

Full Time 661

Chapter 661 Sour Cabbage Beef Noodle Soup

"I knew it!" Selena glared at the three reinvigorated female professionals next door and gritted her teeth. "They really found another backer!"

Joseph stood with his arms crossed, nudging Chen Gu with his shoulder. "Hey, they're coming for you."

Chen Gu curled his lips. He really should have another talk with Director-General Aviloya. Letting him keep taking on challenges beyond his rank, and two Energy Levels at that... Shouldn't the compensation be more generous?

As for this Xiaoga Yexiong, Chen Gu certainly wouldn't take him lightly. He said to everyone, "Help me gather some information about him." He had defeated Gao Deng because he was well-prepared before the battle, having analyzed carefully and executed firmly.

Now that he was the deputy team leader, everyone immediately got busy. But after a whole morning, they came up with very little. The Xiaogasa Family protected Xiaoga Yexiong's information well. Almost all the public data was worthless. They only knew that he was a Resonance Council Celebrity and Seventh Energy Level.

As soon as Xiaoga Yexiong arrived at the Bureau of Mystic Security, he immediately went to meet Ding Zhou. As expected, he would be one of the three people Ding Zhou would personally mentor later, in fulfillment of his promise. Xiaoga Yexiong was different from others; his aspirations weren't limited to just the Eighth Energy Level. Why not the Ninth Power Level?

Ding Zhou was pleased with him and asked, "When do you plan to make your move?"

Xiaoga Yexiong had already thought it through. "I need an opportunity. After all, we are colleagues. I can't just rush over, a Seventh Energy Level, to challenge someone at the Fifth Energy Level. Since Chen Gu used the pretext of a case to challenge Gao Deng last time, I too will wait for a suitable case."

Ding Zhou nodded. "This is a mature and prudent approach. Very good. Proceed as you have planned."

「...」

On the interstellar quantum network, the fan forums for the giant beast battles had suddenly become lively in the past few days. By all accounts, with no heavyweight duels these days, the forums should have been quieter. But just yesterday, someone suddenly posted a video on the forum, sparking a heated discussion. An Alliance official urgently contacted Chen Gu. Chen Gu opened the link.

"My name is Heibo. I'm no match for those so-called star players. They're lofty and shining bright; I'm just a loser lurking in the minor leagues.

"But here I am, overreaching and foolishly daring! I want to challenge a rising star!

"We might be the only two competitors in the giant beast battles that use Energy Gathering Mechanical Species. I want to know who is stronger, and which Energy Gathering Mechanical Species is more deserving to appear in the giant beast battles!

"Chen Gu, accept my challenge! Fight me like a man! Don't be a coward!"

What followed was a clip of his battle with his nine-headed serpent. After the breathtaking battle ended, the screen froze, displaying the contact details of this guy named "Heibo."

After Chen Gu finished watching, the Alliance official turned off the holographic projection and said to him, "When this video first appeared, everyone thought it was just another clown trying to ride on the coattails of the stars.

"But... you saw those battle scenes too. He's strong... and his nine-headed serpent is strong too!

"The fans are now divided into two camps, and surprisingly, there are quite a few who support him!

"Subsequently, some so-called 'deep-dive' posts about this Heibo appeared on the forums. He's a failed player who participated in our draft when he was young but, being quite average in all aspects, was unsurprisingly not selected.

"But he wouldn't give up and kept lingering in the lower leagues, even fighting in underground competitions for a long time.

"Without a suitable beast, he joined a beast-hunting team himself, hoping to capture a young one.

"About thirty years ago, he came to believe that Energy Gathering Mechanical Species would be his opportunity to rise in the giant beast competitions. But, as you know, the perception of Energy

Gathering Mechanical Species in beast battles isn't positive. No one approved of his idea, and he endured all sorts of mockery and ridicule.

"However, he persisted. He bought a young Energy Gathering Mechanical Species and continued to compete while raising it.

"Thirty years later, this Energy Gathering Mechanical Species finally matured, becoming the nine-headed serpent we see now!

"He missed the registration for this year's Alliance competition and could still only linger in the lower leagues. However, his record had become quite astonishing; he was an invincible presence in those leagues!

"He's had a tough time over the years. Because he stuck to his dream, his wife left him, leaving him with their daughter.

"But during his daughter's upbringing, he devoted most of his energy to the beast battles and didn't spend enough time with her. Once she grew up, she left him without hesitation. From this perspective, he's a complete failure."

Chen Gu frowned. No wonder this guy has so many supporters now. A person who gives everything for his dream always arouses people's sympathy.

Especially now that it seemed he was about to succeed—everyone wanted to witness his success at this moment, for a perfect inspirational story.

Aside from his own die-hard fans, deep down, probably everyone else was hoping for Heibo to win.

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He sneered inwardly. I've become the great demon lord, eh? Now everyone hopes Heibo can defeat the great demon lord. But they've actually overlooked one point: it was Heibo who took the initiative to challenge me. Behind this act, there's a strong commercial and purposeful intention. How innocent am I, this so-called "demon lord"? Isn't everything I have today earned through hard work and struggle? Don't my efforts and dreams deserve respect? Why should I be someone else's stepping stone?

An Alliance official said, "We suspect there's a mastermind behind Heibo. His actions on the forums have hit critical points step by step, creating the current explosive situation. That's not something a poor, down-and-out loser could accomplish."

Chen Gu nodded. From this uproar, he understood the Alliance was still on his side. After all, he was a rising star they had personally groomed. If some nobody from a lower-tier league could topple him, the Alliance would lose face too.

"So, what's your advice?"

