

## I CAN CONTROL RESOURCES

### Chapter 151 - 144: Greedy Wolf, 1V4

"Twenty years ago?! Wasn't it... eighteen years ago?" Kong Kun's face fell.

"Are you an idiot? How could someone from eighteen years ago be resurrected now? It has to be twenty years ago. It's not like the Strongest only died in the final great war eighteen years ago. Plenty died before that, you know?" Fang Tangtang gave Kong Kun a look you'd give an idiot.

"Oh, so that's how it is!" Kong Kun exclaimed in sudden realization.

Gao Neng, however, felt a violent tremor in his heart.

The resurrection of the Strongest!

The term wasn't entirely foreign to him.

But back in the Forgotten Land, he had never truly encountered this kind of information. He only knew that after the Great Cataclysm, humanity had fought the aliens for nearly a hundred years, a period marked by several great wars.

The battle that led to the evacuation of the Forgotten Land was one of them.

Before that great war, the Forgotten Land had been humanity's main capital. The City of Hope was merely their secondary city.

But after that war, the aliens breached the Forgotten Land. The once-thriving capital became a desolate wasteland, and the Human Alliance suffered the most crushing defeat in its history. In the end, they were forced to muster all their strength and relocate the entire race to the City of Hope.

As for how humanity ultimately won...

Gao Neng's knowledge of the details was shallow. He only knew the basics: humanity had paid a terrible price in that war, but the aliens had lost most of their Strongest.

Ever since that battle, humanity and the aliens had been locked in a stalemate.

'The resurrection of the Strongest?!'

'Does this mean another great war is coming?'

'No, that's not right!'

'The war between humans and aliens has never stopped in the last century.'

'The only difference has been its ferocity.'

"Tangtang, I want to try today's battle by myself. You guys can provide backup from behind!" Gao Neng glanced at the time. It was almost four o'clock. Time to head out.

"By yourself?" Fang Tangtang asked, surprised.

It wasn't just Fang Tangtang; Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing also stared at Gao Neng in astonishment.

"Yeah. Our last few fights have been too easy. I want to test my limits and see where I really stand. Besides, I'm about to break through to Tier Two!" Gao Neng nodded.

"Breaking through to Tier Two? Fine, we'll back you up. But if you die, that's on you. Also, when you win, the reward is still split fifty-fifty. Don't even think about hogging it all for yourself!" Fang Tangtang didn't try to stop him.

"Of course."

"Gao Neng, are you sure you can handle it alone? How about we go together?" Kong Kun asked, hesitating.

"If I can't beat them, it won't be too late for you to jump in," Gao Neng replied with a smile.

"Oh, I see. Alright then... As long as you can guarantee a win." Kong Kun said no more, but deep down, he felt a pang of bitterness.

When the semester started...

He was a Tier Two Mid Stage.

Gao Neng was a Tier One Early Stage.

Now, he was still a Tier Two Mid Stage.

But Gao Neng was already about to break through to Tier Two. 'Isn't this progress way too fast? Even for someone who's broken the Fourth Human Limit, this cultivation speed is just absurd.'

"Gao Neng, once you've beaten them down, leave one alive for me. I've been working on a new move and want to test it out," Feng Qingqing said, tapping one of her high heels.

"..." Gao Neng was speechless.

'She actually switched to high heels?'

'Truly... hell hath no fury like a woman scorned!'

...

At 4:30 in the afternoon.

The challenge match between the Invincible Team and the Flying Swan Team, ranked twelfth on the D-Rank list, officially began.

The viewing hall was packed, as usual.

Moreover, this time, all the students, both new and old, who had come to spectate saw not only the daily regular, Gui Zian, but also the long-absent Song Tianyun and Wang Qixing, as well as an unfamiliar man in a military uniform.

"A Human Alliance Major General?!"

"He's so young for a Major General! He can't be more than forty, right?"

"He's so handsome!"

The students buzzed with discussion.

Song Tianyun glanced at Shen Fei, as if seeking his opinion.

"A new era is about to begin. There's no harm in them knowing a little ahead of time." Shen Fei nodded, indicating that Song Tianyun could decide for himself.

Hearing this, Song Tianyun smiled and cleared his throat. "Allow me to introduce everyone. This is Division Commander Shen Fei, of the Fourth Division, Third Army of the Human Alliance!"

"Hello, students," Shen Fei said, standing to greet them.

"It's Division Commander Shen Fei, commander of the Fourth Division! I know him... He's Shen Ning'Er's fourth uncle, Greedy Wolf Shen Fei!" someone exclaimed.

"Greedy Wolf Shen Fei?! Oh my god, the Greedy Wolf Shen Fei who's ranked tenth on the Tier Eight leaderboard?"

"My idol... He's my idol!"

The students cried out in amazement.

Song Tianyun gestured for quiet, then continued, "Division Commander Shen is here primarily to observe the overall strength of our military academy. Please try to keep the noise to a minimum during the match."

"Yes, sir!"

"Understood!"

"..."

These were military academy students, after all.

When it came to following orders, there was no hesitation. The viewing hall quickly fell silent.

Just then, an image appeared on the massive screen.

The Desert Battlefield!

The Invincible Team, as usual, had chosen Hunt Mode.

The students were no longer surprised. This had become their standard operating procedure: win every match, go for the kill in every match, and wipe out the entire enemy team, leaving no one alive.

Three of the four members of the Flying Swan Team were women.

Captain: Ling Feiyan, a Tier Two Late Stage. Vice-Captain: Hua Youque, the team's only male member, a Tier Three Mid Stage.

They were the only team on the D-Rank list whose vice-captain was stronger than their captain.

As for the reason why...

It requires no explanation!

Upon entering the battlefield, Ling Feiyan immediately took her two female teammates and burrowed under the sand.

Hua Youque, however, stood his ground, positioning himself in front of the other three. His gaze was grim as he scanned his surroundings, a thin alloy sword held in a reverse grip.

Gao Neng watched from a short distance away, feeling utterly speechless.

Hua Youque was one of the few people on the D-Rank list to have reached the Tier Three Middle Stage. Logically, a vice-captain or even a regular member with his power could have made it onto the C-Rank list.

Of course, that wasn't why he was speechless.

What left him speechless was the strategy of immediately revealing their strongest fighter and putting him right at the front. It could be described in two words: utterly idiotic.

Gao Neng didn't bother with pleasantries. He leaped out from his hiding spot in the sand and beckoned to the not-so-distant Hua Youque with his finger.

At the same time, a pair of silvery-white gauntlets materialized over his hands and forearms.

'A silver-type Talent?! We didn't see Gao Neng use this in his previous fights! So he really came prepared for the Flying Swan Team?' Ling Feiyan thought, still hidden in the sand. A small sense of pride welled up inside her. 'We might lose, but at least he's taking us seriously, right?'

And then...

A tremendous shout echoed across the field.

"Let's not waste any time! Today, I, Gao Neng, will take on all four of you!"

"???" Ling Feiyan was momentarily baffled.

She wasn't the only one.

Hua Youque didn't quite get it either.

What did he mean, take on all four of them?

"I said, one-on-four. Tell your Captain Feiyan to get out here," Gao Neng said with a wave of his hand, pulling out a large, alloy machete.

"You've got to be kidding me," Hua Youque said, stunned.

'One-on-four?'

'Do you have to be so damn arrogant?!'

'You're just a fucking Tier One!'

'Shouldn't you at least show a little of the caution expected from a Tier One?'

"Enough chitchat. Tangtang, you guys play some Fight the Landlord over here. I'm going in!" Gao Neng tossed the words over his shoulder and charged at Hua Youque, machete in hand.

Meanwhile, Fang Tangtang, Feng Qingqing, and Kong Kun lazily got to their feet, took out a deck of playing cards, and slowly began a game of Fight the Landlord.

"..."

The Flying Swan Team was dumbfounded.

Their opponents were really this arrogant?

How were they...

...supposed to save face after this?

They were the twelfth-ranked team on the D-Rank list, for crying out loud! Even if they were mentally prepared for a loss, they had never imagined being humiliated like this.

"Gao Neng, you've gone too far!" Hua Youque roared, raising his sword to meet the charge. Simultaneously, a suit of full-body battle armor materialized around him.

A Tier One Late Stage versus a Tier Three Mid Stage.

Gao Neng might have been talking a big game, but he wasn't about to get careless.

His Spiritual Power instantly fused with his aura.

"Half-Step Kill!"

As Gao Neng took a half-step forward, the aura around his body surged to its peak. The two silver gauntlets on his arms began to vent jets of scorching-hot gas.

The heat generated steam power.

Combined with the fighting technique of the Half-Step Kill itself...

...and Gao Neng's own Life Form Transformation: Copper...

...this slash represented the absolute limit of the power he could currently unleash.

"BOOM!"

Machete and sword crashed together.

The piercing force of the impact created a terrifying pressure wave.

Hua Youque never expected Gao Neng could unleash such a terrifying strike in such a short amount of time. The moment the machete struck his sword, he was forced directly to his knees.

A Tier Three Mid Stage, forced to both knees by a single slash from a Tier One Late Stage.

One could only imagine the turmoil in Hua Youque's heart.

"What kind of fighting skill is that? I've never seen it before!" Hua Youque roared. His specialty was actually agility, but the pride of a Tier Three warrior prevented him from getting into a drawn-out entanglement with Gao Neng right from the start. This was why he had suffered a disadvantage on the very first exchange.

"Half-Step Kill. Every half-step forward is a killing blow!" Gao Neng didn't hold back. As he kicked Hua Youque in the chest, he took another half-step forward.

And slashed again!

"BAM!"

Hua Youque was sent tumbling to the ground by the slash.

A gash ran from his shoulder to his chest, so deep that bone was visible.

...

Back in the viewing hall.

"This Half-Step Kill that Vice Director Gui taught him is truly exquisite. There's no wasted motion. It probably qualifies as a Mid-Tier Fighting Skill, rather than a low-tier one, wouldn't you say?" The speaker was Shen Fei.

Gui Zian said nothing.

But his expression was as black as thunder.

'Half-Step Kill my ass.'

'I taught him Seven-Step Kill, didn't I?'

'How did it turn into Half-Step Kill?'

'And more importantly, how is it even more powerful than my Seven-Step Kill?!'

'What the hell?'

'Could it be that Shen Ning'Er taught this to Gao Neng? Or maybe, during those three days, besides teaching him Energy Manifestation, she also helped him optimize his fighting skills?'

'This won't do. I have to bring out my ace in the hole soon. Otherwise, I'll never be able to show this old face of mine again!' Gui Zian gritted his teeth. 'This kid is making it impossible for me to live in peace.'

'Are the new waves really going to wash the old ones away on the beach?'

Just as he was lost in thought, another voice full of admiration reached his ears.

"Yes, for Vice Director Gui to be able to research variations in fighting skills while also serving as Vice Director of the War Academy... that kind of spirit is truly something we at the Manufacturing Academy should learn from," Wang Qixing added, nodding with great earnestness.

"Old Gui, the power of this new fighting skill, Half-Step Kill, is much greater than your old Seven-Step Kill. You should popularize it when you have the time. Gao Neng is talented and a quick learner, but you can't just play favorites with him!" The final speaker was Song Tianyun.

"Heh heh," was all Gui Zian could say.

'Popularize it?'

'I don't even know it myself! How am I supposed to popularize it?'

'Am I, his instructor, supposed to run up to my student and say, "My dearest student Gao Neng, would you be so kind as to teach me your Half-Step Kill?"'

## Chapter 152 - 145: Combination Technique, Force Kill

...

As Gui Zian cursed under his breath in the viewing hall, out on the desert battlefield, Hua Youque—who'd just taken a boot to the face—was doing the exact same thing.

As for Gao Neng...

He wasn't thinking about any of that.

'Isn't it just a one-on-four? I can take out one person with a single Half-Step Kill, so I can kill all four in two steps. Although, so far, no one's actually shed any blood on this battlefield.'

'But it's only a matter of time, isn't it?'

