

Full Time 531

Chapter 531: Perfect Ending_3

As a proud Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, it regained its freedom upon Chen Gu's death. From then on, the sky was vast and the seas wide; every corner of the Star Sea was accessible to it! Moreover, it was destined to become a super-lifeform. Without the restraints of its so-called "master," its prospects were naturally boundless. But why don't I feel happy at all?

It couldn't help but squat down, lowering its huge head and emitting a series of long, mournful whimpers.

Boluo and Joseph suddenly turned their heads, each feeling as if the other had pushed them. But between them, a blur of energy ripples appeared, pale blue, like ripples on the surface of water.

Gradually, the ripples became clearer. Boluo suddenly jolted and bellowed, "All of you, cut it out!"

Everyone watched the ripples nervously. Is someone coming back? Who could it be?

A figure suddenly fell from the energy ripples—but there was only one! Everyone's heart clenched again. Thankfully, another figure fell out shortly afterward.

They could clearly see the two people on the ground.

"Chen Gu!"

"Director-General!"

Chen Gu crashed to the ground. His head was buzzing, and he had a sweet, metallic taste in his mouth. He felt as if a colossal beast had trampled him; the pain was indescribable. Unfortunately, he had landed headfirst, slamming hard against a rock.

Aviloya, on the other hand, seemed to be in much better condition than him; at least she was still conscious. She looked at the people rushing toward her and shouted sternly, "Nobody come near! I'm highly contaminated right now! Notify the cleaning team immediately and call Dr. Meng Ji!"

Only then did everyone notice that her legs were pitch-black, covered with scales, rotting flesh, and bone spurs.

Gong Shuxu immediately contacted the rear. Soon, the cleaning team arrived, placed Aviloya into a special sealed chamber, and began initial decontamination.

Chu Zheng ignored everyone else, rushed forward, and cradled Chen Gu, repeatedly calling out, "Instructor, Instructor, how are you?"

Chen Gu finally came to. He said with a wry smile, "Stop shaking me; you're making me dizzy."

Chu Zheng's tear-streaked face broke into a smile.

Chen Gu was quickly placed into a recovery pod, despite his insistence that he only had a bit of a headache from overexerting his spiritual power.

But no one would listen to him, turning a deaf ear to his pleas as they worked together to put him in.

He performed such a great feat; he must be critically injured and on the verge of death. Conventionally, that's how it should be.

"Listen to me! Give me three tons of raw silicon soil, and I'll be up and about in less than three hours!" Chen Gu kept arguing. He was uncomfortable as the recovery pod filled with viscous liquid and he lay down in it.

But still, no one listened to him.

Aviloya's voice came from the sealed chamber. "Give it to him!"

"Give him what?" Rainbow asked, confused.

Aviloya repeated, "Give him whatever he wants. Three tons of raw silicon soil."

However, Aviloya quickly noticed that everyone on the special operations team had a strange look on their faces—they all remembered the embarrassing incident that had happened to Chen Gu in the Long-headed People's territory.

Aviloya and Rainbow didn't know and were somewhat puzzled. What's going on?

Chen Gu felt their teasing gazes and glared back angrily. "Hurry up and prepare it!"

If I weren't feeling so utterly drained right now, I'd definitely make these guys taste my 'Fist of Justice'!

This place wasn't far from the factory that manufactured warship mainframes. That factory stored a large amount of raw silicon soil, and Marshal Bai specially approved a batch for Chen Gu.

"Three tons isn't enough," Marshal Bai declared. "Chen has done outstanding work again. Give him five tons."

While Chen Gu was gorging himself on raw silicon soil, Dr. Meng Ji finally arrived. He immediately began to examine Aviloya and started to formulate a Purification plan.

"You are a formidable Ninth Power Level adept. How could this have happened to you?" Dr. Meng Ji asked, puzzled.

Aviloya showed a hint of confusion and said, "The space in Boles's region is very peculiar. Compared to our world, it lacks many fundamental rules. It feels like although a void is established there, it can't truly be considered a 'world.'"

"Inside, some things are amplified, while others are diminished. From my direct experience, the power of evil was amplified, while the abilities of professionals were limited. So, when I went in, I could mostly only use my physical strength to slaughter those bugs. This was not only slow, but I also became contaminated without realizing it. My senses were also suppressed."

Dr. Meng Ji immediately grasped the crucial point. "So, in the end, you couldn't escape using Quantum Teleportation?"

Aviloya nodded. "But Chen Gu rushed in and rescued me using Quantum Teleportation."

For a moment, both the Doctor's and the Director-General's expressions became complex.

Chen Gu devoured all five tons of raw silicon soil. Just like last time, after a hearty meal, he had to use the restroom. Fortunately, this time it only took a little over an hour.

Chen Gu had Combat Rooster dig a pit and bury the rapidly hardening waste.

His actions, no matter how one looked at them, were rather undignified.

But after all that, Great Actor Chen was fully revitalized and bursting with energy.

Then, more good news arrived: the nebula bomb had been found. This time, Rainbow led the team. Joining forces with the military, they successfully retrieved the terrifying weapon.

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The battle within the realm of spiritual power was decisive. Failure signified utter submission of the mind, leaving no secrets hidden from the victor.

Of course, Rainbow knew where Boles had hidden the star nebula bomb.

Only then did Marshal Bai finally breathe a long sigh of relief. If the star nebula bomb couldn't be retrieved and were to explode outside, the entire military would be in total disarray.

Although he was not directly responsible, such an incident would severely damage the reputation of the Confederation's military.

After completing this critical task, Rainbow returned to Aviloya's side to keep her company.

Every day, while Aviloya purified herself in the sealed chamber according to the plan devised by Dr. Meng Ji, Rainbow would sit by her side, quietly reading a book and keeping her company.

There's definitely something going on between those two,

Chen Gu cynically speculated.

But despite his soul being ablaze with curiosity, he was too timid to ask.

