger than them, so if the two of them weren't afraid of wasting time, why should they be afraid?

Han Jijyun quickened his steps to catch up to Ling Lan, and jogged by her side. In low tones, he asked, "Ling Lan, what do you think?" Han Jijyun's gut just told him that Ling Lan knew something.

"Didn't you already notice it yourself?" asked back Ling Lan with a wounded gaze. Dammit, this was truly what was meant by heaven-blessed. Han Jijyun was only six years old, but he was already observant enough to discover something wrong with the situation — she felt pitiful in comparison.

She had only noticed the problem thanks to her experience of two lifetimes, as well as the intensive training and trials provided the learning mind-space. This year especially, Ling Lan had been free of any specific training menu or missions, but had been tormented by Number One via all sorts of methods, causing her to view everything with suspicion now. Looking deeper into everything by at least several layers had become her default reaction.

Han Jijyun was oblivious of Ling Lan's hurt little soul, continuing in a stern manner, "Hn, it won't matter whether we speed up or not, what will come will come. Perhaps they want to see how we react under pressure."

"The examiner did not set a clear path for us, I suspect that ... this test might not have a typical finish line," admitted Ling Lan. Han Jijyun's intelligence allowed Ling Lan to speak freely without worry.

She could finally throw off her sheepskin of a child! Hanging out with such a talented child meant that her own talents would seem less freakish as well. Ling Lan was so happy she could cry — these six years of playing a kid hadn't been easy.

Han Jijyun turned thoughtful at Ling Lan's words. After a while, he responded, "Possibly, the test had already begun the moment we stepped onto the field."

"What do you mean?"

"Is this really a field?" Han Jijyun's words jolted Ling Lan into awareness. She thought back to when she first entered the field — that entrance had not at all been like a regular entrance to a field.

"Wait and watch," said Ling Lan and Han Jijyun in almost perfect unison as their eyes met. Since they had already been caught up in the illusion, all they could do was continue and take things as they came.

After that, they had only run a little bit further when it started raining cats and dogs. Ling Lan's party of ten were quickly soaked to the bone, and the rain obscured their vision while turning the earth beneath their feet into mud. The clothes on their body became heavy with rainwater and clung to their bodies, dragging them down. Under these conditions, having run for several thousand metres, lethargy started settling in. The two girls were hit especially hard and had already started to pant.

"This is real water, not an illusion," Ling Lan concluded after paying close attention to the signals her body were sending her. It looked like the setting of this test was using a combination of illusions and real props. There was no doubt that in this space they were occupying, there were sprinklers equipped all over the ceiling overhead ...

Since they already knew that they were walking within a virtual environment within a room, Ling Lan decided to ignore what she could see as she tried to construct an image of the underlying room in her mind.

Admittedly, the virtual field presented to everyone had been nicely done — the racetrack of a field was just a large circular circuit, so even if those caught within the illusion ran multiple laps around the track, they would still never suspect that they were merely within an enclosed room.

Ling Lan's group ran another few thousand metres — although it felt like they had run countless circles around the track, not a single examiner came to inform them about how many laps they had left. This seemingly endless test began to cause the hearts of some of the weaker children to waver. In particular, the two girls' speed had dropped considerably, and they had fallen behind till they were at the very tail end of the group.

The two boys who were related to the girls, Luo Lang and Han Jijyun, merely turned a blind eye to this, however, continuing to run forward at a steady pace.

Seeing this, Ling Lan frowned. Shouldn't they try to help the girls?

Han Jijyun seemed to notice Ling Lan's hesitation, and quickly explained, "To become a proper soldier, one has to rely on one's own strength. Helping her would be harming her instead. On the battlefield, you can't rely on others to survive."

Han Jijyun's words made a lot of sense, and Ling Lan was not a saint who would insist on helping. She was just about to ignore the girls when a thought flashed through her mind, causing her to pause in consideration.

Was this truly just a test of stamina and speed? If that was the case, the objective could just as easily be achieved on a regular field — was it really necessary to use such precious illusion technology to create this virtual environment? Furthermore, why split them into so many groups?