Gao Neng's momentum was unstoppable. After landing two successful hits, he chased after Hua Youque and began hacking away at him wildly.

"Sisters, go!" Ling Feiyan could finally take it no longer. If this kept up, Hua Youque might actually get hacked to death—something she had never even considered possible before.

A Tier Three Mid Stage expert being chased and hacked at by a Tier One Late Stage fighter?

If they hadn't seen it with their own eyes...

...no one would have believed it!

But whether they believed it or not didn't matter anymore.

Under Ling Feiyan's lead, the two other female team members charged swiftly toward Gao Neng.

A true one-on-four.

Gao Neng didn't hold back, ready to cut down anyone who came at him.

Steam continuously jetted from his arms, releasing waves of heat. He used the momentum to leap up in an 89-degree parabola, soaring over Ling Feiyan's head.

"Behold, my Inverted Hook Bright Moon!" Ling Feiyan also wielded a longsword, her body and arms covered in a layer of cyan armor.

As for this so-called "Inverted Hook Bright Moon"...

Gao Neng didn't quite understand it at first glance.

He just felt that Ling Feiyan's combat technique was quite flashy. It looked like she was waving her sword around to form a flower-like shape.

Then, he struck down with a Half-Step Kill.

BOOM!

Ling Feiyan was struck so hard she was driven into the sand.

Gao Neng followed up by bringing his foot down hard on her head.

"AARGH!" Ling Feiyan let out a miserable shriek as she was driven headfirst into the ground like a carrot, her mouth likely filling with sand.

Of course, as he was stomping on Ling Feiyan, the other two female team members arrived, one on his left and one on his right, both wielding short daggers.

They fought with the close-quarters style of an assassin.

SHIING!

A gash was cut into Gao Neng's leg.

Then, he felt an electric current surge through him, starting from his feet and shooting straight to his head, leaving him with a tingling, numbing sensation.

'Ling Feiyan can use electricity?'

BOOM!

A loud bang.

Ling Feiyan burst out from the sand.

Her body was wreathed in electricity.

'She really can use electricity!' Gao Neng reacted instantly, grabbing Ling Feiyan's calf.

The color drained from Ling Feiyan's face!

'You were just electrocuted!'

'How can you move so quickly?'

'Are you hacking?!'

'This isn't scientific! It's not fair!'

Of course, these feelings were quickly replaced by shock.

Because, just as Gao Neng grabbed her calf, a black monster burst out of the sand, its two gleaming scythes swinging out to either side.

SHIING!

The two female team members were forced back.

And then, a bizarre scene unfolded.

The monster's body latched directly onto Gao Neng's back. Then, its two hind legs kicked off, taking both Gao Neng and Ling Feiyan with it...

BOOM!

...and burrowing into the sand.

'A combination technique, Earth Escape Kill. Never seen that before, have you?' Gao Neng sneered inwardly, holding Ling Feiyan in an iron grip. He ignored her screams and ruthlessly dragged her down into the sand.

Ling Feiyan was indeed screaming.

But the more she screamed, the more sand poured into her mouth.

Then, she felt two hands groping all over her body, moving from her legs up to her throat before clamping down hard.

"Mmph! Mmph!" Tears were about to stream from Ling Feiyan's eyes.

Dying like this...

...was truly agonizing.

Above on the desert surface, by the time Hua Youque rushed over, it was already too late.

All that was left was a sand pit that had yet to fully collapse. As for Ling Feiyan and Gao Neng, they had vanished, having burrowed completely into the sand.

"Captain Feiyan was dragged into the sand?!"

"That monster can do that...?"

"..."

The two female team members were utterly horrified.

Being dragged into the sand and then forcefully killed—it was something they had never seen before.

"Gao Neng, let go of my Feiyan! If you've got the guts, come at me!" Hua Youque roared. He wanted to charge in and save her, but the problem was, he couldn't burrow into the sand.

He could only claw frantically at the sand with his bare hands.

One minute.

Two minutes.

A human figure and a monster burst out of the sand.

As for Ling Feiyan...

...she was gone.

"Gao Neng, you're shameless!" Hua Youque seethed with rage.

"Shameless? What are you talking about? I took on the four of you by myself and, while surrounded, openly captured and killed your captain. What's so shameless about that?" Gao Neng blinked.

'It's a one-on-four.'

'Are you telling me I'm not even allowed to use my abilities?'

"..."

The two female team members were silent.

Gao Neng was telling the truth. It was indeed a one-on-four. If anything could be called shameless, it was only that he had performed the kill on Ling Feiyan under the sand.

But did that really count as shameless?

"Aargh, I'll kill you!" Hua Youque charged forward, ignoring his injuries.

But Gao Neng, once again latched onto by the super Earth Dragon, simply dove headfirst back into the sand.

After that, the scene descended into chaos.

Another female team member's leg was grabbed, and she was forcibly dragged into the sand.

"Aah, you shameless beast... Let me go! Sob..."

Crying?

It was useless!

Even though this was the Virtual Battlefield, Gao Neng's mindset was completely serious. He always treated practice as a real battle, so he didn't care one bit whether you cried or not.

After dragging her into the sand, Gao Neng used the same old routine.

He felt his way up her body, all the way to her neck.

Then, he choked her to death!

...

In the viewing hall.

The once-calm students were now in an uproar.

"That's too cruel!"

"How could he use such methods on a girl?!"

"This isn't a real battlefield. Does he have to be so brutal?"

The students were indignant.

Meanwhile, the eyes of Song Tianyun, Gui Zian, and the others flickered. Listening to the surrounding discussions, their expressions gradually turned grim.

'A reform is truly needed.'

The students of the four major military academies were supposed to be among the Human Alliance's most elite future combatants. Yet now, their words made Song Tianyun and the others feel deeply ashamed.

Cruel?!

If this was called cruel, what did that make a real battlefield?!

This was still the Virtual Battlefield.

A virtual battlefield where no one actually died...

If these students were thrown into a real warzone, what would the outcome be? Song Tianyun and the others couldn't even bear to imagine it.

"All of you, shut up!" an instructor from the War Academy stood up.

"..."

The viewing hall fell silent once more.

"You are all students of a military academy. You should understand the cruelty of the battlefield. The training room is for practice, yes, but it is also a battlefield!" the instructor said, furious. He then glanced at Song Tianyun.

"..."

The students fell silent, not understanding why this instructor had suddenly become so enraged.

"As long as it can kill the enemy, you use whatever means are effective! Besides, Gao Neng used the 'Earth Dragon' to execute an underground attack. This is his own ability. What's cruel or not cruel about it?"

"The difference between men and women? What a joke! If you encounter a woman on the battlefield, are you not going to kill her? If you don't kill them, they will kill you!"

"Students, this is a military academy! The Eastern Capital Military Academy, one of the Alliance's four great military academies! Since you chose to enter a military academy, you must be prepared to face the battlefield in the future!"

"There is no such thing as cruelty, only life and death! Do you understand?!" The instructor's gaze swept over the new and old students, his tone incredibly stern.

"Understood!" Although some students still seemed unconvinced, their military academy training showed. Their reply was thunderous.

"Teacher Qin, thank you for your trouble." Song Tianyun glanced at the instructor who had spoken and nodded. As the principal, some things were not appropriate for him to say.

"It was my duty." Teacher Qin said no more and sat down.

The atmosphere in the hall grew somewhat oppressive.

No student dared to curse Gao Neng's hunting methods anymore. Everyone truly settled down to watch this hunt of a challenge match.

On the screen.

Right under Hua Youque's nose, Gao Neng once again dragged a female team member into the sand.

"A triple kill!"

"He's only Tier One Late Stage, but he got a triple kill. He's so strong!"

"It's not just a triple kill... He might actually be able to pull off a 1v4. Hua Youque is already injured. Is he really no match for Gao Neng?"

"What about his energy consumption? You have to factor that in, right? Gao Neng killed three people and used energy materialization. All that energy use has to be taken into account, doesn't it?"

"That makes sense..."

Once the students calmed down, they began to see things more clearly.

At this moment, they truly felt Gao Neng's power. He had already surpassed the vast majority of the senior students, making them feel ashamed of their own abilities.

"It looks like Gao Neng has taught these senior students a harsh lesson today." Wang Qixing smiled. A first-year freshman had managed to stir up the entire Eastern Capital Military Academy. Even he was a little shaken.

"It's not enough. They need a deeper understanding of what a real battlefield is like!" Song Tianyun shook his head, his gaze turning to the silent Shen Fei. "Division Commander Shen, when does the Military Department want to begin?"

"The sooner, the better. Time waits for no one," Shen Fei replied, his eyes fixed on the screen.

"What about the other military academies?"

"They've already started. The reform begins with the military academies. Those are the orders from above. After the military academies, it will be rolled out to other universities, as well as those reclusive clans and sects that rarely show themselves!" Shen Fei glanced around, then conjured an Energy Barrier and spoke in a low voice.

"Understood. Since it's the Military Department's proposal, the military academies should naturally take the lead!" Song Tianyun nodded. If the military academies were going first, then the four great academies had to set an example.

The Eastern Capital Military Academy.

Absolutely could not fall behind.

...

On the desert battlefield.

When Gao Neng emerged from the sand again, he could feel a severe lack of energy. His red magnetic core was almost completely depleted.

"We've lost..." Hua Youque's face was deathly pale. He was beyond anger now, feeling only humiliation and despair. "But the Flying Swan Team will not be defeated by you alone, no matter what! Your energy consumption is too great. You're as good as dead!"

## **Chapter 153 - 146: The Truth Behind the Reform**

"Gao Neng, your energy must be almost depleted, right? Why don't we step in?" Kong Kun had also noticed Gao Neng's heavy energy consumption.

Taking out three by himself.

It looked easy, but the energy cost was immense.

"No need." Gao Neng shook his head.

Of course, he wasn't using his second magnetic core to convert energy either. This time, he wanted to see just how far he could push his limits.

"Arrogant! Gao Neng, die!" Hua Youque gave Gao Neng no more time to recover, lunging at him with his sword.

"BOOM!"

The two figures collided.

Hua Youque was pushed back a step.

Gao Neng, on the other hand, was sent stumbling back a full five steps before he could steady himself.

"So your energy really is almost gone!" Hua Youque's eyes lit up. He could clearly feel that the power behind Gao Neng's last slash had diminished greatly.

'It really is almost gone... I can manage one more Half-Step Kill at most!' Gao Neng calculated internally. The Half-Step Kill was powerful, but its energy cost was equally massive.

Without converting energy, he only had one more attack left.

But Hua Youque was a Tier Three Mid Stage, after all. Killing him with a single slash would be incredibly difficult. However, if he couldn't end it in one blow, he would be as good as defeated.

'I need an opportunity!'

As he thought, Gao Neng retreated two more steps.

Seeing Gao Neng start to fall back, Hua Youque tightened his grip on his sword and pressed forward rapidly. Of course, he was also wary of Gao Neng's final attack.

"Do you know the real difference between Tier Three and Tier One?" Hua Youque shouted as he pressed his attack.

"A thicker hide?"

"Bah! You're the one with a thick hide! The biggest difference between Tier Three and Tier One is the completion of full-body magnetization, which allows one to form a 'grand cycle'!"

"'Grand cycle'?"

"It means I can either cover my entire body with my energy for defense, or I can instantly cycle and compress all of it, and then..." Hua Youque didn't finish his sentence, but the battle armor covering his body suddenly vanished.

'Hm? An opportunity!' Gao Neng was about to strike when he felt something was off.

Because at the same moment Hua Youque shed his battle armor, an incredibly terrifying aura erupted from him, like a bomb about to detonate.

'Holy shit!'

'He compressed his energy to its absolute limit...'

'...to cause an explosion!'

"BOOM!"

A massive explosion rang out.

Gao Neng felt his body get slammed by a terrifying force.

This time, he wasn't launched into an 89-degree parabolic arc. Instead, he was blasted straight backward, ultimately smashing into the sand.