This time, they had almost entirely uprooted True Knowledge Sin, resolved the issues with Boles and the Mutant swarm, and helped the military retrieve the star nebula bomb. It could truly be described as a 'complete' victory!

However, Aviloya's condition cast a shadow over the hearts of everyone at the Bureau of Mystic Security.

One day, after finally handling the aftermath, Marshal Bai Yunpeng arrived. He offered his regards to every member of the special operations team and then urged Chen Gu, "Hurry back. Without you, the only matches worth watching in the Beast League are Zhuge Wojian's."

Finally, Marshal Bai strolled over to where Aviloya was, but he was not nearly as polite towards the Director-General.

His Excellency the Marshal circled the sealed chamber once, then tapped on the lid with his finger, successfully eliciting a glare from the Valkyrie inside.

"HEH," Bai Yunpeng chuckled. "Looking at your condition, you'll have to stay in there for quite some time."

"Only three months," replied Aviloya with feigned indifference.

"I've decided," said Bai Yunpeng, "to promote Chen Gu to the rank of Brigadier General."

A flash of anger crossed Aviloya's eyes. "Are you determined to poach from our Bureau of Mystic Security? And at a time like this—just after we've helped retrieve the star nebula bomb for you?!"

Marshal Bai stood his ground. "Chen Gu staying at the Bureau of Mystic Security is a complete waste! You can't fully trust him, nor can you provide him with the utmost support!"

Aviloya opened her mouth to say something but held back. Bai Yunpeng paid her no mind and continued, "However, that's not the reason this time."

"Chen Gu is the head of Research Institute 745, and his subordinate, Zhao Junzhi, holds the rank of Colonel. Due to Chen Gu's special status, we've been ambiguous about his rank. He is a Colonel, but we haven't publicized it."

"This time, he retrieved the star nebula bomb and performed a great service. He absolutely must be rewarded. Promotion to Brigadier General is what he deserves."

Then, looking at Aviloya, he added, "And yet, within the Bureau of Mystic Security, there's been no word even now about rewarding the special operations team that achieved so much, or Chen Gu. Why is that?"

Aviloya, lying in the chamber and looking directly at him, stated deliberately, "Bai Yunpeng, this is the last time I warn you. If you dare interfere with our Bureau's internal affairs again, I'll make the entire Bai family pay!"

Bai Yunpeng sneered, "Chen Gu saved your life this time!"

He knocked on the sealed chamber door once more and turned to walk away.

Sensing she was about to erupt, Marshal Bai, worldly-wise from his past escapades, knew perfectly well that the best option was a 'strategic retreat' to 'temporarily avoid her fury.'

Inside the sealed chamber, Aviloya's chest heaved with anger as Bai Yunpeng left. Rainbow entered, glanced at Aviloya, then wordlessly opened her book and resumed reading.

After composing herself, Aviloya said to Rainbow, "Go ahead and announce the reward we discussed."

"Okay," replied Rainbow with a gentle smile.

Chapter 533: Ming Di Research Institute

The entire Special Operations Squad was in high spirits.

The mission had indeed gone exceptionally well. Although everyone's positions remained unchanged, everyone's rank had been promoted one level.

Consequently, both salaries and benefits increased. Most importantly, future advancement required a smaller personal contribution. The higher the rank, the more the Bureau of Mystic Security would help cover.

Chen Gu was promoted by two ranks.

The internal ranking of the Bureau of Mystic Security is similar to military ranks. There are 21 levels in total, from T1 to T21. Currently, Aviloya is the only T21.

Rainbow is T19. There are also several other Deputy Directors with ranks below T20, though their specific ranks vary.

If something happened to Aviloya, or if she temporarily lost contact for some reason, and the Bureau of Mystic Security needed an immediate decision from the Director, the highest-ranking individual would act on Aviloya's behalf, exercising the powers of the Director-General.

The Special Operations Squad is directly subordinate to the Central Office, so their ranks are naturally high. A typical team member is T3, equivalent to the rank of a special task force leader in a major city.

In a "backwater little place" like Wuzhaoyin City, Marcus's rank was only T2 when he was the group leader.

After Marcus transferred to the Special Operations Squad, his rank jumped directly to T4, equivalent to a Deputy Director of a municipal-level branch.

Chen Jixian was originally T5; after joining the Special Operations Squad, he was promoted to T7. Outside of the Central Office, this rank was sufficient to serve as the head of the Bureau of Mystic Security for an entire planet.

The highest ranked was Gong Shuxu; as the most senior, he was already T10.

If something happened to Chen Jixian, then Gong Shuxu would take charge of the entire Special Operations Squad.

Chu Zheng had a higher status than the average team member, but because she had just become a dual-class operator and her Energy Level was too low, her rank was temporarily the same as an average team member at T3.

Before Chen Gu joined the Special Operations Squad, his rank was T4; after joining, it rose to T5. Now, having been promoted two ranks, he had reached T7. However, because everyone's rank had increased by one level this time, Chen Jixian became T8. So, Chen Gu found himself still one rank lower than his father.

In addition to this, the Bureau of Mystic Security had given Chen Gu a special reward: he could choose an item from the Central Office's "Weapon Vault."

Of course, the range of choices was limited.

This prize would be redeemed upon everyone's return to Capital Star.

Due to the Longhead mission, Chen Gu had taken a two-week leave from the Alliance. However, the mission progressed very smoothly, taking only about a week in total. Including the subsequent events with Wei Jiangqi and Boles, the two weeks were just the right amount of time.

There was a match in two days, and Chen Gu immediately requested to return to Capital Star.

Aviloya was still in the sealed cabin, unsuitable for long-distance space travel, so she stayed on the planet while the rest of the Special Operations Squad returned to the Central Office.

With everyone gone, only Rainbow remained by Aviloya's side.

Settling down, Aviloya could finally think calmly. She suddenly posed a question to Rainbow, "Can 'Soul Imprisonment' truly reform a person?"

