

Elite Mages' Academy

Chapter 6: Zombie King

[Optional Mission 1: Kill Five Zombies. Progress Rate: 1/5]

After stealing the kill for the first zombie, Xiao Lin smiled apologetically at the unlucky person beside him before turning his target to other people.

Xiao Lin could feel an obvious loss of strength after using the Slashing skill. The muscles in his arms were also slightly sore. He only had 3 Physique points. It was just like what the Smart Computer had warned him about; if he used the skill one more time, he might not even have the strength to wield the dagger.

Xiao Lin chose to wait silently instead, but he did not waste time. He began observing his next target; he judged the person's true attack power based on how many strikes were needed to kill a zombie. He could not afford to waste the Slashing skill when he could only use it once in a minute.

After resting for a minute, Xiao Lin's soreness gradually disappeared. As the person next to him raised a sword to slash the zombie, Xiao Lin lifted his dagger and gathered his strength for a short moment. After the person's third strike, Xiao Lin's Slashing skill followed; the blow struck the zombie's head and knocked it down to the ground.

[Progress Rate: 2/5]

"Sorry, sorry!" Xiao Lin continued staying low-key and apologized.

The person who had his kill stolen was annoyed, but like Xiao Lin's previous victim, he did not care much for it. He just blamed it on his own luck.

The situation seemed to be smooth-sailing. The team of over a dozen people was on a roll. Reaping zombies seemed as easy as cutting vegetables to them. Although some of them were accidentally scratched, the zombies were not that strong. They endured the pain, bandaged their injuries hastily, and continued fighting.

Xiao Lin maintained his method consistently and quietly completed the mission after five minutes. About half of the team had completed the mission by this time.

The Zombie King had yet to show up, but it did not matter; everyone was confident about completing the mission. Xiao Lin did not stop attacking even after completing the mission, as he realized that he earned 4 Basic Dagger Mastery EXP and 4 Slashing EXP every time he used the Slashing skill.

[Basic Dagger Mastery LV2: 20/500]

[Slashing LV1: 20/100]

Xiao Lin possessed the passive effect of Academic Genius' two-fold upgrading efficiency; this meant that every time he used the skill, he would be given 2 EXP. It looked like using the skill was more efficient than relying on a normal attack.

However, the fish that nibbled at every bait would eventually be caught. After nearly everyone had their kills stolen once by Xiao Lin, some of them began to get suspicious.

"Eh? How did you steal my kill again?"

"Again? He stole your kill as well?" The complaints echoed by many people at once. Soon after that, everyone became suspicious about what was going on. Those who had played games knew that 'killsteal' was a technical term. To do so, one had to have enough attack power; meticulous calculation and observation were secondary.

"I have 7 Strength points, it's at least twice of what this guy has, but even I had my kills stolen. Twice."

"That's nothing, I have 11 Strength points, and I had one kill stolen!"

"Is he doing it on purpose? How could he be so lucky!"

...

The more Wang Dalin listened in on the chatter, the angrier he became; he had the urge to charge toward Xiao Lin with his sword. Other people had two kills stolen at most; Xiao Lin was vigilant about not pissing everyone off. However, Wang Dalin had four kills stolen; as a result, he still needed another kill to complete the optional mission.

It was hard to continue his plan after coming under fire for it. Xiao Lin smiled apologetically in the face of everyone's suspicion and decided to stop what he was doing. He looked at his EXP bar in regret; he was already at 80 EXP.

Truth be told, everyone was more curious than anything about how Xiao Lin, who had less than 10 total attribute points, managed to steal their kills so precisely and consistently. However, Xiao Lin did not plan on explaining anything.

Apart from Wang Dalin, everyone else had completed the optional mission. 20 minutes had passed as well, and there were only 10 minutes left to the mission's deadline. There were still plenty of zombies on the field moving toward the group slowly, and everyone was obviously exhausted as well.

As ordinary people, they reached the limit of their physical strength. Their strength while swinging their weapons was declining as well; this led to the direct consequence of an increase in casualties. Several people were scratched by zombies in a matter of minutes; one of them had a large chunk of flesh torn off directly from their chest cavity. A simple bandage could not stop the bleeding completely.

At the moment, the person's face was as pale as paper. Using his sword as a crutch to barely support his body, he panted, "Let's go! Time is running out!"

Everyone agreed. The Zombie King had yet to appear; even if it did, they felt that it was difficult to win with their current state. They preferred to keep the rewards at hand.

Xiao Lin hesitated a little as he glanced at a straight-faced Gu Xiaoyue. Apart from the first five energy bombs, the girl had been resting; Xiao Lin believed that she was not tired at all. However, was she really going to wait for the Zombie King? He stared at the girl with a confused gaze.

“F*ck it! You should wait until I complete the mission at least, I still need one more kill!” Wang Dalin was angry; he needed one more kill to complete the mission as he was Xiao Lin’s main target for killsteals.

Everyone ignored him; for one, they did not like his arrogance, and secondly, everyone else was tired. They wanted to conserve their energy to rush to the safe area. There was still quite a distance between the safe area and where they were.

“Hmph, I’m a man, with 32 attribute points! I don’t need you!” Wang Dalin said, glaring at the troublemaker — Xiao Lin. He only walked toward a zombie nearest to him after making sure that Xiao Lin was not following him; he had a little PTSD from Xiao Lin stealing his kills.

Gu Xiaoyue was still holding back, and Xiao Lin did not plan on waiting for her. Since his Slashing skill could only be used once every minute, he was destined to follow behind others before getting to use his skill. He waved to the girl and said, “Alright, I’m going back.”

Although Wang Dalin had been showing off, he did have the capabilities; his physique was obviously better than everyone else’s. He still had the energy to draw his sword before killing the zombie nearest to him swiftly.

Right after that, the Smart Computer’s voice rang in everyone’s minds.

[The number of zombies has been reduced by one third. The condition has been met. Activating the Zombie King.]