"Hahaha... cough, cough... That'll blow you to bits!" Hua Youque, bathed in his own blood, laughed with wild abandon.

'I blew Gao Neng to smithereens.'

'Even if I lose this match, at least I can face Ling Feiyan now.'

"Damn it, that Hua Youque actually self-destructed!" Feng Qingqing was furious. After reaching Tier Three, one's energy formed a grand cycle within the body.

If you forcefully compressed that energy...

...you could naturally use yourself as a bomb.

But doing so would completely deplete one's energy. Moreover, it would leave the body riddled with wounds, with almost no chance of recovery.

However, this was the Virtual Battlefield...

You wouldn't actually die from self-destructing here, so one could do it without fear.

But for that very reason, few people above Tier Three ever resorted to this in ranked challenges. After all, the move was basically cheating.

Of course, the War Academy hadn't forbidden it.

It was a one-for-one trade. If your team had enough Tier Threes, trading one for another Tier Three wasn't considered a violation.

As for trading a Tier Three for a Tier Four...

...that would depend on the opportunity.

A Tier Four's Magnetic Core Energy could already be released externally; their energy wasn't just limited to coating their body. Under normal circumstances, one explosion wouldn't necessarily kill them—unless you got the chance to grab hold of them.

But how often did an opportunity like that present itself?

"A Tier Three self-destructing on a Tier One? Hua Youque actually went through with it..." Kong Kun was also speechless. This went beyond shameless.

"While he's not dead yet, I'll go deliver the final blow!" After saying this, Feng Qingqing charged forward in her high heels, her feet moving as if flying across the sand.

"Hahaha..." Hua Youque was still laughing manically.

'A Tier Three like me, blowing up a Tier One.'

'How satisfying!'

However, just as he was reveling in his delight, a high-heeled shoe kicked him in the face.

"SPLAT!"

A bloody hole appeared on his face.

Hua Youque didn't care.

"Come on, kill me, hahaha..."

"I'll stomp you! All men are trash!" After kicking Hua Youque over, Feng Qingqing stomped down hard on his crotch.

"AAAAARGH..." Hua Youque shrieked.

"Hmph, don't think I'll go easy on you just because you're an upperclassman!" Feng Qingqing declared fearlessly.

"Hahaha... It doesn't matter! As long as I blew up Gao Neng, it's fine! Hahaha... It doesn't matter..." Hua Youque was surprisingly tough, forcing himself to laugh through the pain.

"You..." Feng Qingqing was livid and prepared to deliver another vicious stomp.

Just then, a pained groan echoed from a distant sand dune, followed by a slender figure slowly rising to its feet.

"Gan Liniang, you can even play the self-destruct card?" Gao Neng was genuinely dazed by the explosion. Luckily, he had used his life form transformation to add 70% to his defense. Otherwise, he really would have been done in by that dirty trick.

"..." Feng Qingqing.

"!!!" Hua Youque.

Fang Tangtang and Kong Kun gaped in disbelief.

'The guy actually didn't die?!

'A Tier Three's self-destruction didn't kill Gao Neng?'

Feng Qingqing, Kong Kun, and Fang Tangtang all stared as if they were seeing a ghost as a blood-soaked Gao Neng climbed out of the sand dune.

"You're not dead?! That's impossible! I'm a Tier Three Mid Stage! The power of my compressed energy... How could it possibly not kill a Tier One like you?!" Hua Youque was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

'Could anything be more humiliating than a Tier Three cheating with a self-destruct, only to fail to kill a Tier One?'

'No! Nothing!'

'From this day forward...'

'...the name Hua Youque will be a running joke.'

"You dare blow me up? Then taste my Half-Step Kill!"

"NO!!!"

Everything fell silent.

Gao Neng, covered in blood, stood in the desert, holding his Alloy Machete high.

Today, he took on four opponents by himself.

Fighting the Flying Swan Team alone, he dared to ask one question.

"Who else?!"

"BOOM!"

A deafening blast rang out. All Gao Neng saw was a pillar of light shooting straight for his head. The next thing he knew, he was calmly materializing at the exit of the training room.

"???" Gao Neng.

'A 500,000-credit-a-shot Electromagnetic Cannon shell...'

'And Fang Tangtang dared to use it on her own teammate?!'

'The nerve!'

'Fang Tangtang!'

"..." Hua Youque, Ling Feiyan, and the rest of their team stared at Gao Neng appearing at the training room entrance, the four of them equally slow to react.

"What are you looking at? I came out on my own!" Gao Neng gritted his teeth. He didn't leave. He was going to block the exit. 'Let's see you try to hide in there, Fang Tangtang. I swear I'll get my revenge for this!'

...

「Meanwhile, on the desert battlefield.」

Fang Tangtang held the massive cannon aloft and gently blew across its muzzle.

"Who else?!"

"..." Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing just stared at each other.

In the end, neither said a word.

'Fellow student Fang Tangtang, are you sure you're going to live to see tomorrow morning?'

...

In the viewing hall, the students, all speechless, gradually began to disperse.

「And at the exit of the training room.」

After collecting his winnings from Ling Feiyan, Gao Neng was still blocking the door. He absolutely would not leave today until he'd spanked Fang Tangtang's butt raw.

Just as he was waiting, Gui Zian arrived.

Glancing at Gao Neng blocking the exit, Gui Zian felt truly weary. 'These kids are really having a wild time, aren't they? Don't they know how many people are watching?'

"Where are Fang Tangtang and the others?"

"They're still inside. I'm waiting for her!" Gao Neng gritted his teeth.

Gui Zian didn't reply.

He directly pressed a button on the control console.

A moment later, Fang Tangtang, Kong Kun, and the others appeared at the exit.

"Teacher, save me! Gao Neng is trying to murder his vice-captain! He's jealous of my talent! I just wanted to see whether the Electromagnetic Cannon or a Tier Three's self-destruction was more powerful. I didn't think one shot would actually kill him! It's really not my fault..." Fang Tangtang immediately cried for help.

Gao Neng couldn't care less.

He shot forward and tackled Fang Tangtang to the ground.

He didn't hit her torso, because that girl Fang Tangtang was wearing a precious suit of Soft Armor. So, he immediately flipped her over and gave her butt a furious spanking.

"Ow! You jerk, Gao Neng! How dare you spank the butt of me, Death God Fang Tangtang?! I... I'm going to tell Sister Ning'Er!" Fang Tangtang shouted.

"Alright, that's enough messing around. Come with me," Gui Zian said, his expression darkening.

"Teacher, where are you taking us?" Kong Kun immediately asked.

"First, we'll eat. Then, I will personally conduct a half-month training program for the four of you," Gui Zian said without mincing words.

"You're training us personally? Teacher, what about your duties at the academy?" Feng Qingqing was well aware that Gui Zian had more students than just them.

Besides, Gui Zian was also the Vice Dean of the War Academy; his workload was anything but light.

"Teacher Qin will be handling academy matters temporarily."

"Teacher, is the War Academy undergoing a reform?"

"Hm? You know about the reform?" Gui Zian looked slightly surprised. He then glanced at Fang Tangtang, who was still pinned to the floor, and let out a soft sigh. "Alright, fine. There's no harm in you knowing. The matter will be made public throughout the War Academy soon enough anyway."

"Teacher, is the War Academy really undergoing a reform? Is it because a great war is imminent?" Kong Kun's fists tightened slightly, and his expression changed.

"More or less," Gui Zian did not deny it.

"Then there's something I don't quite understand..." Kong Kun said, gritting his teeth.

"What don't you understand?"

"Is the twenty-year cycle real? If it is... then why wait until a great war is upon us to enact this reform? What I mean is... if the reform is truly effective, wouldn't it have been better to implement it earlier? Also, what exactly is this reform? Can you tell us?" Kong Kun let out all the questions that had been weighing on his mind in a single breath.

At this, Gao Neng stopped what he was doing.

Because he, too, wanted to know what the Military Department's reform was all about.

'Are we being sent to the battlefield?'

'If it's just that, then as Kong Kun asked, why wait until now? A twenty-year cycle... that means there are only two years left. Is that enough time?'

## **Chapter 154 - 147: The Deadlock of a Trapped Beast, the State of Humanity**

...

Gui Zian chose the very same hotel Fang Tangtang had brought Gao Neng and Shen Ning'Er to last time. It wasn't far from the Eastern Capital Military Academy, but the prices were astronomical.

Clearly...

Gui Zian was also wealthy.

Gao Neng wasn't surprised. If a Tier Seven Powerhouse couldn't even afford a single meal, then the powerhouses of this world would be utterly worthless.

Gui Zian ordered a table full of dishes and several bottles of wine.

This surprised Gao Neng a little. 'A military academy teacher taking students out for heavy drinking? That doesn't seem logical at all.' But none of that mattered now.

After the dishes arrived, Gao Neng and the others didn't pick up their chopsticks. Instead, they stared eagerly at Gui Zian.

"Let's eat while we talk!" Gui Zian was the first to start. As he ate, he began to speak, "I know you all have questions, but some of these issues are too involved. Even I don't know the full story."

"Even you don't know, Teacher?" Kong Kun was clearly surprised. After all, Gui Zian was the Vice Dean of the Eastern Capital Military Academy. If even he didn't know, just how classified was this matter?

"I can only give you a few main points." Gui Zian waved his hand and continued, "Just now, Kong Kun asked why the reforms are only starting now. This question is both complex and simple."

He paused for a moment.

Gui Zian went on, "First of all, what do you think war is fought with? Duels between powerhouses? That's part of it... but not the whole picture! In essence, no matter what kind of war it is, what it comes down to in the end is overall strength, not the strength of a single 'individual'..."

But where does that overall strength come from?

Resources!

To put it simply, in the history before the Great Cataclysm, which dynasties had sufficiently powerful armies? The Golden Era of Tang Dynasty, the Han Dynasty Era—those all count. But if you analyze them, you'll discover a common principle.

It's resources again!

If a nation is strong enough, its military will become powerful. If a nation is weak, its army's combat strength will naturally be insufficient. Therefore, fundamentally, if you want to wage a war, you must first have enough resources!"

Hearing this, Gao Neng, Fang Tangtang, and the others nodded lightly. Without resources, you couldn't have a well-trained army, because you couldn't manufacture better weapons and armor, nor would you have enough provisions to support the consumption of war.

There's an ancient saying: An army's provisions must be secured before its troops can be deployed.

That's the principle at work.

Seeing Gao Neng and the others nod, Gui Zian continued, "What does a twenty-year cycle represent? It means that the alien powerhouses can be resurrected after twenty years, but it also represents another problem, which is...

A great war every twenty years!

The Great Cataclysm happened nearly a hundred years ago. In that time, humanity has fought a total of four great wars. The Human Alliance of today is, in truth, a shadow of its former self.

In the first great war, although humanity suffered heavy losses, it ended in victory. By the second great war, humanity didn't achieve much of a victory.

By the time of the third great war, humanity was defeated. It was only after that era began that humanity established the Alliance and consolidated all its resources.

But even so, it was already too late...

The war eighteen years ago was arguably the most brutal one. Before that war, humanity had other lands besides the City of Hope. But after that war, we could only hole up in the City of Hope. The Alliance was on the brink of collapse. Do you understand what this means?"

"Teacher, are you saying that the Human Alliance's remaining resources are no longer enough to support another great war?" Feng Qingqing's tone changed.

"It's not as simple as just being unable to support a war..." Gui Zian sighed. "The loss of land means the speed of resource collection is a fraction of what it once was. As we've weakened, they've grown stronger. After occupying vast territories, the aliens' development over the past eighteen years has made them even more powerful!"

"Then is there any hope for us? Are we... just supposed to wait for death?" Feng Qingqing's body trembled slightly. She knew of the aliens' existence.

But she never knew the situation had become this dire.

These things...

Her family had never told her.

"Of course there's hope. Humanity will never just wait to die. As long as a single one of us remains, we will fight to the death. But reform is now imperative!" Gui Zian gritted his teeth.