Rainbow was a Brain Domain Hacker, and Aviloya felt she would have significant insight into the matter.

Rainbow put down her book and looked at Aviloya seriously. "Since Qiao Shuangmu first got involved with Chen Gu, our Qiao Family has been compiling a file on him."

Aviloya wasn't surprised; every prominent family that endured for generations had its own 'code of conduct.' As long as it didn't violate the laws of the Confederation, no one would interfere with such matters.

"When Qiao Shuangyi became close with him, this file was activated. We have been continuously collecting intelligence on Chen Gu from all channels."

"Would you like to know what we found?"

Aviloya was taken aback. "Could it be more complete than what the Bureau of Mystic Security has gathered?"

Rainbow smiled lightly. "Nobody questions the intelligence capability of the Bureau of Mystic Security. But we have a different starting point, so there may be discrepancies in the intelligence obtained."

Aviloya scrutinized her with a puzzled look. Her "bestie" had an expression mixed with a touch of mischief, a hint of mystery, and a bit... of cunning.

Aviloya, rarely showing such a feminine demeanor, rolled her eyes slightly. "Alright, do tell."

"Have you ever considered why, since the establishment of 'Soul Imprisonment,' so few have been subjected to this punishment?"

If it were anyone else, they would likely say something like, "It's too cruel and can't be used lightly." But after thinking for a moment, Aviloya replied, "Because it's too expensive, and simply not necessary."

What most people don't realize is that subjecting a criminal to 'Soul Imprisonment' means that the incarceration device, upgraded from a memory-reading instrument, must operate at full power continuously.

And with 'Soul Imprisonment' sentences ranging from several decades to hundreds of years, the funds expended on one such prisoner could keep one hundred and twenty ordinary prisoners in a regular prison.

There are many other cruel punishments; if necessary, victims' families can even pay to have the prisoner stabbed to death in an ordinary jail.

So while 'Soul Imprisonment' has a notorious reputation, it is seldom utilized.

Rainbow nodded. "Exactly. Everyone says that this punishment is the best choice for those who don't deserve death but are deeply loathed. However, for most people, they simply can't comprehend the cruelty of this punishment."

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"For them, a sentence of lifetime labor reform would have been more satisfying."

"The politician with a technology background who pushed for the bill that established 'Soul Imprisonment' as a penalty was named Wu Qiqiang; he also held another position as a lifetime advisor at the Mingdian Research Institute."

"After 'Soul Imprisonment' became a legal penalty, the Star Nation, orchestrated by Wu Qiqiang, conveniently purchased a batch of 'Soul Cages' from the Mingdian Research Institute. However, no one could find any evidence of improper financial dealings. The Mingdian Research Institute's models were advanced and inexpensive; with only five units purchased, the total sum wasn't particularly large."

Aviloya faintly sensed a trace of unease. "No matter how you look at it, it seems like the Mingdian Research Institute orchestrated everything from behind the scenes. They were well-prepared, which is why their 'Soul Cages' are both advanced and cheap!"

"The Mingdian Research Institute is one of the most mysterious research establishments within the Confederation," Rainbow continued, noncommittal. "For hundreds of years, their sponsors have remained hidden. Every time they faced a crisis, they somehow managed to turn danger into safety at the last moment."

"Then we found something else. So far, three inmates have been sentenced to 'Soul Imprisonment.' However, during the trials, this punishment wasn't the judges' first choice. As you know, it's very expensive, and judges have to consider the prison's budget. But the Mingdian Research Institute played a pivotal role in these three sentences, offering to cover the energy costs incurred during incarceration."

Aviloya frowned. "They're worried that if this punishment isn't used consistently, it might eventually be abolished."

"But why?" Rainbow shrugged. "After selling the first batch of five 'Soul Cages' to the Star Nation, the Star Nation made no further purchase plans. The Mingdian Research Institute didn't lobby politicians for more purchases either. So, their entire profit from this penalty was just from selling five 'Soul Cages'?"

"And what did they spend?"

Rainbow calculated. "First, hiring Wu Qiqiang as a lifetime advisor cost about 17.5 million Starshield."

"Then, promoting the entire bill was a major expense, totaling 240 million Starshield."

"Finally, the energy costs for the three 'Soul Imprisonment' inmates were much less—around 10 million Starshield."

"So, what was their profit in this whole affair? Five 'Soul Cages' sold for a total of 38 million Starshield."

"Moreover, their R&D and production costs for the 'Soul Cages' must have been significant."

Aviloya's expression grew increasingly somber. "They've incurred a huge loss—what on earth are they doing this for?"

Rainbow spread his hands. "I don't know either. The Mingdian Research Institute is very insular; our people can't get in to investigate. But if I were you, I'd definitely sign an order to dispatch special operatives to investigate them secretly!"

Aviloya fell into deep thought and did not immediately agree with Rainbow.

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When Qiao Shuangyi and Lin Xiaochen saw Chen Gu in class, their jaws dropped in astonishment. "My god, Bro, you're actually attending class?"

Chen Gu glared at the two of them.

When class ended at noon, Qiao Shuangyi sidled up, fawning. "Brother Chen, let's go! I'll treat you to lunch. I've saved up some allowance these past few weeks."

Lin Xiaochen shot him a glare. "Listen to your pathetic self! Brother Chen, *I'll* treat you. I even set up a special 'Treat Brother Chen' fund!"

Chen Gu was caught between laughter and tears. Were these two bootlickers deliberately trying to make me squirm?

Chen Gu straightened his clothes. "Alright, alright, you don't have to treat me. Today, it's my treat. Yours truly is now an A-list star in the Alliance; I've got money."

Their eyes lit up, and they chuckled. "HEH HEH HEH. That's right! We totally forgot about that."

"Let's go, let's go! We're eating big today!"

They hadn't even reached the cafeteria when Qiao Shuangyi started acting up. The chubby guy squinted, a lecherous look on his face. "Brother Chen, all those superstars in the Alliance marry famous models or celebrities. What about you? When are you going to show us around the dazzling world of showbiz? HEH HEH HEH!"