She recalled the marathons she had seen in her previous life, where tens of thousands of people could run together at the same time. Ling Lan had taken note of the width of the race track — it was about 50 metres wide. Even if not everyone could run at the same time, the track could still easily handle up to several hundreds or thousands of people. Wouldn't doing so speed up the testing process and save time?

Perhaps, the test was meant to test something else as well — what was the true intention of the test? Ling Lan knew that the answer to this question was probably the key to this test. If she could figure it out, then she would know how to pass the test.

What other hints had there been in the examiner's speech? Sensing Ling Lan's thoughts, Little Four helpfully provided a replay of what the examiner had said.

Tsk, only revealing what he wanted you to know, while keeping everything else a mystery — as expected of special examiners handpicked from the military forces ...

Wait a minute. Handpicked from the military forces? Military forces? Realisation sparked in Ling Lan's mind — she got it! Since all their examiners were from the military forces, was this in itself a hint? Moreover, a group of ten men was precisely the smallest possible military unit in the military forces!

Chapter 28: The Data of the Ten Children
Translator: ryuxenji Editor: H2dH2mr

Ling Lan reigned in her elation, turning to ask Han Jijyun quietly, "What are the requirements to be a qualified soldier?"

Han Jijyun was very surprised by Ling Lan's random question, but still answered seriously, "Passion and loyalty in service of our beloved Chinese Federation, and to respect, trust, and care for our fellow warriors with a pure heart ..." Han Jijyun recited the oath all soldiers had to swear under the flag of their country when they qualified to become a soldier and put on their uniforms; the oath already included all the qualities required of a soldier.

As she listened to Han Jijyun's recitation, Ling Lan's eyes grew brighter and brighter. She then continued asking, "And what are scout academies?"

"Nurseries for future soldiers," said Han Jijyun without any hesitation or doubt.

The smile on Ling Lan's lips became even more noticeable. "Then, we shouldn't lose our pure hearts to respect, trust, and care for our fellow warriors."

Han Jijyun abruptly came to a realisation, and his eyes brightened up. He finally understood what Ling Lan was hinting at.

"Qi Long, Luo Lang, go help Han Xuya and Luo Chao," shouted Han Jijyun to the two running at the front.

"Ah ...!" Qi Long almost tripped over his own feet in surprise. Why did they have to help those two girls who were holding them back?

"I'll explain once the test is over." Although Han Jijyun agreed with Ling Lan's assessment, he didn't want to waste time arguing and so decided not to give Qi Long and Luo Lang an explanation right now.

Naturally, Qi Long listened to Han Jijyun. He gradually lowered his speed, dropping from first place to the last. Seeing this, Luo Lang hesitated for just a moment before following suit. Remember, one of the two girls who needed help was his own biological sister — in contrast, Qi Long had no direct relation to either girl.

Also, while it was true that Luo Lang wanted to beat Qi Long once, he didn't want to win in this way. The prideful Luo Lang wouldn't accept this sort of shameful victory.

Undeniably, Qi Long and Luo Lang had the best physical fitness among the ten children. (Ling Lan didn't count due to her being touched by the gods.) Even though they each took on the burden of another person, their speed was not reduced by much. In no time at all, the two of them had barrelled forward again, once more taking up their positions at the front of the group.

In a particular observation room, the officer who just happened to switch his screen to view room 72 let out a surprised shout. Each officer in the room was in charge of monitoring ten rooms. The officers would switch their individual screens between rooms every one minute, going through all ten rooms in ten-minute intervals, and this officer had just happened to start viewing the feed from room number 72.

The officer seated right beside him had been focused on his own screen, but couldn't help looking up in surprise at his colleagues' shout. He took a glance at his friend's

screen out of curiosity, and when he saw what was happening, he also started to exclaim, “Oh, how interesting!”

Their cries attracted the attention of the superintendent, who walked over with a frigid expression on his face. “What’s going on? Why did you both break the command to maintain silence?”

“Sir! We’ve noticed some promising recruits,” hurriedly reported the two officers, saluting the superintendent. There was no chagrin at all in their voices, instead, their tone was matter-of-fact. They knew that they were in the right because there was an overriding command in the military — the discovery of any promising recruits was to be reported immediately ... and that was precisely what they were doing now.

Upon hearing this, the superintendent’s expression thawed. He looked at the screen, and with just one glance, his demeanour changed. What he saw on the screen had truly shocked him.