"Teacher, what kind of reform?" Kong Kun asked again.

"Is it about consolidating resources?! To cultivate a group of the Strongest?" Feng Qingqing also pressed.

"Heh... The Strongest aren't so easily cultivated just because you say so. However, you're not entirely wrong. Consolidating resources is indeed one aspect, but this time, our goal isn't the Strongest. It's high-tiers!"

"High-tiers?"

"The resources required to cultivate a single one of the Strongest is often hundreds, even thousands of times greater than for a high-tier. Moreover, it takes longer and involves far more uncertainty! Because you simply don't know if piling on hundreds of times the resources will actually produce one of the Strongest!" Gui Zian explained.

'Uncertainty...' Gao Neng understood what Gui Zian meant.

'To become one of the Strongest, you need more than just talent and resources. You also need opportunity. Without opportunity, no amount of resources can create one of the Strongest.'

But if that was the case...

'Will those who truly hold power agree to it?'

'To take the resources that originally belonged to them and give them to others?'

'Just to create more high-tiers?'

This wasn't just reform anymore!

'You could say it's completely cutting off the hope for those people to become one of the Strongest. This kind of reform is terrifying. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call it snatching food from a tiger's mouth.'

"Will those who have a chance of advancing to become the Strongest agree to this? They are the highest echelons of the Human Alliance... And what are we?" Gao Neng voiced the doubt in his heart.

"Of course they won't agree!" Gui Zian glanced at Gao Neng and nodded. Then, he continued, "Moreover, those in the upper echelons don't believe that high-tiers are useful in a real war!"

"..." Feng Qingqing and Kong Kun exchanged a look.

'It's not just the top brass, is it?'

'Even we don't think a few hundred more high-tiers would make much of a difference on a real battlefield.'

'Isn't the battlefield dominated by the Strongest?'

"I know you're all thinking the same thing. 'The Strongest dominate the battlefield'—that seems to be a universal truth. But the problem now is... we don't have enough resources, and we don't have enough time!" Gui Zian had naturally seen what they were thinking.

"But what if it's useless? If the high-tiers can't make a difference on the battlefield, and we don't have enough of the Strongest, then wouldn't humanity... really be doomed?" Feng Qingqing said again.

"If we had two more years, would we have enough of the Strongest?" Gui Zian retorted, his eyes dimming. "In the war eighteen years ago, more than half of humanity's Strongest fell. The number of Strongest humans have now... won't exceed twenty. And the aliens, two years from now, do you know how many of the Strongest they will have?"

"How many?"

"At least one hundred!"

"One hundred?!" Hearing this, Feng Qingqing's eyes went wide.

"And that's just a conservative estimate based on the battlefield eighteen years ago. In these past eighteen years, the aliens have occupied vast amounts of land and resources. Their rate of development is several times faster than ours. If some new members of the Strongest appeared during these eighteen years that we don't

know about... then in two years, the number of the aliens' Strongest will be over one hundred!"

"..." Feng Qingqing and Kong Kun fell silent.

Twenty of the Strongest for humanity.

Over one hundred for the aliens.

How could they possibly fight?!

With a five-to-one disadvantage, it was impossible.

"The Human Alliance is in a checkmate. For the past eighteen years, the Human Alliance desperately consumed resources, trying to create more of the Strongest. But to this day, only two people have become one of the Strongest in these eighteen years... With only two years left, how many more can we possibly create?" Gui Zian let out a sigh as he finished.

"Teacher, are we going to die?"

"Will humanity really vanish from this land?"

"Teacher, what are we going to do?"

"..."

At this point, Feng Qingqing's words were becoming incoherent.

"Now, do you understand why the reform is only happening now?" Gui Zian poured himself a glass of wine and downed it in one go.

Kong Kun didn't speak.

Fang Tangtang was also silent.

And Gao Neng now understood. 'The Human Alliance wanted to create the Strongest, but it was just too, too difficult. The plan to create the Strongest had failed.'

'Only two years left...'

'Humanity can't continue down this path.'

This wasn't reform.

It was a gamble.

A high-stakes gamble between life and extinction.

The atmosphere in the room grew oppressive. Gui Zian ate his food and drank his wine, but said no more.

After a moment of silence, Kong Kun poured himself a glass of wine and, mimicking Gui Zian, downed it in one gulp. A faint blush appeared on his face.

Feng Qingqing also started drinking.

She seemed to hold her liquor well, at least better than Kong Kun.

Fang Tangtang had actually been drinking from the moment she sat down. Now seeing everyone else drinking, she raised her glass and held it out to Gao Neng.

"Cheers!"

"Cheers." Gao Neng raised his glass. He was also affected by the mood. Amidst the oppressive feeling in his chest, a sudden, heroic boldness surged through him.

He drained the glass.

A burning sensation spread through his stomach.

Seeing that everyone had had a drink, Gui Zian's gaze grew profound. He swept his eyes over the four faces before finally putting down his chopsticks. "Do you all think there's no hope left?"

"Teacher, is there any hope?" Feng Qingqing struggled to lift her head.

"Of course there's hope. As long as there is even a sliver of hope, we will not give up. We cannot give up. Because if we do, all that's left is to wait for death!" Gui Zian nodded with a solemn expression.

"What hope is there? The aliens have over a hundred of the Strongest, and we have less than twenty! Humanity will surely be annihilated!"

## Chapter 155 - 148: Bone Kun: Evolution Complete

"No, as long as the reforms succeed, we have hope!"

"But... even if we manage to produce a few hundred high-tiers, what good would that do? On the battlefield, could a few hundred high-tiers possibly defeat over a hundred of the Strongest?"

"Of course, a few hundred high-tiers can't defeat over a hundred of the Strongest, but we can still give it a shot!"

"Teacher, I don't understand..." Feng Qingqing was genuinely confused. Teacher Gui was saying that a few hundred high-tiers couldn't defeat a hundred of the Strongest, yet he also said they could give it a shot.

Isn't that a contradiction?

Feng Qingqing wasn't the only one. Gao Neng was just as puzzled. 'If we can't win, how can we even try?'

"A few hundred high-tiers, fighting one-on-one against the Strongest, would naturally lose. But it's possible if we use different tactics. For example, one of the Strongest leading four well-coordinated high-tier squads can take on two of the Strongest at the same time. In fact, the Military Department started researching and training for this two years ago," Gui Zian explained.

"Teacher, you mean..."

"Four well-coordinated high-tier squads facing one of the Strongest alone would be a death sentence. But if you add one of the Strongest to tie them down, they can fight to a draw, or even win. Of course, this is all on the condition that these high-tiers are true geniuses—beings capable of fighting above their tier. Like Gao Neng, for example." Gui Zian glanced at Gao Neng.

The gazes of Feng Qingqing, Kong Kun, and the others instantly focused on Gao Neng.

Although Teacher Gui's words were simple, they seemed to understand. Not all high-tiers were the same. If there were a few hundred \*genius\* high-tiers, that force would be truly terrifying.

One of the Strongest, leading more than ten, maybe even twenty, genius high-tiers against two of the Strongest...

In theory, it really was a fight they could take!

Of course, this was just theoretical. After all, even the Strongest varied in power.

"But Teacher, that's still not enough, is it? You just said the humans have fewer than twenty of the Strongest. So even with genius high-tiers providing support, if every one of ours takes on two of theirs, we can at most hold off around forty of their Strongest. How could we possibly fight over a hundred of them?" Kong Kun fell silent for a moment, his confusion returning.

"No, you're mistaken!" Teacher Gui shook his head. "From the very beginning, our Human Alliance has never had the ability to single-handedly fight a hundred of the Strongest. During the great war eighteen years ago, humanity had a little over forty of the Strongest, yet we still managed to slay dozens of the other races' Strongest after paying the price of half our own!"

"Why is that?" Kong Kun asked again.

"You should know that 'other races' is just a collective term. To be blunt, they're an alliance too, but they aren't very united. Or rather... they're not even the same race, so what unity is there to speak of?"

"I know that, Teacher, but I still don't see why."

"The twenty-year cycle is the other races' advantage, but it's also their weakness. Their Strongest can indeed be resurrected, but not unconditionally. For instance, the Elf Race relies on the Tree of Life, the Celestial Race on the White Tower, and the Barbarian Race on the Blood Pool..."

"So you're saying, Teacher, that if we can destroy the source of their resurrection, their Strongest won't be able to come back?"

"Yes, that's more or less it. Because of that, they're forced to leave a guardian behind and can't send all of their Strongest into battle," Teacher Gui replied.

"Couldn't they just make... an agreement?"

"An agreement? Heh, they actually tried that once. The result was tragic. Do you know why the Dark Elf Race always follows the orders of the Celestial Race?"

"Is it because the Dark Elf Race's Tree of Life was destroyed?"

"No, it was seized by the Celestial Race. During the first great war, the Dark Elf Race formed a pact with several other races, including the Celestials, agreeing to march into battle together. You can probably guess what happened. While the Dark Elf Race's Strongest were away, the Celestial Race launched a surprise attack on their Tree of Life. Ever since, the Dark Elf Race has had no choice but to obey the Celestial Race's commands," Teacher Gui explained.

"That's breaking the pact!" Kong Kun exclaimed in shock.

"It was, but the Dark Elf Race didn't want to be wiped out, so they had to obey. To be honest, this kind of thing happens a lot between the other races. That's just the reality of it."

"I understand, Teacher... You're saying that even though the other races have a hundred of the Strongest, at most only fifty of them can actually be deployed, right?"

"No, it's more than fifty," Teacher Gui said, shaking his head.

"But why? Teacher... didn't you just say they have to leave a guardian behind?"

"A guardian must be left behind, but that only applies to controlling races like the Celestials. It doesn't include subjugated races like the Dark Elves. Since their Tree

of Life is already under another's control, their Strongest won't be held back to guard it, even after being resurrected."

"I see. So how many of the Strongest will we be facing?"

"Nobody knows the answer to that, but the most conservative estimate is close to sixty. But don't you dare think that sixty is their limit. Once one of their Strongest is heavily injured, they can retreat and be replaced by a fresh one. As for us humans... we can only fight to the death." Teacher Gui let out another sigh as he finished.

"Sixty of the Strongest, and they can swap them out... Then what about us..."

"There's no other way. We just have to fight. Surviving one cycle buys us another cycle. As long as we can hold our ground, humanity gets another twenty years to breathe."

"Teacher, have we never considered... running away?"

"Run? Run where? Would you be willing to abandon your family? How do five hundred million humans run? If the Alliance truly had a plan like that, it wouldn't be for now. It would be the final resort. Right now, to protect this land, we can only fight! We *\*must\** fight!" Gui Zian's gaze turned sharp and fierce.

"Yes, Teacher! We will fight to the death!"

...

The meal went on for a long time.

In the end, the scene was a complete mess.

Kong Kun was passed out drunk under the table. Fang Tangtang was standing on it, shouting, "Eat, drink, and be merry!" Meanwhile, a beet-red Feng Qingqing was yelling that all men are pigs.

Teacher Gui had also had a lot to drink, but as a high-tier powerhouse who had already stepped into the seventh tier, he obviously wasn't going to pass out like Kong Kun.

As for Gao Neng...

He was only slightly tipsy.

He hadn't actually drunk that much.

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing were drinking because of their pent-up anxiety, while Teacher Gui was doing it to unwind.

But Gao Neng didn't need to.

He had grown up in the Forgotten Land. If he was ever going to fall into despair, it would have happened long ago.

If Teacher Gui's words today had any effect on his state of mind, it was only to make him yearn even more to become stronger.

Teacher Gui paid the bill, then hoisted Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing up and left.

Which naturally left Fang Tangtang to Gao Neng.

Along the way, Fang Tangtang stumbled around, shadowboxing drunkenly and yelling, "I can fight above my tier too! One blast from my Electromagnetic Cannon, and one of the Strongest is..."

Hearing her mention the Electromagnetic Cannon, Gao Neng's lips curved into a cold smirk.