Chen Gu snorted. "Wipe your drool first."

Lin Xiaochen shot Qiao Shuangyi a disdainful look. This fatty is really lowering the standards of our 'Bootlicking Duo.'

Chen Gu said, "Don't get me into trouble. I know your older brother, and now I know your grandaunt too. If I take you carousing in the entertainment circles, those two will have my hide."

Families like the Qiaos and the Lins had strict upbringing. Dating was permissible, but messing around was forbidden, especially with the men and women from the world of fame and fortune.

For example, the Qiao Family allowed its core members three years of sowing their wild oats after college graduation. Once they'd had their fill, they were expected to return home, marry, start a family, and manage the family businesses.

Before graduation, however, they were expected to focus on their studies.

Someone like Qiao Shuangyi needed to focus on his advancement even more, without any distractions.

When Qiao Shuangyi first heard the word "grandaunt," it didn't register. A moment later, realization dawned, and he shuddered. "You... She..."

"My god... I should've known! We're all from the Bureau of Mystic Security; of course, we'd run into each other eventually."

"My life is so hard—"

"You have no idea! That woman, in our family, she absolutely calls the shots. No one dares to cross her. Last year, my seventh uncle got some young starlet pregnant, and she had him strung up and whipped! A man in his forties—he lost all face!"

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Chen Gu was also stunned. This "Rainbow" was completely different from the one he knew. Yep, one really can't judge a book by its cover, he thought.

Once in the canteen, Chen Gu was quite generous, telling them to eat whatever they wanted. The duo didn't really go all out to fleece him; they just had their fill and let the matter rest.

Suddenly, Qiao Shuangyi caught sight of Shangguan Yuqing at another table, and his eyes turned red all at once. "Chen, help me get revenge!"

Chen Gu was a bit puzzled. What "grudge" did he hold against Shangguan Yuqing? Then he heard Lin Xiaochen snickering with schadenfreude on the side.

Meanwhile, Shangguan Yuqing also noticed Qiao Shuangyi staring at her and glared back at him fiercely.

"What's going on?" Chen Gu asked.

The chubby boy immediately said, "We have a Professional Combat Class in the afternoon, Chen Gu, you have got to back me up. In the last few classes, I was beaten up really badly by that crazy woman..."

"Lin Xiaochen, you tell me what happened here," Chen Gu interjected. "Did this little lecher take advantage of someone again?"

Qiao Shuangyi let out a mournful wail. "What does it have to do with me? It was clearly that crazy woman who went nuts on her own! Lin, you've got to speak from your conscience!"

Lin Xiaochen's laughter clucked like an old hen. "I heard that a few days ago, the Shangguan Family and the Qiao Family were considering a marriage alliance, and then the adults from both families matched up their young ones, dragging Shangguan Yuqing and Qiao Shuangyi into the spotlight.

"After all, both are from the Huai Shan Branch School and are seen as the finest of their respective families' younger generation.

"Chen, look at this, isn't it a case of a well-matched couple... a dull man with a talented and beautiful woman?"

"Anyway, as soon as word of this proposition leaked from both families, I heard Shangguan Yuqing exploded at home and had a big fight with her father and brothers."

Qiao Shuangyi raised a heaven-shaking complaint. "So, I deserve to be unlucky for this? I was helpless against my family's arrangement, so I thought of building a good relationship in advance, to avoid mutual distaste if we really ended up marrying, which would make life unbearable."

"Heh," Lin Xiaochen mocked. "You sure are thinking far into the future. Have you picked a name for your child yet?"

"..." Qiao Shuangyi turned his head away, ignoring him.

Chen Gu was also amused. To be fair, although both families were equally matched, Shangguan Yuqing was a great beauty; in terms of looks, Qiao Shuangyi was certainly punching above his weight. This was not something Chen Gu could justly intervene in. He was also acquainted with Shangguan Yuxie, so how could he justify hitting his sister?

He looked at Qiao Shuangyi with disappointment. "You can't even beat a woman, and you have the nerve to ask for my help?"

Qiao Shuangyi's face turned red, feeling like a failure. "But... she is one Energy Level higher than me. I really can't defeat her."

Chen Gu patted him on the back. "Brother, listen to my advice. Go home and find a way to break off this engagement as soon as possible. Otherwise, if you really get married, you'll be domestically abused every day, not even allowed on the bed."

His words were earnest, each a piece of heartfelt advice.

Qiao Shuangyi nodded repeatedly like a pecking chicken. "After the last beating, I was also discouraged. So what if she's beautiful? There are plenty of pretty women in the world willing to marry me, Qiao Shuangyi. I don't need to be so infatuated with her."

Chen Gu's eyes darted around. "However, I do have a suggestion that could help you beat her once and get your revenge. But this method can only be used once; it won't work again after that. Get your revenge, and that's it. Don't ever bother her again."

The little fatty's eyes lit up. "That's great! I'll follow your advice, Chen."

Lin Xiaochen also pricked up his ears. With the wide gap between Qiao Shuangyi and Shangguan Yuqing clearly visible, what could Chen Gu have up his sleeve to help the little fatty overpower and beat Shangguan Yuqing?

But when Chen Gu revealed the plan, not only did Lin Xiaochen look mischievously pleased, Qiao Shuangyi was also extremely conflicted. "Chen, in front of everyone, doing that... it's not quite appropriate, is it?"

Chen Gu spread his hands. "I've given you the strategy. Whether you use it or not is up to you."

"This... let me think about it, think about it."

The little fatty thought about it until the Professional Combat Class in the afternoon.

After the last attack, the Huai Shan Branch School's security measures were upgraded in all aspects, including the protection for the students' Professional Combat Classes. In the past, these classes were usually led by someone of Wang Chengqian's caliber, at the Fifth Energy Level. Now, all have been replaced by instructors of at least the Sixth Energy Level.