“Really?” Xiao Lin was mildly surprised. They guessed it right; the Zombie King would only be activated after enough zombies were killed. However, no one expected that the zombie Wang Dalin killed would trigger this mechanism.

The field tremored violently as if there was an earthquake. Even the Academic Building, which was assumed to be an absolutely safe area, was affected. Cracks of varying sizes began appearing on the old walls, and the building collapsed slowly. The over 20 people who had been staying inside were forced to escape the building.

The remaining zombies on the field lost their ability to move and fell onto the ground. The dozen people, who were about to arrive at the safe area, witnessed what happened and grew excited. Everyone turned back after hesitating briefly, while the person who was seriously injured insisted on moving toward the safe area.

They were still exhausted, but they felt that it was a good opportunity given that the remaining zombies on the field had all disappeared. This meant that their next opponent was only one Zombie King. Combat had given them full confidence; they felt that no matter how strong the Zombie King was, it was possible for them to kill it with their numbers.

Completing the compulsory mission provided 10 credits and 100 redemption points; completing Optional Mission 1 provided 10 extra credits and 200 redemption points; meanwhile, completing Optional Mission 2 provided 20 extra credits and 500 redemption points. The reward of a zombie king was bigger than the other two missions combined; it was pretty tempting to the team.

However, Xiao Lin's expression darkened. With the Academic Building's collapse, the 20 people who were hiding in there were now forced to join the fight. There were now more than 30 of them, but there was only one opponent.

30 VS 1!

Although they looked like they had strength in numbers, this also meant that the mission assumed the Zombie King was as strong as all of them combined. No, the Zombie King could be stronger than that!

A big crack appeared in the middle of the field before a rotten arm thrust from the ground. The final target of the mission — the Zombie King — finally showed itself.

The Zombie King was about twice as tall as a normal one, and there were more rotten pieces of meat and dark red accumulated all over its body. The hanging flesh stuck together, making the Zombie King look extremely lean. Its blood-shot eyes looked around before locking its gaze on Wang Dalin.

Wang Dalin was nearest to where the Zombie King was — there were merely two meters between them. He picked up his sword and charged toward the Zombie King to slash at its right leg. He aimed to make this thing lose its ability to move.

Bang!

Xiao Lin heard the sound of a metallic collision from not far away. He frowned and took a few steps back subconsciously. He sensed that the Zombie King might be harder to beat than he imagined.

Wang Dalin's strike was on target, but his sword was not even an inch deep into the Zombie King's calf. It was as if his sword had connected with a metal beam; it was impossible for his sword to go deeper.

The Zombie King waved its arm suddenly and smacked Wang Dalin seven or eight meters away. Wang Dalin got up fast, but his face was smashed. He wobbled a few steps, mumbled something as blood bubbled from his mouth, and fell backward. Although he had only passed out, he was not waking up anytime soon.

Everyone who was about to charge toward the Zombie King stopped in their tracks; the Zombie King's attack power was higher than they expected. They could not help but hesitate with their decision, but the Zombie King did not give them much time to think. After a low growl, the Zombie King rushed toward the dozen people nearest to him.

They were the 10 who turned back from the safe area. After seeing the Zombie King making them its first targets, they froze. A scream could be heard nearby. "Stop daydreaming! The Zombie King should be on a random attack mechanism; it'll make the nearest person its first target!"

Xiao Lin had warned them, but they realized something was off; if the Zombie King attacked anything nearest to it, Xiao Lin would be second after Wang Dalin.

As they looked closer, they realized Xiao Lin had quietly retreated to a further location. They were now nearest to the Zombie King.

One other difference the Zombie King had from the ordinary zombies was that it would chase the crowd, and its speed was not inferior to theirs. In other words, even if they turned around and ran toward the safe area right now, the Zombie King was likely to catch up.

They had no choice but to bite the bullet. They got in formation to face the Zombie King.

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Chapter 7: Replicate

Xiao Lin had already realized that something was wrong the moment the Zombie King appeared. Since his attribute points were low, he was not going to seek death as Wang Dalin did. Instead, he immediately chose to retreat to a place far away. As there were no other zombies on the field, there was more space to move about.

His instinct was to save himself. The moment the Zombie King made the ten who turned back its target, Xiao Lin guessed its attack priority. If he did not leave in time, he might not be able to make it out alive.

Xiao Lin's plan was simple: he wanted to wait it out and see if he could get another killsteal. If that was hopeless, his location could get him to the safe area in time and complete the test.

Whoosh!

A white energy bomb drew an arc in the sky. Gu Xiaoyue, who had been silent for some time, wielded her wand again. However, the Zombie King was a lot faster than ordinary zombies; the girl's hit rate was greatly affected. This time, the energy bomb merely scraped the Zombie King's right arm before a mild explosion occurred.

Nevertheless, a large piece of rotten flesh from the Zombie King's right arm was blasted by the powerful magic. The Zombie King let out an angry roar and continued running toward its targets.

Xiao Lin lifted his brow. He did not feel as hopeless in the face of the Zombie King's defense as he expected. At the very least, the energy bomb was capable of causing decent damage.

Xiao Lin turned around and looked at Gu Xiaoyue. The girl was frowning and pursing her lips; she was obviously dissatisfied with the strike. She seemed like she was aiming for the Zombie King's head.

‘Looks like this girl isn’t so much of an all-rounder after all!’ Xiao Lin could not help but think to himself.

Soon after that, the battle began.

The ten who turned back spread themselves out and circled the Zombie King. They were wielding their respective weapons to either slash or shoot at the Zombie King, but the results were disappointing; their F- grade attack power made it hard to pierce through the Zombie King’s layers of muscle. On top of that, they were already exhausted before this; despite hitting with all their might, they only managed to leave a few light scratches on its dark red flesh.