Once he'd tossed Fang Tangtang into her dorm room, he gave her a good, hard spanking, sending her wailing on the bed.

Finally, he left, completely satisfied.

'That'll teach you to fire an Electromagnetic Cannon at me, Fang Tangtang.'

...

...

「Half a month later.」

Teacher Gui's hellish training officially came to an end.

The Battle Ranking challenges were also drawing to a close.

Over the past half-month, Gao Neng and the others had trained while continuously challenging the Battle Rankings. Their strength and combat experience had both improved by leaps and bounds.

Second place on the D-Rankings: the Invincible Team.

This was the result of their half-month of effort.

Beyond that, there were a few surprises...

For example, Gao Neng had broken through to Tier Two and, in just half a month, had reached the Tier Two Mid Stage at a pace that defied all convention.

This placed immense pressure on Kong Kun, who had also broken through to the Tier Two Late Stage. After all, just one month ago, Gao Neng had barely been at the Tier One Early Stage.

In the blink of an eye, there was only one minor stage separating them.

As for Feng Qingqing...

...it was more than just pressure. It was shame.

That's right, Feng Qingqing had broken through from the Tier Two Early Stage to the Tier Two Mid Stage. But she wasn't happy about it at all, because Gao Neng had broken through on the exact same day.

Fang Tangtang, however, was quite happy.

The reason being, she had broken through a day before Gao Neng. Moreover, she had now officially reached the Tier Two Late Stage, keeping her seat as vice-captain nice and warm.

"I hear the D-Rankings' number one team, the Moon Wheel Team, went through a huge change two days ago?" Kong Kun asked, looking over at Feng Qingqing.

Feng Qingqing was now the team's Intelligence Officer, responsible for gathering intel on their various opponents.

"Not a change, a temporary substitution!" Feng Qingqing replied casually. "Rumor has it the upperclassmen thought it would be too humiliating if we actually swept the D-Rankings. So, two days ago, all three members of the Moon Wheel Team were replaced, and their combat power instantly shot through the roof."

"How 'through the roof'?" Fang Tangtang asked disdainfully.

"The captain is the same: Zhang Yuelun, the only one on the D-Rankings at the Tier Three Late Stage. You guys remember Hua Youque from the old Flying Swan Team, right? He's Tier Three Mid Stage. The other two are also Tier Three Mid Stage. So, the current number one team on the D-Rankings is made up of four Tier Threes!"

"Four Tier Threes?! Isn't that taking things too far? Have they no shame?" Kong Kun was furious. 'Swapping out team members at the last minute... How shameless can you get?'

"If we actually beat them, it won't just be those few who are embarrassed. The reputation of the entire upperclassmen body would be on the line," Feng Qingqing said with a bitter smile.

"Then we'll just wait. They have to go back to their original teams eventually, right? We'll challenge them after they do. We'll see who can outlast who!" Kong Kun said indignantly.

"No. We fight today," Gao Neng finally said.

"Fight today? That doesn't seem very smart..." Feng Qingqing hesitated. Four Tier Threes, one of whom was at the Tier Three Late Stage. That was far beyond the normal level for the D-Rankings.

A team like that could easily rank in the top ten of the C-Rankings.

"Have you forgotten what Bald Shark said half a month ago?" Gao Neng asked, looking at Feng Qingqing.

"What did he say? You don't mean..."

"That's right. Fighting above our tier. If we want to be part of the reform plan Bald Shark mentioned, then Tier Twos challenging Tier Threes should be normal for us, shouldn't it?"

"Gao Neng has a point! I, Death God Fang Tangtang, support this with both hands up!" Fang Tangtang immediately leaped to her feet, thrusting both hands high in the air.

"But that's four Tier Threes... Analyzing the data, our chance of winning is ten percent, at best," Feng Qingqing calculated rapidly.

"Data is just numbers. In reality, this is an opportunity. A perfect chance to see if the stuff Bald Shark taught us over the last half-month is actually effective."

"Well, we could give it a try..." Hearing this, Feng Qingqing finally nodded.

"Wait!" Kong Kun interrupted. "You're going to use that stuff? But Teacher Gui said we can't publicly use anything he taught us these past two weeks until the reform plan is officially announced!"

"Hahaha... My dear Kong Kun, are you really that clueless, or just pretending?" Fang Tangtang burst out laughing.

Feng Qingqing was also left speechless.

"What? Did I say something wrong?" Kong Kun was slow to catch on.

"Everything you said was correct. Your brain's just not very flexible. Since Bald Shark only trained us for half a month, that means the reform plan is going to be announced today or tomorrow. By challenging them today... we're basically giving the reform plan a warm-up. Who knows, maybe the plan will be announced right after our match."

Gao Neng smiled. 'My dear Kong Kun is great in every way, he just hasn't finished evolving yet.'

## **Chapter 156 - 149: Beginning: The Fated Encounter**

...

Challenging for the D-List championship.

Moreover, the challenge had been issued even with the knowledge that the opposing team had switched out members. Naturally, this challenge match between the Invincible Team and the Moon Wheel Team became the hot topic of the entire Eastern Capital Military Academy.

However, aside from the D-List championship match, another event caught the attention of all the students at the Eastern Capital Military Academy today.

Lin Ying was back.

The true number one student of the Eastern Capital Military Academy, leader of the Hunt God Team—ranked first on the A-List of the battle rankings—had successfully returned from the battlefield after a three-month deployment.

As the student council president of the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

Lin Ying wasn't just number one in terms of strength; his influence at the Eastern Capital Military Academy was number one as well.

When Gao Neng, Fang Tangtang, and the others left their dormitory, they saw a large crowd of students surging toward the school gate. Even some of the instructors had gone out.

"Lin Ying is a third-year, at Tier Five Late Stage. According to the latest intel, he single-handedly killed a Tier Six Mid Stage Barbarian on the battlefield this time. As for the Hunt God Team as a whole, they're estimated to have taken down at least several dozen Tier Five enemies," Feng Qingqing announced the latest information she had gathered.

"He's that strong?" Kong Kun was astonished.

"Of course! He's the number one student at the Eastern Capital Military Academy, after all. Plus, I heard Lin Ying might be on the verge of a breakthrough. If he reaches Tier Six, he'll probably be stronger than many of the instructors!" Feng Qingqing said with certainty.

"Let's go. We'll head to the gate and see for ourselves." Hearing this, Gao Neng also felt a flicker of curiosity toward this legendary figure among the students of the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

He was determined to claim the top spot on the A-List.

Therefore, defeating Lin Ying was naturally part of his plan.

Getting an early look at his future defeated opponent was a form of wisdom for someone who had gotten this far on his own merit.

It was still early.

Fang Tangtang, naturally, had no objections.

The group blended into the crowd and made their way to the entrance of the Eastern Capital Military Academy. Everywhere they went, the upperclassmen were gossiping, while the freshmen were full of admiration.

Celebrities always have an aura about them.

Of course, this was Lin Ying's moment in the spotlight. Although Gao Neng was a rising star, his accomplishments and influence couldn't yet compare to Lin Ying's.

Just as he was thinking this, several military jeeps pulled up to the school gate.

Soldiers in black military uniforms got out. Judging by the insignia on their shoulders, they were all at least Lieutenants. After dismounting, they all walked toward the last military jeep.

A moment later, four students stepped out of the jeep.

Three men and one woman.

"The one in the front is Lin Ying." Feng Qingqing had clearly gathered intel on the Hunt God Team, as she recognized Lin Ying at first glance.

Gao Neng looked over.

His brows furrowed slightly. This was a little different from the "return of the king" he had imagined.

Lin Ying was quite fair-skinned and had long hair. He was about 1.8 meters tall with a slender build, completely lacking the sun-weathered tan one might expect.

If Gao Neng's handsomeness was breathtakingly divine...

...then Lin Ying belonged to the cool, refined type. And he was very refined.

But this refinement wasn't the gentle disposition of a scholar. His body was covered in blood, and a crudely wrapped bandage was tied around his arm.

As for the other three...

Chen Qing was a short guy with a buzz cut.

Qiao Yaqui could be considered a beauty, but unlike Feng Qingqing, Qiao Yaqui seemed more intellectual. Her long hair fell to her shoulders, and her features were bright and sunny.

As for the last one, Han Yuping...

...he had more of a soldierly air about him.

He was all muscle, with dark skin, a square face, and stood nearly two meters tall. He looked like the type to charge headfirst into battle—or was he the cannon fodder sent to die?

This information was all recorded in Feng Qingqing's little notebook. Gao Neng only needed a glance to guess the identities of all four.

"Lin Ying!"

"President! President!"

"..."

Seeing Lin Ying get out of the car, the students began to cheer.

Just then, Gao Neng saw a group of people approaching from a short distance away. It included Gui Zian, Vice Principal Wang Qixing, and several instructors from the War Academy.

When Gui Zian passed by Gao Neng, he paused for a moment but said nothing, walking straight toward Lin Ying and the others.

"Vice Principal Wang, Teacher Gui, Teacher Qin..." Upon seeing Gui Zian and the others, Lin Ying immediately stopped and greeted them respectfully.

"Mm, it's been a tough deployment." Wang Qixing offered his sympathies on behalf of the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

"Vice Principal Wang, everyone from the four major military academies on the battlefield has been recalled. Even those few from the Western Alliance Military Academy have gone back. Did something happen?" It was Qiao Yaqiu who spoke.

Lin Ying and the others said nothing more.

Vice Principal Wang didn't seem surprised, his gaze quickly shifting to Qiao Yaqiu.

"Something has come up. It's good that you've all returned safely. Go back and get some rest. The school will make a formal announcement tomorrow," Vice Principal Wang replied.

"Thank you, Vice Principal Wang. Here are the battlefield statistics." Qiao Yaqui nodded, then took out a record book and handed it to Vice Principal Wang.

"Very good." Vice Principal Wang personally accepted the record book.

What followed was some pleasantries between the instructors and the Hunt God Team. However, the instructors all seemed to know Lin Ying's personality, so no one tried to ask him many questions.

Qiao Yaqui took on the role of the main spokesperson.

The other two team members were also off to the side, answering questions to some extent.

As for Lin Ying, he looked toward Gui Zian.

"Teacher Gui, I hear we have some new junior brothers and sisters. Could you introduce them to me?" Lin Ying didn't address Gui Zian as Vice Dean but as Teacher, indicating he was also one of Gui Zian's students.

"Oh? Weren't you always uninterested in this sort of thing before?" Gui Zian seemed a bit surprised.

"After returning, one inevitably hears things through the information network," Lin Ying explained, though his expression remained impassive.

"Mm. Gao Neng, you lot, come over and meet your senior brother." Hearing this, Gui Zian was no longer surprised.

After all, Lin Ying was the student council president.

Besides, now that he was back from the battlefield, communication lines were re-established. It was normal for him to have heard about Gao Neng.

Gao Neng and the others exchanged a look and decided to give Gui Zian some face.

The four of them stepped out from the crowd.

The gazes of the surrounding freshmen and upperclassmen all focused on Gao Neng's group. Even the few instructors who had been chatting fell silent.

The top-ranked team on the A-List of the Eastern Capital Military Academy had finally met the academy's rising stars.

'Will they start fighting?'

"Do you think Gao Neng will be reckless enough to challenge Lin Ying directly?"

"He's not an idiot. One's just barely Tier Two, while the other is about to break through to Tier Six. If Gao Neng challenges Lin Ying now, he'd probably be crippled in a single move, right?"

"Hahaha... that's true."

The upperclassmen chuckled.

The freshmen, however, were unconvinced.

"When Lin Ying was a freshman, he didn't form his own team and fight his way up the D-List! He got onto the D-List with a few second-years!"

"Exactly! In a few years, who knows who will be stronger!"

"He just has the advantage of age."

The freshmen now saw Gao Neng as their role model, so they were rather displeased to hear the upperclassmen's gossip.

'Even if the two geniuses were to fight, it should at least be when their strengths are equal, right?'

...

The two teams came together.