This semester, their class's combat instructor was an old man with somewhat grizzled hair and beard. He wasn't very tall but had a well-proportioned build, and his face bore the signs of hard times.

Before class, Lin Xiaochen introduced him to Chen Gu. "This teacher's name is Gu Han. He used to be an employee in the school's security department; it's said he was once a powerful freelance mercenary. After retiring, Director Xue recruited him to our school. Lately, the teachers have felt that the students' combat skills are lacking, so they brought him out to instruct us in professional combat techniques."

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Teacher Gu Han noticed an extra person in the class, and then it dawned on him. "Chen Gu, is that you? You're back?"

The teacher's attitude was very amiable, and Chen Gu responded with great respect, rising to his feet. "Yes, it's me. I'm back, Teacher."

Gu Han gestured with his hand. "Good, take a seat."

Then he looked at all the students in the training ground and said, "Let's stick with the previous combat pairings. Does anyone want to switch?"

Over there, Shangguan Yuqing glared at Qiao Shuangyi. If he knows what's good for him, he'll quickly raise his hand and ask to change opponents, she thought. Otherwise, I'm going to make him cry for his mom and dad today!

She knew all too well what people like that chubby kid were like, having grown up surrounded by them. In a nutshell, they were spoiled brats who had never faced real hardship—the slightest obstacle or setback would make them give up immediately.

A toad lusting after a swan's flesh, daring to have designs on *me*, this young lady!

However, Qiao Shuangyi sat cross-legged on the training ground floor, hands resting naturally on his knees. He stared forward, his breathing even, seemingly preparing for the upcoming battle—completely ignoring Shangguan Yuqing's provocation.

"Hmph." Shangguan Yuqing cracked her knuckles. You little fatty, you're asking for it!

No one else wanted to change opponents either. But unfortunately, Bai Zhijin suddenly remembered something: the combat pairs had been prearranged, and Chen Gu hadn't returned at that time. In other words, Chen Gu hadn't been included.

This isn't right!

Bai Zhijin, driven by his perennial adolescent conviction that he was destined to carry the banner for students from humble backgrounds and become their representative against the noble families, absolutely could not tolerate this kind of 'preferential treatment' for a scion of a noble family.

He raised his hand high. "Teacher!"

Gu Han asked, "Do you want to switch opponents?"

"No, I'm not switching. I just wanted to ask why you didn't arrange an opponent for Chen Gu. If I'm not mistaken, even if he doesn't fight, he'll still get credit for this course, right?"

Liao Mingliang, sitting beside Gu Han, buried his face in his hands. Ah, Bai Zhijin, my friend, he thought. Talented and loyal, but sometimes a bit dense...

Fan Yutong was frantically tugging at him from the side, but Bai Zhijin stood "proud and unafraid," looking up at Teacher Gu Han like a little rooster.

The old teacher chuckled. "Alright then, I'll arrange for you to fight Chen Gu."

Bai Zhijin shivered, then clenched his teeth and straightened his neck. "I'm not afraid of him!"

Gu Han laughed again. "I didn't say you were afraid of him, did I? No need to emphasize it. How about this: we won't wait. Your match with Chen Gu will be first, starting right now."

Liao Mingliang and Fan Yutong both sighed and lowered their heads. Oh well, they thought in resignation. Worst-case scenario, we'll help him pay his medical expenses...

Chen Gu rose and stepped into the center of the fighting area. Gu Han, ever the conscientious teacher, thought for a moment and then emphasized to Chen Gu, "A light touch is all that's needed. You're all classmates—don't get too rough."

Chen Gu promptly replied with an obedient, "Understood, Teacher."

Bai Zhijin made his preparations, then solemnly stepped into the fighting area. He let out a loud shout, just about to activate his class ability, when a huge fist suddenly appeared right before his eyes.

THUMP!

Bai Zhijin yowled, clutching his left eye as he staggered back more than a dozen steps. The class energy he had just gathered instantly dissipated. His head was buzzing, stars danced before his eyes, and his nose stung as if he were about to cry.

By the time he regained his bearings and looked down, he had already been pushed out of the circle—he had lost.

Bai Zhijin found this hard to accept. I'm supposed to carry the banner for students from humble backgrounds! How could I lose so quickly?

Meanwhile, Chen Gu had already turned, bowed to the teacher, and stepped out of the circle. "Teacher, I didn't even use my class ability. That was restrained enough, right?"

He had gone very easy on him.

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Gu Han smiled and nodded. "Alright, that must have been hard on you. Facing such a low-level opponent must have been quite dull, right?"

Chen Gu hurriedly replied, "What are you saying, Teacher? Helping my classmates improve and fostering their growth is part of my duty as a member of Huai Shan Branch School."

Liao Mingliang and Fan Yutong could barely listen anymore. Enough already, you two, with your call and response! Are you deliberately trying to shame Bai Zhijin to death?

But stand up for a friend and speak out for justice? What a joke. Haven't they seen the huge black ring around Bai Zhijin's left eye? If I dared to speak rashly, Chen Gu would dare to give me one too.

Standing there in extreme awkwardness, Bai Zhijin listened as Teacher Gu Han said, "The fact that I'm your teacher means my judgment is far superior to yours. My decision not to let Chen Gu participate in the duels showed I had already recognized his strength far exceeds yours!"

"Bai Zhijin, do you have any other questions?"

The self-proclaimed standard-bearer for students from humble backgrounds, Bai Zhijin, his face beet-red, murmured in a voice as faint as a mosquito's buzz, "No."

"Then return to your seat."

The subsequent duels nearly put Chen Gu to sleep. Indeed, the skill level was not high.

These students came from affluent backgrounds and had begun interacting with Professionals from an early age. Their Energy Levels weren't low; they were already at the Second or Third Energy Level. Many had even awakened unique professional skills and mastered various unique combat techniques—all skills taught in private by powerful Professionals their families had hired at great expense.

But ultimately, they lacked real combat experience and were far inferior to Chen Gu's special operations teammates.