In comparison, the Zombie King’s attack power was terrifying. Its attack method was monotonous; it only swung its arms around to grab things with its sharp green fingers. If one was grabbed twice in a row, the person would be reduced to mush, regardless of their Strength points.

Three out of the 10 disappeared within just a minute, and that was due to the Zombie King’s low attack frequency. Moreover, Gu Xiaoyue would emit an energy bomb from time to time to back the team up and slow down the Zombie King’s movements. If not for these factors, the entire team would be wiped out.

“No, I can’t beat it at all!”

“Run!”

The remaining seven had varying degrees of injuries. A casual grab from the Zombie King would leave them with terrifying wounds; as a result, their physical energy loss was accelerated due to the unceasing blood flow. They had no spirit to fight and eventually gave up on doing so. They turned around and ran, choosing to spread out into different routes. Even if the Zombie King ran faster than them, most of them would be lucky enough to reach the safe area. As for who would be the unlucky one, no one really considered at the moment.

Xiao Lin had been observing from a distance for some time; he admitted that the Zombie King’s attacks made him hesitate. Even with Gu Xiaoyue’s lethality, he had yet to come up with a good idea to face the Zombie King. The seven people who decided to retreat were right to do so; it was meaningless to continue fighting it. However, a weird expression appeared on his face suddenly as he yelled, “Be careful!”

The Zombie King stood in place suddenly, clenched its fists, and punched the ground. About one or two seconds later, the seven people who had just spread out wobbled and fell to the ground. They tried their best to get up, but they were dazed; it was as if they were drunk and powerless.

The Zombie King growled and leaped. The first unlucky person nearest to it was stomped on. He did not even get to cry before turning into dust and disappearing. After that, the Zombie King used its hands to shoot at two other people; their chests were pierced through, and they died an ugly death.

In a mere few seconds, all seven of them died.

Gu Xiaoyue pursed her lips; her usually calm expression switched into a worried look in a rare sight. She had a plan where she would let everyone else deal with the Zombie King. It did not

matter if she could cause effective damage; as long as she made sure that she emitted the energy bomb from a safe location, she was confident about her attack. However, apart from this, Gu Xiaoyue was clear that she was useless at doing anything else.

The Zombie King's next target was Gu Xiaoyue. Other than those who had just been killed, the girl was closest to the creature. Gu Xiaoyue was forced to store her wand and get ready to run for it. This was what she was most afraid of; she knew how terrible her physique was. It was impossible for her to beat the Zombie King in a chase.

"Are you stupid? Stop running to the exit, run for the Academic Building!" Xiao Lin's voice came at the right time.

The Academic Building?

Gu Xiaoyue followed Xiao Lin's finger and understood what he meant. The Academic Building collapsed, so the two dozen people who had been staying there out of fear were standing near the ruins. They did not dare attack the Zombie King, nor did they dare to rush through the field.

These people were less than 10 meters away from Gu Xiaoyue. She charged toward them without hesitation. Although she was weak, she was still over 20 meters ahead of the Zombie King.

Xiao Lin ran for the Academic Building as well. The two dozen people near the ruins were mostly girls. Although they felt a little guilty for staying there, they were relieved by the fact that there was no punishment for death here.

Xiao Lin could tell that, apart from Intelligence, Gu Xiaoyue's Strength, Agility, and Physique were bad. She needed a token human shield to deflect the Zombie King's rage.

The Zombie King was a lot faster than Gu Xiaoyue, but just as she was about to be caught up with, she managed to run past the girls next to the ruins without looking back.

Based on the target priority mechanism, The Zombie King's pupils flashed red before switching his targets. The terrified girls were nearly defenseless; some of them passed out from extreme fear. They could only be killed mercilessly.

Although Gu Xiaoyue got herself a decent distance away from the Zombie King, she was not rushing to attack; she was so tired from the short distance sprint that it seemed a little over-exaggerated. Apart from dripping with sweat, she clutched to her chest with her left hand, and a hint of pain flashed through her expression.

"Your Physique is quite bad;" Xiao Lin wanted to comment that she was worse than him, but he realized that he only had 3 Physique points himself. If her points turned out to be higher than his, things would be awkward...

Gu Xiaoyue shook her head to calm herself down. She pushed her spectacles and her face was still blushing from the run. However, she managed to speak in a calm voice, "You didn't take the chance to head to the safe area?"

The girl was not being sarcastic at all; she was just curious that Xiao Lin chose to turn back for her.

Xiao Lin shrugged and said with a laugh, “It’s because we can win. Of course, I’ll stay behind to share the prize. Although the mission didn’t mention if the reward for killing the Zombie King could be divided, I think as long as there’s enough participation in trying to kill a Boss of this level, there should be some form of reward.”

“Where do you get your confidence from?” Gu Xiaoyue asked with suspicion as she raised her wand, aiming it at the Zombie King. However, she frowned soon after that, putting her wand down again.

The girls who were running everywhere made the Zombie King’s movements hard to predict; it caused an even bigger problem for Gu Xiaoyue’s declining hit rate. Moreover, she was still panting slightly; it affected her precision.

Xiao Lin thought to himself and asked, “How many more times do you think you can use the energy bombs?”

“Probably five to seven times. I’m still a little unstable, I’m not completely sure about it.” It seemed like Gu Xiaoyue had already thought about this question; she answered him without hesitation.

Xiao Lin was left speechless. How high was this girl’s Intelligence? She had already fired the energy bombs many times in combat before this. “It will probably take the Zombie King a few more minutes to kill those people. Don’t strike now; rest. If this is the case, how many more times can you do it?”

“I can definitely use seven then. However, you should be able to tell that my Physique is bad.” Gu Xiaoyue looked at him and continued, “Moreover, my energy bomb’s hit rate is nearly nil while running.”

In other words, when the Zombie King switched to target them, they would not be able to run or defeat it. Their mission would definitely fail.