There were no sparks as one might expect; instead, there was a hint of curiosity between them.

Feng Qingqing's gaze was fixed on Qiao Yaqiu—the publicly acknowledged number one campus belle of the Eastern Capital Military Academy, a Tier Five Mid Stage expert, and the top-ranked female student.

Meanwhile, Kong Kun was looking at Han Yuping.

Han Yuping, the "Wild Bull." His fighting style lived up to his name—as wild as a bull. It was said that he once fought a Demon Race Wild Bull in close combat for half an hour on the battlefield without being defeated, thus earning his moniker.

As for Fang Tangtang and Gao Neng...

...both of them had their eyes on Lin Ying.

The short, buzz-cutted Chen Qing felt a little frustrated. He had heard about the Invincible Team from Qiao Yaqiu, so he knew that Fang Tangtang was a long-range attacker.

'So, according to the normal script... Everyone else is looking at their counterparts. This little loli should be looking at me, right? But why isn't she looking at me?'

"You're Gao Neng?" Lin Ying's gaze landed on Gao Neng. He didn't even glance at Kong Kun standing nearby, recognizing Gao Neng instantly.

"You're Lin Ying?" Gao Neng returned the question.

"Mm. I heard you have a D-List championship match today. I'll be watching." Lin Ying nodded, said nothing more, and left directly.

Seeing Lin Ying leave, Qiao Yaqiu and the others immediately followed.

Gui Zian glanced at Gao Neng.

"Are you confident?"

"I hear you've already placed bets outside, Teacher. Isn't it a little late to be asking that question now?" Gao Neng gave a faint smile. 'You've already bet on me to win, don't you have any goddamn clue?'

"So confident. If you lose, I'll beat you to death!" The corner of Gui Zian's mouth curved up slightly. He really had bet on Gao Neng to win—with his entire fortune.

If he really lost, he felt he probably wouldn't be able to go on living.

So how could Gao Neng possibly be allowed to live?

...

「4:30 PM」

At that moment, the D-List championship match between the Invincible Team and the Moon Wheel Team officially began under the watchful eyes of the entire academy's students and faculty.

Song Tianyun, Wang Qixing, and Gui Zian were all present.

Even the other vice principal, the dean of the Research Academy, who rarely made an appearance in the viewing hall, had taken a seat in the stands.

And there were far more students than usual as well.

Lin Ying had arrived early with the three other members of the Hunt God Team.

It wasn't just Lin Ying. The second, third, and fourth-ranked teams on the battle rankings... all the teams that had been deployed to the battlefield had returned today.

The viewing hall was packed with people.

But unlike usual, the buzz of conversation was not loud.

Everyone's eyes were fixed on the screen.

Soon, a line of text appeared on the screen.

Challenge Mode Selected: Hunt.

Battle Scene: Jungle.

"Four Tier Twos versus four Tier Threes, and they actually dared to choose Hunt?!" In the silent viewing hall, the first cry of surprise finally broke the quiet.

## **Chapter 157 - 150: Hit and Run?**

"He's certainly arrogant." The comment came from members of a few teams that had returned from the battlefield. They'd all heard about what had happened at the Eastern Capital Military Academy over the past month.

Gao Neng, the number one freshman at the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

He'd first made a name for himself at the freshman orientation, where he'd beaten a whole crowd of new students to the ground.

Afterward, Gao Neng formed the Invincible Team and, to the disbelief of all students, new and old, consecutively challenged 19 ranked teams within a month.

Record: Undefeated.

Of course, there was also the matter of Gao Neng and Shen Ning'Er.

Although Gao Neng had publicly stated that nothing inappropriate happened between him and Shen Ning'Er in his dorm room, the fact remained that she had stayed there for three days and three nights.

Right now, Gao Neng was arguably the hottest rising star at the Eastern Capital Military Academy. Having broken the Fourth Human Limit and mastered Energy Manifestation—all of it pointed to his immense potential.

"It's starting," an instructor announced.

The surroundings once again fell silent.

On the screen, a dense jungle appeared.

...

Gao Neng and his team appeared on the edge of the jungle, while the four members of the Moon Wheel Team materialized in the center.

Zhang Yuelun was a fourth-year student. While not a dazzling genius, his greatest strength was his unwavering composure, which was how he had held the top spot on the Ding List for a full year.

The moment he appeared, he covered himself in armor.

It was a full suit of battle armor, encasing his body from head to toe. The neck of the armor had even been specially reinforced.

"Defend!" Zhang Yuelun gave his first combat command.

"Defend? But we're Tier Three!" The three team members, Hua Youque included, were astonished. They had come here for a battle of revenge, after all.

"Is there a problem?" Zhang Yuelun's gaze turned cold.

"Fine. You're the captain; you call the shots. So, how do you want to defend?" Hua Youque and the others were frustrated, but they didn't defy Zhang Yuelun's orders.

The laws of jungle warfare: sneak attacks, concealment, setting traps, and killing in one strike.

"Hua Youque and Li Ling, set traps. Zuo Qing, find a hiding spot. Signal immediately if you see anyone. I will take the high ground and provide support," Zhang Yuelun instructed.

"Alright!" The three had no objections.

Zhang Yuelun immediately found a large tree and climbed up.

Because he was a long-range attacker.

...

「At the edge of the jungle.」

Gao Neng immediately unleashed his Spiritual Power.

The drain was significant, but he didn't mind. He quickly located the members of the Moon Wheel Team at the center of the jungle.

However, he only found two of them.

One was Hua Youque, and the other was Li Ling.

But he couldn't find Zuo Qing and Zhang Yuelun; they must have found very concealed hiding spots.

Gao Neng's Spiritual Power could only probe, not perform a 'thermal scan.' Therefore, finding hidden targets would require a slow, meticulous search.

But doing so would consume a terrifying amount of Spiritual Power.

The distance was a bit too far.

Gao Neng didn't continue his search. It wasn't worth the cost right now; the drain would be much lower once they got closer.

"They're in the center. Hua Youque and Li Ling seem to be setting traps, and the other two are probably hiding," Gao Neng relayed.

"Setting traps? Looks like the Moon Wheel Team is on the defensive!" Feng Qingqing concluded.

"Tier Threes versus Tier Twos, and they choose to defend? The Moon Wheel Team really is..." Kong Kun was speechless. He thought \*they\* were the ones who should have been on the defensive.

"This means they're scared of us! Let's attack!" Fang Tangtang's face was lit with excitement.

"Mm." Surprisingly, Gao Neng didn't object. Since their goal was to defeat a higher-tiered opponent, there was no need to be conservative. Going all out was the only way to win.

"Are we really attacking?"

"Attack!"

"Alright!"

Having trained together for half a month and fought in ranked matches for almost another, the four had developed a tacit understanding. They didn't need to discuss a division of labor.

...

The Invincible Team began to advance.

They approached the target at top speed.

When the two sides were less than 30 meters apart, the Invincible Team stopped.

Gao Neng began probing with his Spiritual Power again. This time, his search was more meticulous, advancing from one patch of grass to the next.

"One in the second patch of grass to the left, one hidden behind the tree on the right, and... huh? They dug a hole... one's buried underground!" Gao Neng had located three of them.

However, he still hadn't found Zhang Yuelun's position.

'Is he in a tree?'

'Or did he dig a hole like Zuo Qing?'

Gao Neng couldn't be 100% certain.

Finding Zuo Qing had been a coincidence. He was actually hidden very well, but he had happened to move. Otherwise, Gao Neng truly wouldn't have spotted him.

"Still no sign of Zhang Yuelun?" Feng Qingqing asked in a low voice.

"Yeah." Gao Neng nodded.

"That's to be expected. Zhang Yuelun is a long-range attacker, so he's bound to be experienced at picking hiding spots. Besides, his personality is extremely cautious; he'll be hard to find," Feng Qingqing added.

"If we can't find their long-range support... this could be a problem." Gao Neng was prepared to go all out, but that didn't mean he was an idiot.

One person was missing.

And it was the crucial long-range attacker, at that.

That meant their movements would be exposed, leaving them vulnerable to being sniped from afar. A frontal assault at this moment would be unwise.

"Which plan are we using?" Kong Kun liked to do things with a bit of style.

"Plan Four!" Gao Neng replied after a moment of thought.

"Then I get to have some fun!" Hearing they were going with Plan Four, the excitement on Fang Tangtang's face grew even more brilliant, making her look like a red cherry.

...

「In the viewing hall.」

It was still completely silent.

But the freshmen's gazes toward the upperclassmen held a certain disdain.

Four Tier Threes against four Tier Twos—with such a massive advantage, they had actually chosen to set traps and defend. It was utterly shameless.

"I wonder what this 'Plan Four' is?"

"Rumor has it Vice Director Gui has been giving Gao Neng's team special training. Could it be a new combat technique?"

"Could be. Let's watch!"

The students whispered amongst themselves for a few moments, then fell silent.

And at that moment, the scene on the screen changed.

Hua Youque, who was lying prone in a patch of grass after setting his traps, suddenly felt that something was wrong. A chill crept up his spine.

'A sneak attack?!' Hua Youque instantly dove forward, simultaneously swinging his longsword back to block without hesitation.

CLANG! The sound of metal on metal rang out.

'It's that Earth Dragon!'

Hua Youque knew, of course, what had ambushed him. But the force of his sword colliding with the Earth Dragon still forced him out of the grass.

'I was discovered?'

Hua Youque's emotions were in turmoil.

'There shouldn't have been a problem with my hiding spot. There's only one way I could have been discovered: Gao Neng used his Spiritual Power to scout.'

He didn't dwell on it.

After being forced out by the strike, Hua Youque slashed his sword at the Earth Dragon again.

But after its attack missed, the Earth Dragon immediately burrowed back underground.

At the same time, a loud BANG erupted near Hua Youque's ear, stunning him and causing him to glance back instinctively.

And then, he saw a beam of light.

Just like love.

It pierced straight through his chest.

'Am I dead?' was Hua Youque's only thought before he materialized at the training room's entrance. He couldn't believe it. He'd died just like that?

He had specifically left the Flying Swan Team to come here for his revenge kill.

And the result?

It hadn't even officially started...

...and it was already over?

Hua Youque couldn't understand. What kind of strategy was this?

Using an Electromagnetic Cannon right from the start!

'Did they think I was too strong, so they decided to trade Fang Tangtang to take me out right away? No way. If we're talking about combat power, the other three are just as strong!'

'What the hell?'

'The fight hasn't even properly started, and it's already a one-for-one trade. Is that really a good move?'

Hua Youque stood at the entrance to the training room, filled with resentment, fury, and despair... He wished he could charge back in for a rematch.

But the problem was, he wouldn't get another chance.

「In the viewing hall.」

A large number of freshmen and upperclassmen were also a bit dumbfounded.

Why use an ultimate move right at the start?

And they'd used that ultimate on an ordinary member like Hua Youque. It didn't seem like that gave them any advantage, did it?

Hua Youque was dead, but Fang Tangtang was also out of combat.

They still had to face Zhang Yuelun, a Tier Three Late Stage expert, plus two more at Tier Three Mid Stage. No matter how you looked at it, it seemed like a bad trade, didn't it?

Just as they were thinking this...

...something even stranger happened.

After firing the cannon, Fang Tangtang immediately collapsed to the ground.

This was something everyone had expected.

But what nobody expected was that the instant Gao Neng saw Fang Tangtang collapse, he scooped her up without a moment's hesitation, turned around, and bolted.

It wasn't just Gao Neng running.

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing were also running.

The four of them sprinted toward the edge of the jungle without a single glance back. They had arrived quickly, but they were leaving even faster.

The students were stunned.

Even some of the instructors were baffled.

Finally, all eyes turned to Gui Zian. 'Could this really be the result of half a month of intensive training?'

"Battlefield survival rule number four: Take the advantage and run! Ahem, you could also call it... shoot... and scoot!" Gui Zian seemed to have been expecting this and replied casually.

"..."

The instructors, the students.