Lin Xiaochen was first on stage. After a duel that looked like a genuine exchange but was, in reality, mostly wasted effort and flashy moves, Lin Xiaochen secured a difficult victory.

Quite pleased, he sat down next to Qiao Shuangyi after his match, eager to watch the exciting duels to follow.

Coincidentally, Qiao Shuangyi and Shangguan Yuqing's duel was scheduled for the very end, as if Teacher Gu Han had intentionally saved them for the grand finale.

When it was finally their turn, Qiao Shuangyi took a deep breath, pressed his hands on his knees to stand, and walked steadily onto the dueling field.

Shangguan Yuqing was already impatient, eager to pummel that oaf.

But Qiao Shuangyi suddenly raised a hand. "Wait a moment. Before we duel, I have something to say."

Shangguan Yuqing chuckled coldly, limbering up her joints. "Fine, speak. Let's hear your last words."

Qiao Shuangyi suddenly adopted a heartbroken expression. "Do you really hate me that much?"

Shangguan Yuqing froze. What does he mean?

Qiao Shuangyi continued, "I've heard that girls usually aren't too harsh on boys who like them. So why are you being so cruel?"

"Do you know how ecstatic I was when I heard our families were considering a marriage alliance?"

"Yes, perhaps I got a little carried away, but that was because I thought my dream was about to come true!"

"But then you shattered my beautiful dream in the cruelest way imaginable."

"I haven't been able to eat or sleep these past few days, I've been thinking so hard. But never mind that. I still hope you find happiness. If you truly don't want this, I'll speak to my family. I won't let them pressure you..."

Shangguan Yuqing was stunned. This little fatty... does he really like me?

However, at this very moment, Qiao Shuangyi, who had stealthily closed the distance under the cover of his words, flashed a treacherous smile and punched her squarely in the face.

WHACK!

Shangguan Yuqing stumbled, one side of her fair, delicate face instantly turning red and swollen!

Qiao Shuangyi leaped back, spread his arms, and roared with laughter at the sky, "Hahaha, I won! I won!"

"You lost! You lost!"

He was ecstatic and performed a cheeky, butt-wiggling dance right in front of Shangguan Yuqing!

Shangguan Yuqing's eyes turned bloodshot. With a furious howl, she charged. "I'm going to kill you!"

But a large hand intercepted them. It was Teacher Gu Han. "This duel is over, Shangguan Yuqing. You have indeed lost. What lesson have you learned from this?"

Shangguan Yuqing was beside herself with rage, flailing at Teacher Gu Han's restraining arm like a feral cat trying to get at the little fatty. "He cheated! He's shameless, despicable, a lowlife!"

But Gu Han didn't budge, and she couldn't get past him. "Don't you understand yet?" he said. "Deception and strategy are also part of combat."

"Once a duel begins, you are mortal enemies! You must never allow yourself to be distracted for any reason. The moment you fall into an opponent's trap, it's a path to death. No one will remember if the victor used underhanded tricks, and sympathy for the loser will never change the outcome of the battle!"

He gave a gentle push, sending Shangguan Yuqing reeling back. "Alright. Go back and reflect seriously."

Reflect my ass! Shangguan Yuqing, burning with indignation, pointed at Qiao Shuangyi and seethed, "Fatso, you just wait!"

Qiao Shuangyi gave his backside another taunting wiggle in her direction, then darted behind Chen Gu.

Shangguan Yuqing lunged again but was once more stopped by Teacher Gu Han.

When class ended and everyone began to file out, an infuriated Shangguan Yuqing started towards Qiao Shuangyi, who quickly yelled, "School rules forbid private altercations! Shangguan, do you want to be expelled?!"

Shangguan Yuqing ground her teeth. "You just wait! If you have any guts, don't you dare leave the school grounds for the rest of your life!"

Lin Xiaochen sighed from the sidelines. "Brother Chen, that trick of yours was effective, but the repercussions look pretty severe..."

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He didn't have the nerve to say, Your idea is really mean, really shameless...

Chen Gu smiled slyly. Anyway, Qiao Shuangyi got to vent his anger. As for the future... little fatty, you're on your own.

"Let's go, let's have a big meal in the cafeteria to celebrate!" Qiao Shuangyi was quite excited, thoughtlessly not pondering the future. After all, I won today!

The cafeteria had no alcohol but did have beverages. Qiao Shuangyi, somewhat carried away with pride, raised his cup high. "Cheers!"

In the corner, Shangguan Yuqing, who had sulkily gone to the restroom to apply makeup and cover the fist marks on her face after the battle, watched the fatso with seething hate, her head bowed.

The ever-stoic Shang Qingye beside her suddenly said, "Tomorrow night, there's a match with Chen Gu."

Shangguan Yuqing was slow on the uptake but then burst into ecstasy. "That fatso will definitely go to support his brother. As long as he leaves the school, he's a dead man!"

...

[Huai Shan Branch School] had an interesting little school rule, said to be personally set by the principal: no fighting in the school, but outside... no one cared.

This weekend's evening match suddenly spiked the recently waning excitement because Chen Gu, due to "academic" reasons, had not competed for two whole weeks, and tonight was his comeback.

The outside world generally believed that the so-called "academic reasons" were just an excuse—and they were right about that. However, their subsequent speculations were far from the truth.

Most of the media and experts speculated that there was something wrong with Chen Gu's health.

After all, he was the first Energy Gathering Mechanical Species athlete to truly achieve success; there must have been plenty of unknown "adversities."

Given his health issues and a two-week suspension, everyone was very tolerant and understanding.

Since everyone guessed that Chen Gu had health problems, for tonight's comeback match—whether he could perform at his peak level—some were hopeful, some worried, and others took pleasure in his misfortune.

The Alliance seemed to be looking after him, as tonight's opponent was a player ranked a good bit below fifty in individual matches – Xiao Yunzhan, known by the nickname "Flying Snake."

