

Chapter 17

The long summer of waiting seemed to drag on, and the events that took place at Skyburst Gaming Cafe seemed to merely be an interlude in life.

While Jack was waiting for his college entrance exam results, his song "Time" soared like a rocket, breaking into the top three of the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

This achievement quickly made him one of the most talked-about rising stars in the music industry.

Countless music legends turned their attention to the up-and-coming artist, curious to see whether this campus folk singer could continue to work his magic.

However, just as "Time" was attempting to climb further up the charts, it met stiff competition from two classic songs holding firmly at the top.

These two tracks seemed to have been revived with new energy, with their downloads and streams skyrocketing, leaving "Time" with no room to overtake.

Though many sharp-eyed listeners suspected foul play with the chart manipulation, Jack couldn't have cared less.

As the day for the college entrance exam results drew near, Jack decided to use the seven or eight thousand dollars he had earned from Seth to treat Wesley and Eddie to a meal.

After that, he signed up for computer courses and even started to consider finding a part-time job to ease his family's financial burden.

The place where Jack enrolled to learn computer skills was called "Future Tech Training," specializing in programming and IT.

Many students who had failed their college entrance exams chose to study here in hopes of securing a good job in the future.

The owner and instructor of the training center was named Patrick Hamilton, a senior at Alnewgo University, who was immensely helpful to Jack in his studies.

Jack showed an incredible talent for technology and, combined with his hard work, he quickly became one of the top students in the class.

Recognizing Jack's potential, Patrick directly invited him to participate in some of his side projects. In return, Patrick offered Jack a share of the profits.

It turned out that Patrick ran a cheat software business on the side, which brought in a significant income.

Jack eagerly accepted the offer. After all, it was a chance to improve his practical skills while also earning some money. What could be better than that?

Then, the long-awaited day finally arrived. The college entrance exam results would finally be released.

The temperature that day soared to 38 degrees Celsius, the sweltering heat making it hard to breathe.

But the scorching weather couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the graduates eager to check their results.

Jack and his friends arrived at the cyber cafe, which was packed with people, many of whom were there to check their scores.

Every so often, the air was filled with the sounds of cheers, screams, anger, or disappointment as students received their results.

After a long wait, the three finally found an empty slot. They quickly input their account details and eagerly pressed the enter key. But to their dismay, the screen was filled with nothing but jumbled characters.

It turned out that the website had crashed due to the overwhelming traffic from students checking their scores.

The three had no choice but to keep entering their details and wait patiently.

After what felt like an eternity, Wesley was finally able to log in.

His scores were displayed on the screen.

Foreign Language: 109
Maths: 125

English: 90
Science: 241

Wesley jumped up in excitement when he saw the results. Jack and Eddie couldn't help but share his joy.

Wesley, who had been hovering around a total score of 520, had managed to score an unexpected 565 this time.

Last year, the cutoff for first-tier universities had been 520, and now, Wesley had not only passed the threshold but was also in a strong position to attend a prestigious university.

Eddie looked at Wesley with envy and said, "I wonder how many points I'll get. Wow, my results are out too!"

He quickly checked and exclaimed, "Foreign Language: 90, Maths: 126, English: 95, and Science: 230. The total is 540."

For Eddie, this was an average performance. With a bit of luck, he might even be able to reach the cutoff for top universities.

Wesley and Eddie let out a sigh of relief before turning their attention to Jack, who was still trying to refresh his page.

Unfortunately, all he was getting was a screen full of gibberish.

At that moment, Wesley and Eddie's phones rang. It was a call from home, urging them to hurry back and report their results.

Wesley patted Jack on the shoulder and smiled, "Good luck! We're heading back now. Don't forget to let us know when you get your results!"

A moment later, two young, attractive girls took the seats Wesley and Eddie had vacated. They, too, began checking their scores and clearly had much better luck than Jack.

While Jack was still stuck on a page of gibberish, he overheard a loud exclamation from the girls next to him.

"Wow! Bella, you're amazing! You scored 682!" a voice exclaimed in awe.

The shout immediately drew everyone's attention.

People around them began murmuring with envy.

"Oh my god! 682 points! She even got 146 in English! Wow, I'd kill for that score!" someone gasped, clearly impressed.

"With this score, she could apply to any of the top ten universities in the country without any problem!" another voice added, filled with admiration.

"Wow! That's a really high score." someone else muttered, their tone tinged with envy.

Surrounded by admiration, the girl couldn't help but show a hint of pride.

But Jack remained completely unaffected. He glanced at her score for a second before turning back to focus on refreshing his own results.

The top student, noticing Jack's indifference, felt a bit annoyed. After all, seeing such a high score was a rare occurrence.

"He's probably just some loser. Even the system is ignoring him. It's been more than ten minutes, and he still hasn't gotten his score," she thought to herself, and that helped ease her irritation.

Meanwhile, Jack, with his bad luck, had become the subject of ridicule.

One person laughed and said, "Look at this poor guy. He's been refreshing for half an hour and still hasn't gotten anything."

Another chimed in, "I don't think he hasn't gotten his score. I bet he's too scared to check it. Probably didn't even score 200."

"No way! At least 250, I think," someone interjected, their voice laced with doubt.

While people laughed and continued to fawn over Bella, the crowd slowly began to disperse. Only Bella and her friend remained, waiting for their results.

Finally, Bella's friend's results came in. It was 520 points, a solid but unremarkable score.

At that moment, Jack's computer screen suddenly lit up. His results were finally in.

Foreign Language: 138
Maths: 150

Science: 293
English: 148

A total score of 729.

What was even more eye-catching was the ranking displayed right after his score.

Number 1 in the province.

The top science student in Eastvale Province had quietly emerged.

In that moment, Jack's heart fluttered slightly with excitement. Finally, he had become the underdog of this year's college entrance exam, an unprecedented achievement that would not be surpassed.

No matter how confident he had been before, seeing his results in black and white finally lifted the heavy burden on his shoulder.

He walked out of the cyber cafe with light steps, as if the whole world were cheering for him.

The top girl and her friend also noticed Jack's score. When they saw the remarkable score and ranking displayed on his screen, they couldn't help but rub their eyes in disbelief.

Soon after, an exclamation rang out across the cyber cafe. "Oh my god! Our state actually has a top scholar!"

It was as if a small pebble had been dropped into the quiet cyber cafe, sending ripples of shock and excitement through the room.

At first, it was Belle's friend who heard her voice and curiously leaned over to take a look.

Then, the others around them began to gather closer as well.