Damn, what a ridiculously logical explanation!

But the problem was...

Now that the Invincible Team had fled and the Moon Wheel Team was on the defensive, how was the rest of the match going to play out?

For a moment, the students couldn't process it.

But soon, their expressions changed.

The Invincible Team had indeed traded Fang Tangtang's combat power for Hua Youque's. But the key was that Fang Tangtang was still alive on the battlefield. This meant the Invincible Team already had one point.

They didn't need to fight anymore!

Once the one-hour time limit was up, the Invincible Team would win.

What a shameless tactic!

Even more shameless than four Tier Threes playing defensively!

In fact, 'shameless' didn't even begin to cover it. This pioneered a new age of dirty, underhanded tactics! How did they resemble military academy students at all?

"Didn't Teacher Gui teach us these tactics in the second semester of our sophomore year?" Chen Qing of the Hunt God Team murmured from the front row.

"But these are battlefield tactics... Does Teacher Gui intend to send Gao Neng and his team to the battlefield already? But that's not right. The four major military academies have a rule that students can only go to the battlefield after reaching Tier Four, and they're only Tier Two," Han Yuping said, scratching his head.

"Let's just keep watching. It's only the beginning. Maybe it's just a coincidence?" Qiao Yaqiu shook her head, her gaze falling on Lin Ying beside her.

Lin Ying didn't speak.

He merely narrowed his eyes, recalling something Gui Zian had said to him during the second semester of his sophomore year, back when he was leaving the academy.

On the battlefield, you only need to remember one word: Survival!

Don't worry about losing face!

And don't be burdened by any thoughts of honor!

You must always remember: only those who survive the battlefield can truly master it and become the kings who make the alien races tremble in fear.

What if you encounter an enemy stronger than you?

Then run, of course!

Only an idiot would take them head-on.

That's not guts, that's suicide!

Of course, when an opportunity to gain an advantage presents itself, you must seize it. However, remember this one principle: after you've gained your advantage, you still have to play it smart.

'Invincible Team... you've certainly taken your advantage. So, how are you going to play it smart now?' Lin Ying's eyes opened again. As he watched Gao Neng and the others fleeing at top speed, the corners of his lips curled into a rare smile.

## **Chapter 158 - 151: What the Hell**

...

「In the jungle battlefield.」

Zhang Yuelun and his team were clearly a bit stunned.

To use their ultimate move right at the start, and then run away after using it? This was something they hadn't expected. According to the Invincible Team's usual tactics, Kong Kun should have been the first to make a move.

"Should we chase them?"

"If we don't, they'll get away!"

Li Ling and Zuo Qing both looked up in unison at Zhang Yuelun, who was hidden in the trees.

Doing so would expose Zhang Yuelun's position, but in this situation, the enemy was clearly trying to stall for time. Did exposing his position even matter anymore?

"Chase them? Could there be a trap...?" Zhang Yuelun's brows furrowed. He was also considering the problem. Chasing them... was risky.

But if they didn't chase, this challenge match would basically be over before it began.

'Damn it!'

"Chase them!" Zhang Yuelun made up his mind.

Now that Fang Tangtang was exhausted, the Invincible Team's fighting force was effectively down to just three people. Naturally, they couldn't give up at a time like this.

"Kill them!"

"Finish them off!"

Li Ling and Zuo Qing had been holding back their frustration for a while now. Four Tier Three fighters taking a defensive stance against four members of a B-team—this wasn't something they wanted to do in the first place.

And what was even more frustrating was...

...they had already lost a member.

Rage filled their hearts. They had to get revenge.

"Gao Neng is running while carrying Fang Tangtang; he can't be that fast. Zuo Qing, you're the fastest. Go cut them off!" Li Ling didn't even bother asking for Zhang Yuelun's opinion this time.

"Alright." Zuo Qing immediately sped up.

"Zuo Qing, be careful! There might be an ambush up ahead!" By the time Zhang Yuelun came down from the tree, Zuo Qing was already almost out of sight. He shouted anxiously.

"Don't worry, Zhang Yuelun. Aside from Fang Tangtang's Electromagnetic Cannon, no one on their team can one-shot me." This wasn't exactly a boast from Zuo Qing.

As a Tier Three Mid Stage fighter, his speed and strength were both superior to the Invincible Team's Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing.

As for Gao Neng...

As long as he watched out for a sneak attack from the Earth Dragon, it wouldn't be a big problem.

"You're not getting away!" Zuo Qing roared. His figure moved like lightning, and in less than two minutes, he caught up to Gao Neng's group and successfully intercepted them.

"So fast? Is this the power of a Tier Three?" Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing's expressions changed drastically. Both looked a little fearful.

"Hahaha, let's see where you run now." Zuo Qing didn't waste any time, directly choosing to attack the weakest link, Feng Qingqing, vowing to take her down.

"Zuo Qing, don't attack just yet! Just hold them back!" Zhang Yuelun shouted from behind.

But it was too late.

Zuo Qing's fist had already shot out.

And Feng Qingqing didn't even try to dodge.

BOOM!

The punch landed squarely on Feng Qingqing's stomach.

"Ah!" With a miserable cry, Feng Qingqing spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, which landed squarely on Zuo Qing's face.

His vision was blocked.

Zuo Qing instinctively wanted to reach up and wipe away the blood covering his eyes.

But at that moment, Feng Qingqing grabbed both of Zuo Qing's arms in a death grip. What's more, her feet began to kick relentlessly at his groin as if her life depended on it.

Zuo Qing felt the chilling whoosh of air.

He clamped his legs together tightly.

At the same time, he drove his knee forcefully upward.

BAM!

Feng Qingqing took another knee to the stomach.

"Trying to tie me down?! Impossible!" Zuo Qing used all his strength to throw Feng Qingqing off, because he already sensed that something was wrong.

"Combat Technique: Cyan Snake Spitting Water!"

PTUI!

Another mouthful of blood sprayed onto Zuo Qing's face.

Zuo Qing's expression changed drastically. He couldn't care about anything else. He instantly unleashed his full combat power, his battle armor transforming into sharp spikes as he temporarily abandoned all defense.

BOOM!

Spike after spike slammed into Feng Qingqing's body.

Feng Qingqing's body was once again hit by a powerful blow. Her battle armor on her shoulders and stomach was shattered by the impact of the spikes.

Tier Three versus Tier Two.

The energy and intensity were on completely different levels.

Several gashes were torn into Feng Qingqing's body.

As for the unarmored parts of her thighs, they were directly pierced, leaving several bloody holes.

But Feng Qingqing still showed no intention of letting go. Her hands held Zuo Qing in a death grip, and instead of retreating, her legs moved forward, wrapping themselves stubbornly around the spikes.

"Are you trying to take me down with you?!" Zuo Qing yelled. He had already guessed what Feng Qingqing was trying to do, but he had exhausted all his options. What else could he do?

BOOM!

A massive force slammed into his head.

'I'm a little dizzy!'

Then, a cold sensation swept across his neck.

His head flew into the air.

But he couldn't see how he had died. Not until his vision cleared again, and he saw Hua Youque also standing at the entrance to the training room.

"I'm dead?"

"Yeah, you're dead... But why the fuck are you dead?!" Hua Youque was furious. "It's only been a short while, and they've already used up their Electromagnetic Cannon. How could you still die?"

"It was three against one, and one of them clung to me like death even after being seriously injured. Have you ever seen tactics like that...?" Zuo Qing's heart was filled with melancholy.

It wasn't that he felt his death was particularly unjust.

He was ambushed, held in place by one person, and then killed by two others from behind. A death like that couldn't really be considered unjust.

It was just that the Invincible Team's tactics had truly been beyond his expectations.

The change in their behavior was too drastic!

When he saw the Invincible Team run, he instinctively believed they were trying to stall for time. Under those circumstances, he naturally didn't think they had the will to fight him to the death.

'Since that was the case...'

'...when I attacked Feng Qingqing, she should have dodged, then tried to escape, while I would have relentlessly pursued and tied her down.'

'With that, how could I possibly have failed?'

'But what happened instead?'

Feng Qingqing not only didn't run, she didn't even try to dodge. She took his punch and kick head-on, and finally, even wrapped her body around his spikes.

'And because of that, I died?'

...

「In the jungle battlefield.」

When Li Ling and Zhang Yuelun arrived, they saw the exact moment Zuo Qing was beheaded by the Earth Dragon's One Slash.

The scene was quite brutal.

As for Feng Qingqing, she was severely injured and pale, blood pouring from all over her body. She had clearly lost her ability to fight.

Then, they saw Kong Kun hoist Feng Qingqing onto his back.

And turn and run!

"Running again?! Do you really think you can get away?" Li Ling and Zhang Yuelun were speechless. Did they really think Tier Three fighters were a bunch of newbies? That they could run whenever they wanted?

They had lost two members now.

But the Invincible Team also had two exhausted members. In terms of true combat power, they still held the advantage.

Li Ling and Zhang Yuelun didn't hesitate this time.

They immediately gave chase together.

At the same time, an Earth Dragon burst out of the ground, blocking their path and continuously swinging its two large scythes.

'Dammit, we're going to get held up by this thing!' Zhang Yuelun cursed inwardly. He wanted to let Li Ling chase ahead, but he was afraid Gao Neng and the others would pull the same trick again.

'If Li Ling charges ahead alone... and Kong Kun, despite his injuries, latches onto Li Ling and refuses to let go, how are we supposed to fight?'

Gao Neng was capable of fighting a Tier Three on his own.

Zhang Yuelun knew this very well. Therefore, sending one person to chase Gao Neng now seemed unwise. But if they didn't split up, the enemy would just keep running for their lives.

'This is so fucking... ridiculous!'

Zhang Yuelun had been on the D-list for so long, but he had never fought such a frustrating battle.

"Zhang Yuelun, are we chasing or not? If we don't, they'll get away!" Li Ling was also incredibly frustrated. He remembered that they were the ones who held the absolute geographical advantage.

The central position.

They had set up traps in advance.

Logically speaking, fighting so conservatively should have made this battle foolproof.

So why had it turned out like this?

It felt like ever since Hua Youque was blasted to death by Fang Tangtang's cannon, the whole script had gone off-rails, completely deviating from their plan.

It looked like both sides had suffered heavy losses.

But upon closer inspection, while the other team had two members who had lost their combat effectiveness, not a single one of them had actually died. Meanwhile, they had already lost two.

"How are we supposed to chase them? So we can lose another one?!" Zhang Yuelun was starting to get angry too.

"So what if we lose one more? If we don't chase, we'll definitely lose! Don't forget, Gao Neng has Spiritual Power! If he decides to hide, we'll never be able to find him!" Li Ling was so angry he was practically hopping mad. "This Earth Dragon can burrow underground. If it's determined to stall us, we won't be able to get rid of it quickly."

"We have to send one person!"

"I'll go after them. You hold off the Earth Dragon!" Zhang Yuelun gritted his teeth and finally made a decision. He was a Tier Three Late Stage fighter; at this point, he had no choice but to go all out.

"Alright!" Li Ling slammed a palm at the Earth Dragon.

The Earth Dragon burrowed into the ground.

Zhang Yuelun took the opportunity to dash past it, speeding forward. At the same time, a huge Alloy Bow appeared in his hands.

SWOOSH!

An arrow shot out,

aimed straight for Kong Kun's rapidly disappearing back.

BOOM!

Kong Kun dodged the arrow.

A half-meter deep crater appeared in the ground, and a scorching heat emanated from within it, as if the very earth and rock had been set ablaze.

"Wow, is that Zhang Yuelun's combat technique: Blast Flame Arrow?" Gao Neng exclaimed as if he'd discovered a new continent, then continued to sprint madly.

But with both of them carrying someone on their backs, this cat-and-mouse pace didn't last for long.

In no time at all, Gao Neng and Kong Kun were caught.

And right in front of them was another crater blasted by an arrow, with flames still burning inside. As the arrow landed, Zhang Yuelun descended from the sky like a Celestial God.