This guy, who came from a top-ten club named [Thunder Crown], was a promising rookie. In recent years, he had probably focused on team matches, not caring much about personal rankings and only participating for training purposes.

As Shangguan Yuqing predicted, Qiao Shuangyi came excitedly with Lin Xiaochen to cheer for Chen Gu—two rich brats, the sly and the fawning, combined!

The pair of rich kids arrived at [Immeasurable Stadium] in their car, clueless that a small, bee-like unmanned aerial vehicle, equipped with highly sensitive dynamic capture cameras, followed them closely.

The live feed was transmitted back to a luxury RV parked outside [Immeasurable Stadium].

The RV was luxurious inside and out, yet it was set up like a spy surveillance vehicle—though it looked more like a party was going on inside, rather than any covert operation.

Shangguan Yuxie was there with her gang of girls—and they brought all sorts of fine drinks, delicacies, and even... R-rated movies.

Shangguan Yuqing felt helpless. She shouted a few times but was totally unable to control these unruly girls, and eventually, she gave up. Fortunately, Shang Qingye was reliable. The two of them kept their four eyes fixed on Qiao Shuangyi and his companion.

PING. Suddenly, Shangguan Yuqing's private account alerted her. She opened it to see a message from Chen Gu: He's arrived.

Shang Qingye glanced over. "You've bought Chen Gu off?"

"What do you mean 'bought off'? That sounds so unpleasant," Shangguan Yuqing said triumphantly. "He's also friends with my brother. I went and cried to my brother, and he persuaded Chen Gu for me—although I also promised my brother I'd just beat him up to vent my anger and not take things too far."

Shang Qingye rolled her eyes. "Do you even need to promise your brother that? What else could you do?"

Shangguan Yuqing bit her lip. Indeed, she actually had some other plans...

Chen Gu looked at the little fatty beside him. Sigh, the Qiao Family, the Shangguan Family... I can't afford to offend either of them. I hope you can understand my good intentions.

The reason Shangguan Yuxie used to persuade Chen Gu was simple: her brother was bringing Qiao Shuangmu with him!

"The little guys stirring up trouble—our older generation actually enjoys seeing it happen. 'No discord, no concord,' and 'bickering lovers' have not been uncommon throughout history."

"If those two really end up together, Chen Gu, you would have done a good deed."

Chen Gu certainly wasn't optimistic. With the little fatty's looks... forget 'bickering lovers'; all that's left for them is fighting and conflict.

But since their families were both intending to set the little fatty up... or rather, to help them get together, Chen Gu didn't need to agonize over it anymore.

After he "tipped off" Shangguan Yuqing, Marshal Bai began to chatter on the side, introducing his opponent to him:

"Xiao Yunzhan had impressive rookie physical test scores, which is why he was selected by [Thunder Crown]. He's been carefully nurtured over the years, always participating in matches alongside a few star players from the club, training and learning at the same time."

"His nickname is 'Flying Snake,' and his giant beast is a four-headed elephantine serpent. But his fighting style is tricky and changeable, excelling in speed and agility, often using guerrilla and counterattack tactics."

"Although his ranking isn't very high, don't underestimate him. We old fans are quite optimistic about his potential..."

After prattling for a while, Bai Yunpeng took a sip of his drink, somewhat discontentedly remarking, "You should hire a coach. In the future, collecting intelligence and devising strategies should be handled by a professional."

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"Don't be so stingy; you're making quite a bit of money now."

Chen Gu nodded, agreeing that he indeed should hire a professional team to help him deal with the matters of the Behemoth Alliance.

He looked at the photo of his opponent, Xiao Yunzhan – a tall and thin young man with single eyelids and fair skin, whose appearance was very popular with young female fans.

...

In another lounge, Xiao Yunzhan was discussing tactics with the club's team in a tense manner, yet he seemed somewhat distracted.

The club's coach patted him on the shoulder, "Ah Zhan, what's the matter?"

The young man was well-liked in the club, always humble and eager to learn, biting the bullet and completing even the toughest training tasks assigned by the coach.

Being absent-minded while discussing tactics before the match was something that had never happened before.

Xiao Yunzhan smiled, "I'm fine. Coach, there's no need to continue with the planning. It's not going to be of any use."

"You..." The coach was at a loss for words.

Xiao Yunzhan went on, "If Chen Gu has fully recovered, no matter what we plan it's useless; we're definitely no match for him. If his physical condition really is an issue, all I need to do is use my usual skirmishing tactics, and I'll surely beat him."

The coach wanted to say more, but Xiao Yunzhan waved him off, "You all go out. I want to be alone and quiet for a while before the competition."

"Alright," the coach agreed somewhat helplessly. Although Xiao Yunzhan's behavior today was a bit odd, many players did indeed like to adjust their mindset in solitude before the match.

With a wave of his hand, the coach led everyone out.

Xiao Yunzhan closed the door, gently swiped his hand in front of him, and opened a chat window.

There was already a line of text:

Number 21, are you ready to give this dirty world a huge shock?

A faint smile appeared on Xiao Yunzhan's lips, and a sense of unprecedented comfort filled his heart. He swiftly replied:

I shall initiate the Purification of this world!

Then, he closed the chat window and sent out a few more messages: Are you all ready?!

Soon came a slew of responses: Let's shock the world together!

...

Chen Gu's match was naturally scheduled for last, even though people generally believed that his opponent wasn't qualified to be the finale just yet.

The preceding matches were also spectacular. Chen Gu watched all of the matches from his private box and realized that the Behemoth Alliance indeed was full of talent. Many of the players' tactics were unique, and he learned a few tricks as well.

When his turn came to appear, the atmosphere in the stadium instantly soared. Amidst the cheers, Chen Gu waved his arms as he entered the ring.

Across from him, Xiao Yunzhan watched him with a smile. Chen Gu made eye contact for a moment and felt something was off, but he couldn't quite pinpoint why he had this feeling.