The two officers glanced at each other feeling proud of themselves, but also relieved that the children were still performing brilliantly at this bloody important moment.

Sadly, the screen wasn’t cooperative; the superintendent had only observed for a few seconds when the feed switched over to that of another room.

“Wu, switch the feedback to the previous room,” ordered the superintendent.

“Yes, Sir!” Officer Wu was the one who was in charge of monitoring Ling Lan’s group. He quickly adjusted the feed so that the screen was fixed on the room Ling Lan’s group was in.

From the screen, they could see that the two girls, Han Xuya and Luo Chao, who were originally being dragged around by Qi Long and Luo Lang’s brutal pace, had now been piggybacked by the two boys. From the looks of it, the two girls had completely depleted their energy and could no longer run on their own.

Meanwhile, behind them, the six remaining children, including Ling Lan, had started running in a rotation, making sure to assist the two children with the weakest stamina. Of course, they also helped each other, giving each other a push or a supporting shoulder when necessary as they ran, so nobody had been left behind.

This current situation was a direct result of Ling Lan and Han Jijyun’s decisive actions. If they hadn’t reached out first to help the weakest two of their teammates, there would have probably been a few less people in the group by now.

Their actions had sparked some realisation in the other teammates, whom they didn’t know as well, so when those teammates saw that they were growing tired, they had

actually stepped up and offered to take over and help. Thus, the current situation came to be as seen on the screen.

“Give me the data of these ten children.” Even as he marvelled at the sight, the superintendent’s brows furrowed. A seed of doubt grew in his heart. This team was altogether too coordinated, causing him to suspect that someone may have abused their authority to manipulate things so that these children had been put into one group on purpose.

Soon enough, the data of Ling Lan’s group of ten had been retrieved.

Ling Lan: Son of Major General Ling Xiao, god-class operator of the IN mecha , vice commander of the Seventh Division of the Interstellar Forces. Inheritor of said major general’s premium military benefits. Physical Fitness: [S] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-2, Potential: [S] rank.

Qi Long: Son of Colonel Qi Yaoyang, ace pilot of the MT mecha , lead pilot of the Third Division of the Interstellar Forces. Physical Fitness: [S] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-2, Potential: [S] rank.

Luo Lang: Son of Colonel Luo Qifeng, commander of the Third Fleet in the Ninth Division of the Interstellar Forces. Physical Fitness: [S] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-2, Potential: [S] rank.

Han Jiyun: Son of Colonel Han Rong, deputy director of the Federal Central Military Intelligence Agency. Physical Fitness: [A+] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-3, Potential: [S] rank.

Luo Chao: Daughter of Colonel Luo Qifeng, commander of the Third Fleet in the Ninth Division of the Interstellar Forces. Physical Fitness: [B] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-2, Potential: [A] rank.

Han Xuya: Daughter of Major Han Yushao, acting head of the Federal Logistics Base on the Planet of Qiyuan. Physical Fitness: [B] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-2, Potential: [A] rank.

Luo Shaoyun: Commoner. Nephew of Captain Luo Jiguang, commander of the Third Company of the mecha protective task force for mecha operators of the Thirteenth Division of the Interstellar Forces. Inheritor of said captain’s premium military benefits. Physical Fitness: [A] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-1, Potential: [A] rank.

Yuan Youyun: Descendant of the Yuan family of the Planet of Zhong Xing. Physical Fitness: [A] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-1, Potential: [A] rank.

Li Jinghong: Descendant of the Li family of the Planet of Doha. Physical Fitness: [B] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-1, Potential: [B+] rank.

He Chaoyang: Commoner. Adopted son of Captain He Shaoji, deputy captain of the Ninth Fleet Assault forces of the Seventeenth Division of the Interstellar Forces. Inheritor of said captain's premium military benefits. Physical Fitness: [B] rank, Spiritual Power: Tier-1, Potential: [B+] rank.

Taking in this data, the superintendent could clearly see that all the children came from different star systems, and had backgrounds from all walks of life, though over half came from traditional military families. Most importantly, however, even the weakest potential among the children was at [B+] rank. Even if that ranking might not qualify for the special classes, it was more than enough to ensure a spot in the regular classes.