Xiao Lin was confident this time. “If that was the case, I wouldn’t have come over just now. Alright, listen to me. I’ll try my best to stall the Zombie King. I can’t guarantee that it’ll work, but I’ll try. When I do, try your best to hit it. Based on what happened just now, the Zombie King’s magic defense isn’t high. With your crazy Intelligence level, it’s definitely possible for both of us to finish this brat. Hey, what’s that look you’re giving me...”

The girl’s gaze was filled with disbelief under her black-framed spectacles; she could not believe that someone with under 10 attribute points could stall the Zombie King. She tilted her head and asked, “What’s the success rate? Otherwise, I’d rather give up this optional mission!”

Most of the two dozen girls were dead by now. If they retreated to the safe area right now, they could still complete the compulsory mission. If they waited till the Zombie King switched its focus to them, they would not have a backup plan at all.

“50%. No, 70 or 80%!”

Gu Xiaoyue stared at Xiao Lin for ten full seconds before nodding cautiously. “Fine, but if things go wrong, I’m leaving myself.”

“So brutally honest. We’re teammates, aren’t we?” Xiao Lin teased. He did not get a reply.

Xiao Lin was nervous. His last-minute plan needed Gu Xiaoyue to kill the Zombie King. Her terrifying magical lethality was necessary. She was a logical and calculative girl; if things went right, Gu Xiaoyue would probably not ditch him and run.

If Xiao Lin’s plan failed, there would be no difference whether Gu Xiaoyue decided to leave or not. He would definitely be killed; it was impossible for someone with under 10 attribute points to fight the Zombie King one-on-one.

It was time for the Academic Genius talent.

In a passive state, the Academic Genius talent could increase Xiao Lin’s learning efficiency two-fold. If he decided to start it up, Xiao Lin would gain a chance to replicate a skill; he could replicate any F grade skills that was not a talent!

That was Xiao Lin’s final secret weapon!

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Chapter 8: Shockwave

When the Zombie King knocked the group of people to the ground earlier, Xiao Lin was reminded of the Zombie King’s Shockwave skill. It dealt weak shock damage to targets within a three-meter radius and was able to inflict a brief stun. Most importantly, it was a Level F skill, which was within his scope of replication.

[Academic Genius skill activated; target of replication: Zombie King; skill: shock wave; skill level, F; replication, successful!]

“Three minutes! We only have three minutes!” Xiao Lin summed up. “Remember to aim at its vital point: the head!”

He did not explain his reasoning and rushed up with his dagger.

Of the girls who were still hesitating near the school building, only four were still alive at that moment, but that number immediately went down to three. The Zombie King chased down another girl, and its huge arm split the girl’s stomach open, leaving a big hole. Various organs and flesh were strewn all over the place.

Despite being well aware that everything was fake—that he would not actually die nor lose his life—Xiao Lin still felt a little sick witnessing everything up close. Fortunately, the girl’s body soon disappeared.

Xiao Lin’s appearance allowed the Zombie King to immediately set its sights on him. Its meter-long arm swept from left to right with a considerably wide attack range of attack. Xiao Lin had already

consciously distanced himself, but the fact that this was the first time he had ever faced such a situation still remained. Slightly nervous, he misjudged his distance and found the dark red arm sweeping toward him like two steel pipes.

Xiao Lin's instinct was to raise his dagger and protect his chest. The next second, he felt as though he had struck an iron wall. The walloping force sent him flying three or four meters back before falling to the ground. He struggled hard to get up. Their power differentials were wider than expected, and a head-on fight would only result in his death.

Blood bubbled in Xiao Lin's chest and he spat out several mouthfuls of the scarlet fluid. As he looked up, he noticed that the Zombie King was raising its arms high instead of chasing after him. He had observed that same action several times already and was very familiar with it. Xiao Lin ignored the blood at the corners of his mouth and raised his dagger at almost the same time.

Shockwave!

In fact, Xiao Lin had some thought as to how to use the skills he replicated. The moment his mind thought of how to release those skills, his arms lifted up on their own, as if he was being manipulated like a puppet. It was different from executing his Slashing skill since it was a skill that he learned and there were clear instructions to use it.

The Zombie King's Shockwave used both hands, while Xiao Lin's replicated Shockwave was triggered by the blade of the dagger hitting the ground.

The process did not matter; the results were the most important.

Since the appearance of the Zombie King, Xiao Lin has been observing it almost without blinking, so he has mastered many details. For example, every time the Zombie King used Shockwave, it would stand still before raising its hands. The process of releasing that skill took about one to two seconds, and its range was three to four meters.

Xiao Lin happened to be on the border of that range. He was in a prime position to turn around and escape, but doing so would be meaningless. In terms of power and speed, he was no match for the Zombie King.

Since it was a skill, it could surely be thwarted! Crucially, the height difference meant that Xiao Lin had to execute his Shockwave faster than the Zombie King!

Boom!

The dagger touched the ground, only half a second faster than the Zombie King. An invisible wave rippled out in an instant, and the ground vibrated for a brief moment. Judging from the magnitude of the vibration, the force was not as powerful as the Zombie King's, but it did not matter to him. Xiao Lin did not count on it being lethal. All he hoped was that it took effect!

Although the shock was short-lived, it successfully played its role of being an interference. The Zombie King's body shuddered for a while before it fell over, and it was unable to release its own Shockwave as everyone anticipated.

“Awesome!” Xiao Lin pumped his fist excitedly, though the plan did not guarantee absolute success. The Zombie King might have had mechanisms that made it immune to such attacks, or that Xiao Lin’s own execution of the technique was not as fast as the Zombie King’s. Fortunately, there was none of that. After all, it was an admissions test for freshmen, so although the Zombie King was very strong, its power was not imbalanced.

“Hurry! Attack its head!” Xiao Lin shouted back.

Gu Xiaoyue did not need his reminder. She blasted her energy bombs almost immediately. When it came to stationary targets, her hit rate was at least 80%, if not 100%.