But with the battle about to start, there was no time to dwell on it. He and Xiao Yunzhan nodded to each other, then turned and entered their respective connectors.

"CLANG!"

"CLANG!"

The doors of the cages on both sides opened, and the Combat Rooster was the first to roar out, while the opposing Quad-Headed Serpent Elephant remained still.

Cheers erupted all around.

Xiao Yunzhan's coaching team turned pale. Usually, this indicated the behemoth sensed the opponent was stronger and was scared before the fight had even begun.

But at this point, the behemoth would have been mind-linked with the player, with the main control no longer in the behemoth's hands. Players would not be afraid to fight or afraid to appear because they knew that any injuries would be to the behemoth, not themselves.

The reason for this was a deep-seated fear in the subconscious mind of the behemoth, causing it to wrestle the player for control of the body, leading to a delayed entry!

Once such a situation occurred, it meant the player could not fully control the behemoth, and the two could not work together in harmony. This match might as well not be fought, as defeat was certain.

On the stage of behemoth battles, this was very rare, but every time it happened, the side that hesitated to fight was bound to lose.

The audience, who were eager to see Chen Gu's condition after rumors of his "health issues," were now faced with this situation: were they about to witness a victory without a fight?

The ferocious Combat Rooster continued its roaring, violently stomping on the ground of the ring, creating a thunderous vibration.

Finally, a massive figure appeared slowly and reluctantly from the opposite cage.

The Quad-Headed Serpent Elephant had an odd body. It resembled a gigantic elephant, but with four long, python-like "trunks" on its "head." Each trunk ended in a fierce snake head dripping with venomous fangs.

Each appearance of the Quad-Headed Serpent Elephant had been ferocious and arrogant, but today it seemed languid and weak.

Moving its massive body, the Quad-Headed Serpent Elephant finally entered the ring and, as usual, raised its four huge heads to the sky, spraying venom like rain from its mouths.

This was its entrance ceremony and also a tactic. The venom would vaporize and merge into the air around it, acting as a nerve-paralyzing agent for biological species. As the battle progressed, the poison would slowly take effect.

In such matches, the ring would raise an energy shield to separate the inside from the outside and protect the audience.

After the match, all poison gas would be extracted from the ring.

By this time, the energy shield was already up. However, just as the Combat Rooster roared and charged towards the Quad-Headed Serpent Elephant, there was a sudden LOUD BANG on the edge of the ring. An energy generator had exploded into smithereens.

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The energy shield flashed briefly, then extinguished.

The spectators near the ring paled, covering their noses as they hurriedly fled backward. Those in the back rows no longer cared about watching the match; they all rushed toward the emergency exits in a panic.

But then several more explosions rocked the area—every emergency exit was blown to rubble.

Dozens of spectators who had reached the doors were blasted, leaving them bleeding from their heads.

By this time, Chen Gu realized something was wrong. The Four-headed Elephant Snake across from him still looked weak, but every muscle in its body seemed to be twitching and writhing. Then, its four trunk-like snake heads rose high again and began a prolonged spray!

As it sprayed, the Four-headed Elephant Snake's body was continually consumed, shrinking—as if it were dissolving itself into that venom!

Combat Rooster let out an angry roar, ready to pounce. "This bastard is completely disregarding me, Brother Chicken, standing there and spewing into the sky by itself!"

Chen Gu's voice came coldly in its mind, "Come back!"

Combat Rooster insisted it could handle the creature, which looked incredibly frail and unable to withstand a beating.

In its mind, Chen Gu simulated the scene of the Four-headed Elephant Snake being blown up by an attack: one strike, and it would explode, its venom spraying all over "Brother Chicken"!

Combat Rooster shivered and obediently backed off.

Chen Gu quickly tried to contact Bai Yunpeng and the others in the private box, telling them to retreat immediately. He was closest to the venom and sensed it was extraordinarily dangerous.

He had held his breath from the first moment, burst out of the connector, withdrawn Combat Rooster into the Dimensional Prison Ring, and then retrieved a light, single-soldier Mecha suit to put on.

This Mecha model was designed for extravehicular exploration and had excellent sealing properties.

Combat Rooster felt somewhat dissatisfied, thinking it could have been helpful outside. After all, it hadn't been easy to get out for a bit. Just after making an appearance, it was put back again—it was reluctant to go.

But Chen Gu was very authoritarian and, without further ado, kicked it back in.

There was still no response from Bai Yunpeng. Chen Gu glanced at his communicator, and his heart sank: no signal at all!

In this era, "poor signal" wasn't a thing; the only possibility for a lack of communication was interference from military-grade equipment.

Chen Gu moved swiftly to the outside of Xiao Yunzhan's connector—the door was locked firmly from within!

At this point, he could no longer worry about the risk of exposing a Professional's secret. He punched the connector's door.

THUD!

The palm-thick alloy door dented on the spot. Chen Gu's second punch sent the alloy door flying inward with a BANG.

Chen Gu burst in, only to see Xiao Yunzhan looking at him with a strange smile. "Too late," Xiao Yunzhan said, "the Purification Element has been fully released..."

Chen Gu reached out to grab him but found that Xiao Yunzhan was already dead!

Hmm? Doubt flashed through his mind. His plan to capture the leader first had failed. He felt no regret or hesitation and immediately turned to leave—there was still much to do.

On the ring, the Four-headed Elephant Snake had finished its spewing. Its huge body had shrunk to just a quarter of its original size, and it lay weakly on the ground, seemingly not long for this world.

However, Chen Gu noticed something odd: the surface of the Four-headed Elephant Snake's body was completely covered in a thick layer of green moss.

This moss grew extremely fast, crawling and spreading over the Four-headed Elephant Snake's body like worms.

Chen Gu turned to look at the spectator stands. The spectators who had been sitting in the front rows were now on the ground, clutching their throats and retching painfully, as if something were stuck, preventing them from breathing. Their faces turned red before they slumped down limply.

Green moss was growing from their eyes and nostrils!