The superintendent looked once more at the first line. Ling Lan's data, in particular, made a surge of emotion rise up within him. The god-class operator of the IN mecha Major General Ling Xiao ... that man was the role model of countless soldiers ... it was such a shame he had died in the death tunnel of a meteor field seven years ago. He could still remember what a shock it was when the news had first been received. The whole Federation had been shaken to its core, and all the military men had been greatly saddened by the tragedy.

For context, it should be noted that there were only 12 god-class IN mecha operators throughout the entire Federation. Each god-class operator was considered a national treasure, and was the representation of a country's might, acting as a deterrent to foreign enemies. And Major General Ling Xiao, in particular, had been the only operator to have ascended to god-class within the past ten years, and he had also been the youngest IN mecha operator.

Back then, everyone had been optimistic, anticipating that Major General Ling Xiao would be able to become the strongest god-class operator among the twelve, with youth as his greatest advantage. Sadly, the tree of his talent grew too high above the canopy 1 — it was toppled by the wind long before he could truly spread out his branches.

Later on, the Federation's investigation had uncovered that the magnetic turbulence within the death tunnel was most likely a sinister plot hatched by an enemy nation, specifically targeting Major General Ling Xiao. Unfortunately, the Federal Intelligence Agency hadn't discovered this in time, and the painful price of their oversight was twofold — not only had the nation lost the potentially strongest god-class mecha operator of the future, but the two countries had also become bitter enemies, whereby the war between them would not stop till one side was annihilated.

The death of a god-class mecha operator would never be forgiven by the soldiers of the Federation!

Chapter 29: The Final Lap

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The superintendent suppressed his surging emotions, putting his full focus on the performance of the ten children on the screen. Finally, he smiled with satisfaction and said, “End their test and let them out.”

The officer in charge of monitoring Ling Lan’s group wavered, and asked, “Then how shall we score them?”

The superintendent glared. “Do you need me to teach you something so simple? How much time did they take to complete the course? And how is their condition now?”

The officer’s eyes brightened. “Understood, Sir.”

Meanwhile, on Ling Lan’s end, the group of ten had been holding out for another few rounds. By now, even the indomitable Qi Long and Luo Lang were starting to tire. Running with another person on your back was worlds apart from running on your own — after just a few rounds, they had begun to feel the doubled strain on their bodies. Initially, they had thought that they would be able to persist for another ten to twenty rounds, but now they weren’t so sure about that.

Among the ten children, Ling Lan was definitely the one in the best condition. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that she was never tired — because from the moment they had started running, Ling Lan had been circulating her Qi.

Ever since she had tasted its fruits in the strength test, Ling Lan had harboured suspicions that the Qi exercises still had secrets for her to uncover. So, she decided to apply it once again during the running test. Clearly, her decision was a wise one — after running for so long, she was still brimming with energy, and her vital stats remained at the same levels as when she was at rest.

These numbers were all supplied by Little Four. While Ling Lan was marvelling at her discovery, Little Four had shuffled over ... To put it nicely, he wanted to help Ling Lan research the Qi exercises and fulfil his role as a contracted assistant ... but in truth, Little Four was just bored because he had no access to the internet here.

Still, with Little Four’s help, Ling Lan very quickly understood the secrets of the Qi exercises. Apparently, circulating Qi could replenish the body’s energy as it was being expended, as well as repair any damage affecting the body’s functions, allowing the body to maintain peak condition over long periods of time.

Of course, Little Four also noted that the current situation, where her body was maintaining a stasis between expenditure and recovery, was only possible because

Ling Lan was not using much energy right now. If Ling Lan were to carry someone and run, like Qi Long or Luo Lang, full equilibrium would probably be impossible — some energy would still be expended. That said, Little Four encouraged Ling Lan by adding that the amount of energy recovered by the Qi exercises would increase the more she trained and circulated her Qi, to the point that eventually, she may possibly never have to worry about her energy levels ever again. (Of course, this was only a possibility after several decades of training ... but Little Four decided that Ling Lan didn't really need to know that.)