Two consecutive white energy bombs sailed in a graceful arc and connected precisely with the Zombie King’s head. Successive explosions blew up the Zombie King’s right ear, causing it to roar mutedly.

“Awesome! This is going great!” Xiao Lin keenly noticed a green viscous substance flowing from the Zombie King’s head. Whatever it was, the earlier attack had caused it a lot of damage.

The Shockwave’s short-lived stun effect ended and the Zombie King stood up again. It seemed to have increased its speed a notch, but it no longer targeted Xiao Lin. Instead, it went after the other three surviving girls.

Xiao Lin did not just remain idle. He took the opportunity to keep his distance and made it a point to not be too close to it. He admitted that it was very mean of him to use other people to buy time, but there was really no better plan than that. The Shockwave was also impossible to use in quick succession, and if the recharge duration was the same as that of the Zombie King, it would take at least 30 seconds before it could be used again.

“What do you think? Can you strike its head now?” Xiao Lin asked.

Gu Xiaoyue pushed up the frame of her glasses, then hesitated and shook her head. “It seems to be speeding up again. There’s no guarantee that I can hit the target.”

Xiao Lin let out a sigh. It was to be expected. Compared to a slower, ordinary zombie, the quicker Zombie King would definitely be more difficult to target.

“You. How did you do that just now?” Gu Xiaoyue asked with a rare look of confusion on her face.

With all her cold stoicism, Xiao Lin found it surprisingly refreshing to see such a confused expression on her face. He kept quiet though, and after estimating that the time was almost up, he raised his dagger again and rushed forward. The raging Zombie King had just killed a girl who was frantically running away, so its focus once again shifted to Xiao Lin.

Following a set pattern, Xiao Lin and the Zombie King executed a Shockwave at almost the same time. However, Xiao Lin was one step ahead and managed to intercept the Zombie King’s attack yet again. The stun effect the Shockwave produced caused the Zombie King to fall heavily to the ground.

Then, without Xiao Lin’s order, Gu Xiaoyue shot out her energy bombs at exactly the same time. Since she had time to prepare, she released three energy bombs in a row, all aimed toward the

zombie lying still on the ground. The energy bombs struck just like before, hitting the Zombie King's forehead, eyes, and nose.

After the smoke and dust of the explosion cleared, Xiao Lin was pleasantly surprised to find that half of the Zombie King's face had been blasted off by the explosion. In particular, the bloody red glow in its entire right eyeball had completely extinguished, and half of its vision was lost. It was good news for the two of them.

To their surprise, however, the Zombie King was extremely tenacious. Gu Xiaoyue's combination of extraordinary intelligence and lethal magical skills could kill ordinary zombies in one shot, but the Zombie King still stood strong despite five energy bombs to the head. In addition, it survived the sum of all the slashes that were inflicted upon it, both large and small.

The Zombie King's strength was spent. Its speed had dropped drastically after getting up and its body swayed; it looked like it could fall at any time.

However, Xiao Lin's situation was not that good either. Although he could execute the Shockwave technique that he replicated, it was a physical damage technique that consumed his physical strength too. As a slacker with only three points in his physique, two consecutive uses of the technique made Xiao Lin feel as though his body was about to fall apart. He felt like he had just finished a marathon.

Looking back at Gu Xiaoyue, the girl's face was as pale as paper. She continued to use her energy bombs, but her mental energy was nearly drained. Xiao Lin had experienced that feeling before. Losing mental faculties and with nausea spreading throughout her entire being, she was no better off than he was.

Gu Xiaoyue previously said that she could use up to seven energy bombs. After the five she had already used, they only had two opportunities left.

Fortunately, the two girls who were still alive finally gained their last burst of courage in a moment of despair. Instead of seizing the Zombie King's slowing down to escape, they clenched their novice weapons and charged up, roaring.

The badly-injured Zombie King seemed to have weakened considerably and was temporarily held back by the two girls. There was not much time, but a handful of seconds was enough for Xiao Lin and Gu Xiaoyue to get a short rest. The Zombie King's Shockwave predictably killed the last two girls in seconds. By then, there were no other people whom Xiao Lin could use to stall time. They were the Zombie King's final targets.

Xiao Lin and Gu Xiaoyue glanced at each other silently. Both of them understood the look in each other's eyes. It was a deciding moment for victory or defeat—if they failed, they would have failed with pride.

The two chose to stand together and stay where they were in order to give themselves more time to rest.

“The frequency in which the Zombie King can use the Shockwave is about twenty seconds. It used it once when it killed those two girls, so in a while, I'll immediately send it falling down. It's all in your hands after that. We have one chance.” Xiao Lin found the girl's face a little scary, as though

the bright eyes behind her black glasses could just close completely at any time. It prompted him to ask, “Are you alright?”

“Just mind yourself!” The girl’s tone was still frigid, but in the iciness was intense fatigue that could not be concealed. Gu Xiaoyue bit her lip so hard until blood flowed down her delicate chin. She did not seem to mind it at all.

Gu Xiaoyue intended on using the pain to keep herself awake. Xiao Lin swallowed back whatever words of concern that were going to come out of his mouth. She was a stubborn girl and he decided to put all his trust in her.

Within ten seconds, the Zombie King was less than five meters away from Xiao Lin. The stench of blood and decay rushed toward his face as Xiao Lin slowly raised his dagger.

Shockwave!

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Chapter 9: The Freshmen’s Records

The Shockwave was successfully executed, and the tremors shook the Zombie King to the ground once more.

Xiao Lin’s vision turned black at the same time. After utilizing that skill, his strength finally reached its limit. Before he fainted, the last picture in his line of sight was two energy bombs accurately striking the target. The Zombie King’s head was completely blown up into fragments.

Success at last; but unfortunately, he could not complete the mandatory task.

When he could open his eyes yet again, Xiao Lin found himself lying in a huge metal hall. Enveloped in a milky-white halo, his bodily fatigue disappeared at an astonishing rate. After the admission test, he was more than piqued by the academy’s wonders.