"A ranged attacker... are you sure you can stop the two of us?" Gao Neng stopped running and gently set Fang Tangtang down.

"You've left me no choice!" Zhang Yuelun gritted his teeth.

"Classmate Fang Tangtang, you've eaten so many Energy Pills. Can you run on your own now?" Gao Neng nodded slightly, then glanced at Fang Tangtang.

"Of course... I can!" Fang Tangtang pouted. She could indeed only fire one shot, but that didn't mean she couldn't walk.

"Kong Kun, take Fang Tangtang and Feng Qingqing and go."

"Okay!"

"You want to fight me alone?!" Watching Kong Kun quickly escape with Fang Tangtang and Feng Qingqing, Zhang Yuelun was once again stunned for a moment.

## **Chapter 159 - 152: Release: A New Mission (Super Divine Artifact)**

'This makes no sense!'

Zhang Yuelun truly couldn't figure out what on earth Gao Neng was thinking.

"Don't thank me. I'm just teaching you a lesson." A smirk played on Gao Neng's lips, and an Alloy Machete appeared in his hand.

"You're either overconfident or just plain stupid!" Zhang Yuelun said before retreating, quickly putting distance between himself and Gao Neng.

He wasted no more words.

He nocked an arrow to his Alloy Bow and instantly drew it to its full extent.

"Don't waste your energy. You can't hit me." Gao Neng stood tall, chest puffed out.

"Arrogant bastard!" Zhang Yuelun cursed as he released the arrow.

WHOOSH!

It flew straight for Gao Neng's throat.

Gao Neng tilted his body slightly, and the arrow flew past his ear.

"BOOM!"

The arrow exploded against a tree.

"You used your Spiritual Power to lock onto the arrow?" Zhang Yuelun's expression changed slightly. They were less than twenty paces apart—not too far, but not exactly close either.

"Yep. My Spiritual Power is fully developed. Within a hundred-meter radius, nothing can escape my lock. Your arrows can't hit me, your blade can't cut me, and your fists can't land on me. Simply put, you just can't hit me." Gao Neng nodded.

"Fuck that! I don't fucking believe you!" Of course, Zhang Yuelun didn't believe him.

"If you don't believe me, try shooting a few more arrows. It's your energy you'll be wasting, anyway." Gao Neng looked completely unfazed.

"You think all I can do is fight from a distance?"

"Hmm... Besides long-range attacks, you're also good at running your mouth."

"I'll kill you!" Zhang Yuelun roared in anger.

He was Gao Neng's senior, after all. A Tier Three Late Stage expert, just one step away from Tier Four. And now he was being looked down on by Gao Neng?

Zhang Yuelun wasted no more time on words.

His Alloy Bow folded, surprisingly transforming into an alloy staff.

"VMMMM!"

Energy surged from it.

Zhang Yuelun lunged forward.

Gao Neng dodged.

He dodged again.

And again...

He dodged for a full ten exchanges.

He hadn't swung his machete once.

But neither had Zhang Yuelun's staff hit him.

"I told you you can't hit me. Stop wasting your energy and just give up. Two of your teammates are dead, and as their captain, you bear a great deal of responsibility."

"Cut the crap!"

"First of all, your leadership is flawed. You had the advantage, yet you insisted on being defensive. You might think you were being cautious, but that's not it. It's just because you lack confidence. You were intimidated by my impressive track record, and deep down, you felt you might actually lose..." Gao Neng ignored Zhang Yuelun's shouts and continued.

"Shut up!"

"Your insecurity drove you to win by any means necessary. You abandoned your teammates. They were supposed to be your most loyal partners, yet you cast them aside right before a crucial battle to recruit new members on the fly. If you were one of the original members of the Moon Wheel Team, how would you feel?"

"Nonsense! It was for the honor of the upperclassmen!"

"'Honor' is just a high-and-mighty excuse. Don't you trust them? They're your partners. Why don't you trust them? Because you think they're not strong enough? Is that why you found some Tier Three Mid Stage teammates and kicked your old ones out of the Moon Wheel Team?"

"Gao Neng, will you ever shut up? You're trying to provoke me... but it won't work!" Zhang Yuelun's chest felt tight. Every word from Gao Neng was like a knife twisting in his heart.

"On the battlefield, it's not raw power that matters, but teamwork—perfect, unspoken coordination. How long were your original teammates with you? They're the ones who know you best, yet you didn't trust their strength. Zhang Yuelun, you're pathetic. You're nothing but a coward!"

"ARGH... I'm not!"

'Now's my chance!' At that moment, Gao Neng's eyes flashed.

He saw Zhang Yuelun execute a horizontal sweep with his staff.

He pushed off his feet and leaped high into the air.

"Half-Step Kill!"

Gao Neng's strike was incredibly sudden.

Combined with the extremely short wind-up time for the Half-Step Kill, Zhang Yuelun had no time to pull his staff back to block after Gao Neng leaped and chopped down.

"BOOM!"

A gash was torn open on Zhang Yuelun's shoulder.

It stretched from his shoulder all the way to his chest.

"Argh... Gao Neng, you coward!" Zhang Yuelun roared, sweeping his alloy staff again, trying to force back the advancing Gao Neng.

But Gao Neng's second slash was already on its way.

Half-Step Continuous Kill!

He saw that this slash was aimed at the same spot—from shoulder to chest.

Zhang Yuelun had no choice but to pull his staff back to defend.

"CLANG!"

Zhang Yuelun stood his ground, unmoving.

Gao Neng, however, was knocked back half a step by the impact.

However, the instant he was pushed back, Gao Neng forced another slash.

"Half-Step Triple Kill!"

"BOOM!"

Zhang Yuelun was finally knocked back a step.

"Four Kills in a Row!"

"Five Kills in a Row!"

"Six Kills in a Row!"

Gao Neng pressed forward relentlessly, unleashing slash after slash as if his energy was limitless.

Zhang Yuelun's face, meanwhile, was gradually growing pale.

He had let his anger get the better of him, allowing Gao Neng to land that first blow on his shoulder. Now, after several more strikes, the wound had burst open.

Just then...

Gao Neng's Seven-Blade Slash arrived.

"You can't touch me!" Zhang Yuelun roared, hoisting his alloy staff to his shoulder to block again.

But just then, the unexpected happened.

As Zhang Yuelun focused all his strength on fighting Gao Neng, a figure suddenly shot out from behind him and clamped a hand around his throat.

"Ngh?!" Zhang Yuelun was shocked.

'A sneak attack!'

'Who's ambushing me?!'

'Didn't Kong Kun already run away?'

Zhang Yuelun tried to break free, but Gao Neng's machete was already coming down.

## **Chapter 160 - 152: Announcement: A New Mission**

BOOM!

The slash descended from Zhang Yuelun's shoulder like a crescent moon, severing one of his arms. Blood gushed out like a fountain.

"Argh! Why? Didn't you say we were fighting one-on-one?!" Zhang Yuelun's eyes went bloodshot. He knew exactly who had ambushed him from behind.

Kong Kun!

It was Kong Kun who had suddenly grabbed him from behind.

Otherwise, there was no way he would have been so grievously wounded.

"Did I say that? I just told Kong Kun to get Fang Tangtang and the others out of here. I never said anything about fighting you one-on-one." Gao Neng looked completely innocent. He really hadn't.

Zhang Yuelun had misunderstood.

Besides, he wasn't an idiot. A Tier Two Mid Stage fighter going one-on-one against a Tier Three Late Stage? His odds of winning were 40 percent at best.

Most importantly, a fight like that would be incredibly costly.

"You're shameless! Despicable!" Zhang Yuelun seethed.

But it didn't matter whether he accepted it or not, because Gao Neng's Eighth Slash was already descending. The blade struck Zhang Yuelun on the neck.

BOOM!

The force of the blow sent Zhang Yuelun sprawling to the ground.

His battle armor encased his entire body, and the neck was specially reinforced, so Gao Neng's slash didn't cut through.

Still, the blow made it difficult for him to breathe.

And then...

He saw a dazzling, golden Scythe of Death.

"Take this! Thirteen Death God Slash!"

"..."

"Fang Tangtang, don't kill him! Leave some for me, I haven't even had a turn yet!" Kong Kun yelled frantically, leaping forward and desperately pummeling the stump where Zhang Yuelun's arm had been.

"Argh! You shameless bastards!" Beaten into excruciating pain, Zhang Yuelun couldn't hold on for long. Soon, he vanished like smoke.

...

In the viewing hall.

Whether they were new or returning students, everyone was speechless for a long time.

In this duel, the Moon Wheel Team should have been stronger than the Invincible Team on paper. The reality, however, was that the Invincible Team had a massive advantage.

One could even say they completely dominated the battlefield.

Zero deaths, three kills!

That was the record they had witnessed.

Although the challenge match wasn't officially over, the Moon Wheel Team was down to just Li Ling. The outcome was already a foregone conclusion.

How could this be?

None of the students, new or old, understood what had happened. They just had the feeling that the Moon Wheel Team had been led around by the nose the entire time.

"It seems they really are going to be sent to the battlefield." Lin Ying glanced over at Gui Zian and Song Tianyun in the distance, a thoughtful expression on her face.

"..." Qiao Yaqiu remained silent.

Chen Qing and Han Yuping looked at Lin Ying in surprise, but they quickly realized her judgment was probably correct.

Because Song Tianyun had already stood up.

As the Headmaster of the Eastern Capital Military Academy, Song Tianyun rarely spoke at such informal gatherings. This time, however, he went straight to the stage.

And not just Song Tianyun.

Gui Zian, Wang Qixing, Shen Fei, and the old vice-chancellor from the Research Academy all stood up and followed Song Tianyun onto the stage.

The challenge match wasn't over.

And yet, the image on the screen had gone dark.

Then, row after row of numbers appeared on the screen...

Alliance Calendar, Year 056: Total Human Population - 4.57 billion.

Alliance Calendar, Year 057...

...

Alliance Calendar, Year 076: Total Human Population - 1.53 billion.

Alliance Calendar, Year 077: Total Human Population - 1.28 billion.

Alliance Calendar, Year 078: Total Human Population - 610 million...

...

The numbers were simple.

But every student in the viewing hall fell silent.

These were numbers written in blood.

"In two more years, how many humans will be left?" Song Tianyun began, his eyes growing moist as he gazed down at the students.

"Today's battle, the one fought by Gao Neng and his team, might have seemed unsettling to some of you. That's because it wasn't a normal, head-on fight."

"How is a 'normal' battle supposed to be fought? You go all-out, you risk everything... because in the training rooms, no one really dies. All that matters is winning!"

"I imagine many of you think that way. But why did they fight like they did? I think you're starting to understand... Yes. A Tier Two against a Tier Three. That was never a normal fight. All they wanted was one thing: for the entire team to survive!"

"And that is all I ask of you, as well. When you truly step onto the battlefield, I want you to be like Gao Neng and his team today... and survive."

"The Military Department's reforms have already begun!"

"Previously, the academy's rule was that you could not go to the battlefield before reaching Tier Four. This was to keep the casualty rate down. Now, that rule has changed. You still cannot go to the battlefield \*alone\* before Tier Four. However, if you are in a four-person squad under the leadership of an instructor, you can!"

...

Song Tianyun said a great deal more.

By the time Gao Neng and his team emerged from the training room, they had also made their way to the viewing hall.

However, Gao Neng hadn't heard Song Tianyun's speech. By the time he arrived, Wang Qixing had already finished his part, and Gui Zian was the one speaking on stage.

Gui Zian was reading from a list.

It was mostly filled with teams from the B-List and C-List of the battle rankings.

As for the teams on the D-List...

There was only one.

The Invincible Team!

The very last one on the list.

"We're going to the battlefield!" Fang Tangtang was beside herself with excitement.

"So soon? I'm not ready for this..." It wasn't that Gao Neng had never considered going to the battlefield one day, but he certainly hadn't expected to go right now.

'Isn't this a bit too rushed?'

No one answered Gao Neng's question.