Ling Lan, who was still as sprightly as ever, looked at the sweat streaming from Qi Long and Luo Lang's foreheads as their steps started to slow. She could tell that their stamina was starting to fail, and that they might soon be unable to go on. Ling Lan was unsure whether she should offer to take over and help them — she wanted to, but she was also afraid that she would stand out too much by doing that. If only there was a way for her to help without being noticed ...

Currently, under Little Four's regulation, Ling Lan's outward condition appeared to be similar to that of Han Jijyun's. Both of them were panting hard, and the backs of their shirts were drenched with sweat. After all, she had been helping the weakest boy in their group all this time — although she wasn't piggybacking the boy like Qi Long, carrying part of another's weight was still naturally more tiring than running solo.

A devil and an angel were fighting in Ling Lan's mind as she pondered this dilemma. But before one of them could overpower the other, the outside world had already made Ling Lan's decision for her.

Luo Lang cheered as he pointed towards one side, "I see a sign! One more lap left!"

Luo Lang's words were like a shot of adrenaline to the heart. Some of the children who were on the brink of giving up rallied themselves for a final push.

Ling Lan looked towards where Luo Lang was pointing at, and saw an examiner lifting a display screen, which only had a number one written on it in Arabic numerals. This clearly indicated that they only had one more lap left to go.

Seeing this, Han Jijyun encouraged the group onwards, "Just one more lap left. We need to hold on no matter what. Make sure no one is left behind!"

"Okay!" all the other nine members of the group shouted in response, Ling Lan included. They would get through this final round no matter what.

Han Xuya suddenly inhaled sharply, and yelled, "Qi Long, put me down."

"What's wrong?" asked Qi Long in surprise.

“The last round. I can do it.” It was impossible for Han Xuya not to have noticed Qi Long’s fatigue, and she didn’t want Qi Long’s results to be affected because of her. Qi Long was meant for the Special A-class. For this final round, she would run on her own, even if she fainted before she could finish ... she didn’t want to burden Qi Long any longer.

On the other side, Luo Chao was also trying to convince Luo Lang to put her down for mostly the same reason. She didn’t want her brother’s results to be dragged down because of her. The two girls wanted Qi Long and Luo Lang to run at full speed for this final lap so that they could battle it out for the best time.

Han Jijyun stepped in to dissuade them, “It’s already the final lap. If we don’t all make it to the end, then what we’ve been doing so far will all be for nothing. Besides, you all should know what true soldiers do — they never leave a comrade behind!”

Han Jijyun’s words were like a ray of light. Several of the quick-witted children had immediately figured out what he was saying. Han Xuya and Luo Chao, who had initially still wanted to protest, also changed their minds at Han Jijyun’s words. Instead, Han Xuya urged, “Qi Long, pull me quickly, let’s move faster.” Since they had already decided to finish together, then they couldn’t afford to waste even one more second.

And so, the strong pulled the weak in Ling Lan’s group, and just like that, they supported each other as they hastened towards the finish line. At this time, Ling Lan took charge of pulling along the weakest two boys, leaving Han Jijyun free to run on his own. Han Jijyun threw a grateful glance in her direction — Ling Lan’s help was much appreciated. His stamina was almost completely gone; if he still had to pull along another person, he was uncertain if he could actually finish this final lap.

Outside the virtual environment testing room was an open-air café where more than a few of the examiners were seated, drinking tea and chatting with one another. This test was a long one which would last for at least three to four hours. Naturally, the examiners would not just sit outside the testing room and wait the whole time — most of them would typically order a cup of tea or coffee here to pass the time, and perhaps find a few familiar friends to chat with.

Similarly, the on-site examiner responsible for room 72 was talking to a few close friends. He was just getting comfortable when the communication device on his wrist started beeping.

He tapped the accept button on the device, and with a silver flash, a holographic screen appeared before him. Simultaneously, the image of the officer in charge of monitoring room 72 appeared on the screen.

“Notice, the testees in room 72 are about to complete the test. Please make the necessary preparations.”

The examiner was bewildered. “Complete the test? In less than two hours? Really?” He really could not be blamed for his disbelief, for there had never been a record of this test being completed in less than two hours in all the history of the scout academy tests. The only exceptions were the children who had to be removed early from the room when they fainted out of exhaustion.