The halo lasted for a long time before it gradually dissipated. Xiao Lin discovered that he was probably the last to wake up, as everyone else was looking at him with dissatisfaction.

“As expected of a loser with an attribute score of less than ten. You made all of us wait for you!” Wang Dalin spoke in a peculiar tone. He was killed by the Zombie King and failed to complete his tasks, the blame of which he attributed to Xiao Lin.

“Did you think you had 46 total attribute points too? You were so deluded to fight the Zombie King. You don’t know what death means, do you? Hmph, at least there’s no penalty for failing the admissions test,” Wang Dalin sneered proudly, complimenting Gu Xiaoyue while he was at it, but the girl’s attention was not on him at all.

Xiao Lin was not interested in entertaining him. Gu Xiaoyue stood gracefully beside him, still maintaining her cold arrogance. Fatigue seemed to be absent between her eyebrows, and the magical halo had also healed her completely. However, Xiao Lin was very disconcerted by the fact that he should have awoken around the same time as Gu Xiaoyue did. However, he was the last to wake up. Was his physique really that bad?

His last memory was that the Zombie King ought to have died. Xiao Lin shot the girl an inquisitive look and she responded with an imperceptible nod.

Xiao Lin breathed a sigh of relief. It was fortunate that they could probably get the rewards for those two optional tasks. There was no way for them to get the mandatory task done since he fainted at the last moment. He had only himself to blame for his poor physical strength.

It was raucous inside the metal hall as everyone discussed the earlier test. Some were impressed by the academy's super-technical and nearly realistic simulation. Although everyone was scared at the time, they felt very excited after giving it a second thought. At the very least, it proved that many of the things that instructor Qin Chuan said before were not a lie.

Some people had difficulty accepting all that and were shouting to go home. Even if the test was a simulation, they could actually feel suffering and fear just before their deaths.

There were a few who expressed regret for the earlier battle. They were the last few who participated in the battle but were quickly killed, and they were all wondering whether the Zombie King mission had been completed.

"Impossible! I heard one of the girls say that Gu Xiaoyue and Xiao Lin were the only ones left in the end. How could they have won?"

"But that girl's attack power is amazing. She could kill ordinary zombies in seconds. Damn it, I really want to learn magic!"

"What's the use? The Zombie King was too fast. How could Xiao Lin's loser attributes stop it?"

As those who experienced the situation personally, Xiao Lin and Gu Xiaoyue both wore tacit expressions. They were reluctant to speak, and those who came to inquire about it left dejectedly. More and more people began to feel that the Zombie King mission was left incomplete.

In fact, everyone engaged in the discussion simply to conceal the anxiety in their hearts. The admission test was over, but Qin Chuan—who claimed to be their instructor—had not yet appeared, and the silver metal door was tightly closed. No one knew what would happen next.

Unbeknownst to them, 12 men and women had gathered in a conference room not far away. They sat at a long conference table; they were all instructors of the freshmen's classes. Before them was a stack of reports, specifically of freshmen who had just finished the tests. Everyone was either perusing through them or in deep thought. Various expressions were presented on their faces, including ones of surprise, excitement, and disappointment.

At the end of the long table, a handsome man in a suave suit held a cigarette in his mouth and lounged on a high-end leather sofa. He was the only person in this room who was not reading reports, but instead, looked at everyone with a smile.

After some time, the cigarette butt was the only thing left in the man's hand. He stretched out his finger, tapped the table lightly, and snapped everyone back from their respective thoughts. The instructors who stood tall in front of the freshmen were all full of respect in that instant. They were utterly afraid of being caught unawares in front of that man. Qin Chuan might have been brave enough to scold the Admissions Department casually in front of the freshmen, but he did not even dare let out a single peep in front of the department head.

"Has everyone read the admissions test report for your classes? Well, as the head of the Admissions Department, allow me to summarize." The man who was purportedly the department head sported a gentle smile. He seemed to be in a good mood and cleared his throat. No one in the meeting room dared to interrupt as soon as he started speaking slowly.

"There are 1,360 students enrolled this year and are divided into twelve classes. Based on the Smart Computer's statistics, the results of the admissions test are as follows: Grade F, 560; Grade D, 450; Grade C, 500; Grade B, 83; Grade A, 52."

Having said that, the Admissions Department head paused for a few seconds, as several instructors counted in silence. Suddenly, they uttered an abrupt "Hey!", raising their heads and looked at the man incredulously. The others understood in an instant, and their faces wore looks of surprise.

The department head was very satisfied with everyone's expressions. After satisfying his vanity, his smile became even brighter. "We finally have people who achieved Grade S: a total of 15!"

The silent conference room erupted instantly. Each instructor was shocked and confabulated.

"The students this year are amazing! When I first entered the academy, only five people who achieved Grade S in the admissions test."

"My class was even worse! Only two!"

"I recall that achieving Grade S requires one to complete three tasks and at the same time survive!"

"Yes, Grades S, A, and B are achieved by completing three, two, and one task respectively. Grade C is for when they don't complete any tasks, but were recorded killing zombies. Grade D is when students were proactive, in spite of their failure to complete the mission and having zero kills. As for Grade F, it consists of students who had done nothing but escape out of fear," one instructor fluently explained.

"For freshmen, the Zombie King is not so easy to deal with, unless they are talented students who were born with skills. You don't have any talented students in your class, do you!"

Having said that, the head of the Admissions Department waved his hand and laughed. "We've come to the point now for me to announce another set of data. Within this year's students are a few confirmed to be talented. Of the fifteen who achieved Grade S and completed the three tasks, thirteen of them talented students. Be it the physical examination report or the results of the admissions test, this year's crop has been the best in ten years!"