However, there was no such notification from his communication device, which was tracking the status of the ten children he was responsible for. None of the dots representing the ten children were red, which indicated unconsciousness, or even yellow, which meant their body had given out on them. All the dots were still green, indicating that they were all still conscious and that their bodies were still capable of going on.

The invigilator of room 72 observed the incredulous face of the on-site examiner, and couldn't help but laugh. He kindly reminded him, “You should hurry, otherwise you won't make it in time. Also, the kids in that group are great kids. You won't be disappointed.”

Without giving the examiner any chance to ask any further questions, the invigilator of room 72 ended the video call. He grinned to himself as he recalled the shocked face of the examiner — coming here to monitor these kids had not been so boring after all.

The examiner stared blankly at the dark screen before him, speechless. This blasted invigilator — couldn't he have explained more clearly?

The rest of the on-site examiners had also heard their conversation, all of whom were now looking at him in shock. Of course, there were also those who were burning with curiosity, and were just waiting to find out more so they could gossip.

“I've got it. Let me find out what's going on, then I'll come back and tell you guys. I need to go work now.” Pensively, the examiner stood up, calmly grabbing his military cap from the table and putting it on before slowly ambling over to room 72.

Dammit, those children in there had better not disappoint him! The examiner tried to suppress his anticipation ... ha, his previous calm had actually been completely faked.

Chapter 30: I Order You All To Attack Me!
Translator: ryuxenji Editor: H2dH2mr

The café was connected by just one tunnel to a pearly-white, awe-inspiring building of epic proportions right across from it. Its walls, which stretched on endlessly, appeared to be seamless, but they actually contained countless electronic doors hidden from the

naked eye. The main door to this virtual reality construct was accessible from this tunnel, and it was open to the professional soldiers of the Federation for virtual simulation training and sparring.

On the other hand, the entrance Ling Lan and the other children had entered from was actually the backdoor of this virtual reality construct. It was connected to the scout academy and appeared to be just a regular field from the outside. This was also why Ling Lan had been so easily fooled — who'd have thought that a scout academy would have access to such advanced virtual technology? From this, one could see how much importance the Federation placed on cultivating talent among the young.

Of course, the convenient access bestowed upon the scout academy was not purely for testing purposes. In the future, the assistance of virtual technology would be invaluable in elevating all the stats of the children.

The examiner walked along the pearly-white wall for a distance. Frankly speaking, without using the signal he had pre-set with his communication device, the examiner himself wouldn't have a clue where room 72 was. Once these electronic doors merged into this endless wall, they could no longer be seen from the surface; as if they had become one with the wall.

The examiner was walking down yet another length of the wall when suddenly, the communication device on his wrist vibrated. He immediately stopped, a smile appearing on his face. It looked like he had found the room.

Almost randomly, he brushed his fingers over the section of wall right in front of where he stood, though it was really with focused intent. Soon enough, his fingertips told him that he had found the correct spot, and he pressed down lightly three times.

The wall reacted rapidly — the spot where the examiner had pressed lit up, and a palm-sized screen emerged from the wall. The screen displayed a password page, with an input keyboard consisting only of the ten Arabic numerals, 0 to 9.

The examiner smiled as his fingers flew across the keyboard. His speed was astounding — his fingers moved so quickly that they appeared to leave blurry trails in the air. It was impossible for any observer to see which numbers he was pressing ... and then there was a loud click, like the sound of a sealed door unlocking. Within the blink of an eye, a doorway had appeared to the left of the examiner.

The examiner strode in, and the door closed behind him, silently blending into the pearly-white wall once again.

The moment the examiner entered room 72, a wide virtual race track came into view. Behind him, neither the door nor the wall could be seen anymore — only a race track, which extended as far as the eye could see, remained. The illusion was so realistic that it was hard to believe that a door and a wall had existed right there just moments ago.

The examiner did not wait for long before ten figures appeared on the distant horizon. Some were running while some were pulled along, some were dragging down others down while some supported others ... but still they staggered forward at a run — no, walk would be more accurate. It looked like the ten children were at the end of their ropes. In the past tests, the children would usually appear one at a time, unlike this group that still appeared organised and managed to arrive at the finish line without losing a single member.

The examiner found himself slightly impressed. Perhaps this was what the monitoring officer had been trying to tell him — they were truly great kids.

When the children saw him, they suddenly perked up and then, as if they had been injected with stimulants, they rapidly stormed towards the examiner like ferocious tigers.

The examiner smiled. The fact that the promise of victory could prompt such a reaction from these kids was a good sign — truly, they had potential. The examiner was very pleased, and his impression of Ling Lan's group improved yet again.

"I see the examiner ..." The exhausted Qi Long caught sight of the examiner when he lifted his head and the welcome sight made him call out in exhilaration. Hearing his call, the other nine children rallied, eyes turning bloodshot, their appearances just like rabid wolves ...

Ah woooo! Eerily in sync, the ten children let out a ravenous howl and then, just as if they had seen a gourmet dish cross over into their territory, they abruptly exploded with energy, rushing toward the examiner standing in the distance.

They barrelled over the finish line but didn't slow down at all — instead, they actually sped up as they pounced on the waiting examiner.

The charge of the ten children was so aggressive that the examiner was taken aback, but who did they think he was? The examiner was a professional soldier who had lived through largescale galactic battles; he regained his composure within a split second.

"These little rascals!" Facing this sudden attack, the on-site examiner was rather speechless. With a stony expression, without even moving a single step, he slightly twisted his body to the side. And just like that, he completely evaded the children's desperate final attack.

"Darn it, we missed!" Qi Long stumbled face first into the ground and punched the ground in frustration.

Luo Lang, who was not far away from Qi Long, also slumped to the ground with a face full of dissatisfaction. The thing was, just as they were about to give up, Qi Long had suggested a plot that had boosted their waning energy ...

What Qi Long said was that they must take revenge upon the examiner by turning him into a human cushion. That's right, they would push him to the ground and stack themselves on top of him. This would show the examiners that they were not to be easily bullied!

Alright, so this plot had fanned the festering hatred of the ten children to the max, actually managing to draw out unknown wells of energy from within them, which had allowed them to continue running all the way till the end.

Hatred truly was a formidable force.

As for Ling Lan, she hadn't cooperated mainly out of hatred. Instead, her mind had drifted to strange places — just thinking about a group of bratty kids pushing down a mature and handsome examiner ... wasn't this just like some trashy group student-teacher romance? Wasn't it? Wasn't it?

Fine, so Ling Lan was a corrupted soul. It was all the fault of her previous life, during which she had read all sorts of lowbrow novels without shame.

The examiner stood watching them with his arms folded before him. With a cold smile, he said, "Oho, I see you still have energy left. Not bad." The frigid look on his face was like ice, but he was actually ecstatic inside. Hell, this group was just too much like those batches of new soldiers he trained — they had spirit, they had guts, and they could think for themselves. And yet they were only six years old ... how extraordinary. The examiner felt the itch to just grab these ten children straight into his boot camp for special training — they were sure to become great soldiers someday.

Qi Long raised his arms in surrender. "Sir, we are fully beat."

The examiner scoffed, "If you all want to pass, get up." Dammit, still being able to speak in such a loud voice when you're out of energy? Who do you think you're trying to fool?

Qi Long tsked, but pried himself off the ground anyway. Everyone had worked so hard to complete this test, if they failed simply because they couldn't stand up at the end, how shameful would that be? Qi Long was deeply influenced by his father, who firmly believed that men should face death standing up.

Qi Long was the first to stand up, and Luo Lang was the second. Even though Luo Lang's hands and legs were cramping due to exhaustion, he still couldn't bear losing to Qi Long. Seeing Qi Long stand, he pushed his body to stand out of sheer unwillingness to lose.

Ling Lan was next, followed by Han Jijyun, Luo Shaoyun, Li Jinghong, and He Chaoyang. They each stood up one by one, in sequence, until the final two, the girls Han Xuya and Luo Chao, were standing as well.

Although they stumbled and fell several times in the process, gracelessly, they all still managed to stand up straight in the end. In their eyes, all one could see was the stubborn persistence for success.

The examiner was pleased. "Not bad, you lot are certainly spirited. Now, I order you all to attack me."

All the children were stunned by this sudden turn of events.

Han Jijyun reacted the fastest. The CPU of his brain spun at high speeds, analysing the intent behind the examiner's words. His expression was serious and solemn as he asked, "Why?"