The department head waved his hand repeatedly, expressing his excitement. As the head of the Admissions Department, the performance of each freshman and the proportion of talented students

directly affected the school's evaluation of him and whether he could be re-elected as department head. Judging from that year's batch, he felt that his re-election would no longer be a problem.

The meeting room, which was quiet for a while, became lively again. The instructors experienced various different moods. The proportion of talented students was beyond imagination, and what the department head said was true. The quality of Dawn Academy's new students had been declining in the past decade, especially recently. In the past few years, the number of talented students in each new enrolment had dropped to even less than five.

The instructors smiled reluctantly. There were plenty of talented students, which meant that the competition between them would be even more intense. It was even more difficult to obtain rewards that rightfully belonged to the instructor. In addition, those talented students would soon be able to step on their heads in one or two years at most. It was only natural then that none of them could be happy.

"There are fifteen Grade S freshmen, but only thirteen talented students. That leaves two more," an instructor expressed his doubt, likely wanting to shift from the depressing topic of talented students.

"Probably achieved that by teaming up with the talented students," someone remarked absent-mindedly. That statement was open to doubt though since all of them knew that the Smart Computer determined whether or not a person completed the Zombie King mission by highlighting their contributions. Thus, the possibility of opportunism was basically zero.

The department head did not keep everyone in suspense and quickly revealed the answer. With a meaningful look, he spoke again, "Old Qin, among the twelve classes, your Freshmen Class Seven is the only one without any talents, yet they managed to break two records that had existed since the establishment of Dawn Academy."

The Old Qin he mentioned was Qin Chuan, the instructor of Freshmen Class Seven. He kept a strange expression throughout the meeting, but he was shocked at that point. He looked at the department head in surprise and asked, "They broke a record? What record?"

The other instructors were also puzzled.

"Hehe, looks like none of you know enough about the academy's history!" The department head smiled but did not blame them. He was in a very good mood that day and said, "The first record is that two non-talented students from the same class achieved Grade S in their admissions test at the same time. The last time a non-talented student got a Grade S was eight years ago, and that was only one person."

The first record did not actually signify much, but the department head's expression then became rather serious. "The second record is having the highest intelligence score in the history of Dawn Academy's freshmen. Gu Xiaoyue, a student from Freshmen Class Seven, has an intelligence value of 36 in her physical examination report!"

Qin Chuan was the only one prepared for that. Everyone else inhaled sharply.

The department head's tone was low, yet full of enthusiasm. "It could be said that, throughout the two-hundred years of history among academies all over the world, there are only 40 or so people

with an individual intelligence value of more than 30. Although Gu Xiaoyue isn't the highest among them, she's the only non-talented student! In other words, this batch has generated a world record!"

Elite Mages' Academy

Chapter 10: Opening Ceremony

With that last sentence, the man became emotional and his face turned red. He knew very well how important a world record was to Dawn Academy, especially since the academy had been surpassed by foreign countries in almost all aspects in recent years. As the head of the Admissions Department, the eventual credit for recruiting those new students would end up going to him, which was more than satisfactory.

The department head then said, "I've sent word of Gu Xiaoyue to the student union, and before I came, I got the news that the president would leave the New World for the time being and return to the school to personally host the freshmen assembly!"

The instructors looked at each other. After the admission test was the freshmen assembly, which was usually hosted by the head of the Admissions Department. The student union of Dawn Academy was different from those of ordinary universities in that the council president had more than just supreme authority. The position also represented an extreme power and was the kind of existence which the instructors could only yearn to achieve.

After a brief moment of surprise, however, they reverted back to being calm. They received far too much earth-shattering news that day and felt a bit out of sorts. In light of the freshmen creating a new world record, it was understandable that the student union's president would show up and host the freshmen assembly.

"Okay, let's not waste any more time. Everyone, head back to your respective classes and make arrangements. I'll meet the president first..." The department head got up, but his cell phone rang from his waist barely two steps later. He mumbled a few words, "Who is it now? Don't they know that I'm at a meeting?"

Getting out his small and nifty cell phone, his expression changed dramatically as soon as he looked down. He placed the device on the table, stood upright, then quickly tidied up his suit and tie before pressing the answer button. A virtual holographic screen popped out from the phone and a gray-haired old man appeared.

"Dean, how can I be of service?" The department head's tone was humble and respectful.

"I'll be personally attending the freshmen assembly. Please make the arrangements." The old man's voice was low and his words were concise. The screen was cut off with that as the Dean hung up.

"Was that person just now...the legendary dean?" A female instructor timidly broke the conference room's silence.

“Yes!” The department head was still in a trance.

At that point, everyone was completely shocked. If the president of the student union was someone they could look up to, then Dawn Academy’s dean was the supreme existence that they could not even hope to touch.

The dean’s appearance at the assembly raised the standards of that freshman assembly by a couple of notches. Even if Gu Xiaoyue’s initial intelligence value set a world record, she was still a talentless ordinary student and did not warrant the dean’s in-person attendance at the assembly.

The instructors who left the meeting room were still shocked and confused. They could not figure out the reason, but it was certain that the dean made an exception to attend the assembly because of Gu Xiaoyue. Although there were 13 talented students in this new intake, the highest talent level was only an A, not an S!

...

The freshmen were getting increasingly anxious as they waited in the rotunda. Some even began wildly speculating as to whether they had been captured by aliens for experiments...

It was not until the huge metal gate was opened again that Qin Chuan’s figure reappeared, thereby dispelling that rumor. The freshman had mixed feelings, and Qin Chuan’s expression was also similarly convoluted as his gaze finally landed on Gu Xiaoyue and Xiao Lin.

As an instructor, Qin Chuan did not have the authority to probe into the actual video of the admission test, but he believed that the Central Smart Computer System would do an evaluation of each student.

Gu Xiaoyue came as a pleasant surprise. After all, she was someone with an intelligence score of 36. Qin Chuan was actually quite shocked during the health screening, so much so that he could not help but pity her for not being a talented student. Nevertheless, none of that mattered since the girl did manage to attract the attention of the student union and even the dean.

Indeed, despite being unable to wrap his head around it, Qin Chuan decided to treat the girl well, as he might get to ask favors from her in the future.

As for Xiao Lin, however, Qin Chuan frowned again. It could not be helped that he had a lasting impression of that boy since there was no way a person with an initial attribute value of no more than 10 could still be standing there. It was a fact that could not be forgotten. Dawn Academy’s student admissions were strictly screened, and although he dared not say anything in front of the Admissions Department head, he could not avoid criticizing internally.

Xiao Lin was also one of the 15 people who received Grade S, but Qin Chuan never expected someone with a loser physique to possess the strength that corresponded to earning a Grade S. If Gu Xiaoyue relied on her 36 intelligence points to get that grade, then what did Xiao Lin rely on to achieve the same?

Qin Chuan’s flickering eyes made Xiao Lin feel very uncomfortable. There was no doubt that his basic physique was slightly inferior, but he never expected Qin Chuan to be calculating so many things in such a short period of time.

After some time, Qin Chuan spoke calmly, “The Smart Computer has already sent you the scores for your admissions tests. You can get the results by asking for it in your minds.”

Xiao Lin made a mental plea and the Smart Computer’s voice appeared once again.

[Name: Xiao Lin]

[Student ID: 201235]

[Comprehensive evaluation in the admissions test: S]

[Reward: 40 credits, 800 redemption points]

Xiao Lin’s eyes widened with surprise. The reward was clearly obtained by adding up the three tasks, but he distinctly remembered fainting after the Zombie King was killed and could not reach the safe area to complete the required tasks. He could not help but turn to look at the expressionless Gu Xiaoyue, and was a little surprised that the cold girl had actually helped him.

Xiao Lin opened his mouth to thank the girl, but Qin Chuan’s loud voice rang again and silenced the noisy hall at once. “Now, will anyone who obtained Grade F please come to the front.”

Everyone was surprised. No one dared to step forward even after a few minutes, and none of them knew what would happen. Some people mumbled, “Didn’t you say that there wasn’t a punishment in the admissions test? What is this!”

Qin Chuan smiled slightly, though he did so in a rather cold manner. “Don’t worry, this isn’t a punishment. If all you got was an F in this easy test, then losers like you aren’t suitable to continue your studies at Dawn Academy. So, anyone who got a Grade F can leave.”

“We can really leave?”

“Aren’t you afraid that we’ll leak this to the media?”

Some people were still in disbelief.

Qin Chuan snorted coldly, “Don’t worry, you won’t remember anything that happened here after you leave. This will all be just a dream. Right, I don’t want to waste my spit speaking to losers anymore. Hurry up! I have the test evaluation sheet here, so don’t even think about trying to fool me!”

Everyone noticed that Qin Chuan was holding a stack of papers that resembled reports. After exchanging glances, someone finally walked forward with reluctance. With one person taking the lead, the rest soon followed suit. Qin Chuan took the list and cross-referenced them one by one until it was confirmed that all the people who obtained Grade F were there.

There were more than 30 people. Xiao Lin noticed that those who got Grade F were mostly the girls who hid in the teaching building, were afraid to go out, and ended up being tragically killed by the Zombie King.

Xiao Lin then began thinking: 'If Grade F was given to those who did nothing, then would Grade S means that the person completed all three tasks at the same time?' He wondered how many people actually got Grade S.

Soon a few men in black uniforms came in from outside the gate and left the metal hall with the frightened girls. The rest remained silent for a while. No one knew where they would go or whether they would really return to their normal lives.

There were more than 60 people left. Qin Chuan clapped his hands and his expression relaxed considerably, "I can now formally congratulate all of you for being the provisional students, now officially Dawn Academy's freshmen. Some of you might envy those who can leave and return to the real world, but believe me, that thought won't last long. They're the ones who will truly be regretting everything! In fact, those who failed the test don't even have the chance to regret it!"

Qin Chuan became friendly all of a sudden. There was no longer his initial arrogance and domineering attitude, taking everyone off guard. They had just only arrived at that mysterious academy, and the only staff they came into contact with was the instructor in front of them. Soon, however, they would come to understand that the instructors were actually the least valuable throughout the entire academy.

"In another half an hour, we'll gather in the auditorium for the freshmen assembly. This time, the academy's dean will attend and might even give a speech, which is unprecedented. Finally, I'd like to remind everyone that you'll belong to Freshmen Class Seven, for the entire freshman year at least. At this stage, you'll be an inseparable group as a class. Whether it be the monthly exam or the final exam, you'll be grouped as a class."

Xiao Lin did not feel very pleasant. After graduating from university, the one thing he rejoiced was that he no longer needed to take exams. After thinking that he would have to take exams every month in the future, he felt that he would have been better off if he slacked off in the admissions test and got sent back.

Everyone could finally leave the metal hall and headed for the auditorium to participate in the assembly. However, Xiao Lin noticed that Qin Chuan asked Gu Xiaoyue to stay back. They seemed to be talking about something.

Outside the hall was a very wide corridor. On the metal wall were computer screens inlaid on each side, with arrows pointing toward the direction of the auditorium.

There were several halls on both sides of the corridor, similarly filled with girls and boys who had experienced the same experience as them. Qin Chuan said that they were in Freshmen Class Seven, so the others must undoubtedly be freshmen from other classes.

Xiao Lin counted carefully and came to a total of 12 halls, meaning that there were 12 classes. More than 30 people in their class had been eliminated and about 60 people were left. If every class had a similar number, then the entire freshmen year would have 700 or 800 people. It was no small number, and he became more and more curious about the mysterious college.

At the urging of several instructors, the students did not have time to chat. They spent ten minutes hurriedly passing through the long and winding corridor before finally arriving at the auditorium. The moment they stepped in, gasps were heard and nearly everyone felt their eyes go blind.