The officials exchanged glances. "It mainly depends on you," one said. "If you're confident you can defeat him, we can accept the challenge. We can then launch various public opinion campaigns to reverse the current sentiment, transforming your duel into a battle about 'Dreams' between two competitors filled with confidence and passion for the Energy Gathering Mechanical Species."

"This would significantly boost your reputation and prevent you from being seen as a dream-crusher for the underdog."

"If... you aren't confident, we can issue a statement exposing the opponent's ulterior motives. We'll say that you've already achieved great success, need to concentrate on your league matches, and therefore won't accept such clout-chasing challenges. Your fans would understand, and your core support base wouldn't be significantly affected."

This, however, would clearly mean losing a large number of casual fans.

Chen Gu didn't respond immediately. Instead, he asked, "What's the commercial value of this match?"

The officials answered frankly, "Immense."

Chen Gu smiled. "He's trying to use me for clout, so it's only fair I use him too, right? Ramp up the publicity. I want to maximize this match's commercial value! You know what to do. I want him to help me make a killing!"

The officials were momentarily stunned. "So, you mean you're accepting the challenge?" they confirmed.

"Accept? Why wouldn't I?" Chen Gu smiled. "He's handing me a golden opportunity to make money. I absolutely have to seize it."

「...」

Xiaoga Yexiong, having "inherited" the Xiaogasa Family's age-old traditions of earnestness and meticulousness, began working diligently within the headquarters after a sincere discussion with Deputy Director Ding Zhou. He reviewed past case files and constantly visited various departments to quickly familiarize himself with the Bureau of Mystic Security's operational procedures and customs. He even "took the time to visit" the neighboring Special Operations Squad, disingenuously presenting traditional Xiaogasa Family delicacies—not as a gesture of goodwill, but to showcase his own refined manner. In essence, he was doing everything possible to swiftly integrate into the Bureau of Mystic Security and lay a solid foundation for his subsequent plans.

Throughout this entire process, the three female Professionals from the Xiaogasa Family constantly hovered nearby. A man so completely absorbed in his work is truly captivating! they thought, utterly mesmerized. The three sisters even began to fantasize about a scenario where they might jointly serve their young master in his chambers.

However, Xiaoga Yexiong's ostentatious visit to the Special Operations Squad failed to ignite much tension, as the primary party involved, Chen Gu, was absent. Xiaoga Yexiong wasn't concerned at the time, thinking, It's only sensible for a Fifth Energy Level opponent to make himself scarce when I'm at the height of my power.

But when Chen Gu remained unseen for several more days, it struck him as odd. On the fourth day, he could no longer restrain himself and ordered, "Red Princess, find out why Chen Gu hasn't appeared these past few days. Is he on some secret mission?"

Red Princess was the eldest of the three female Professionals—born sixteen minutes before one sister and eight minutes before the other. While they each had their own given names, the family elders were accustomed to addressing them as Red Princess, Blue Princess, and White Princess. Being called 'Red Princess' by those lecherous old geezers feels entirely different from when our young, handsome master says it!

Red Princess cooed softly in acknowledgment and bowed gracefully. "Red Princess accepts the order."

Less than ten minutes later, Red Princess returned, her expression grim. "Young Master... that fellow hasn't been on any mission. Instead, he's been preparing for a large-scale commercial event."

Xiaoga Yexiong was stunned, and a wave of displeasure washed over him. Here I am, the young master of the Xiaogasa Family, meticulously preparing with 'earnestness and rigor' at the headquarters, and my opponent doesn't even take our impending duel seriously? In his eyes, an opponent of my caliber, a Seventh Energy Level master, is less important than... making money? Viewed this way, doesn't my 'earnest and meticulous' approach seem rather... comical and absurd?

"HUMPH!" Xiaoga Yexiong snorted angrily. "Such arrogance will surely lead to ruin!"

The Sanhime nodded in unison. "Ruin upon him!"

Xiaoga Yexiong then asked, somewhat curiously, "What kind of commercial event is it?"

Red Princess sniffed disdainfully. "It's just some commercial colossal beast battle. Only someone from a minor family like his would treat such an event as a golden opportunity. After all, they're not like us, the Xiaogasa Family, a premier lineage accustomed to vast fortunes."

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Xiaoga Yexiong thought for a moment, then nodded in agreement. "I heard that kid comes from an ordinary background. His family only has 'Chen Biological', so it's no wonder he'd do anything for a bit of money. Those with low origins tend to be shortsighted."

However, by that afternoon, as Xiaoga Yexiong was riding home from work, he saw a holographic advertising space playing an ad that seemed to feature Chen Gu.

He glanced at it in the car and didn't look again, thinking it must be a promotional ad for his commercial competition.

But then, mere seconds later, he spotted another ad on top of a building showing a similar promotion.

His home was on a floating island, and it took about half an hour to get there from the head office building, with twenty-six minutes of the journey on the ground. During that time, he saw at least sixty advertising spaces playing ads for this "commercial competition."

Xiaoga Yexiong smirked to himself. Those living on the surface are all poor, he mused. A celebrity like Chen Gu is indeed low-end; his audience all lives on the ground.

Yet, as soon as his car entered the floating island where he lived, the most expensive advertising spot above the entrance was prominently displaying Chen Gu's ad.

Furthermore, this ad was quite lengthy. It started playing while he was queuing to enter the island and was still going when he finally arrived!

During the four-minute journey on the floating island, he saw ten more advertising spots broadcasting Chen Gu's competition ads!

The floating island is different from below; it's inhabited by the rich and noble. To avoid disturbing their rest, there are very few advertising spots up here. Being able to advertise heavily in this area was previously a luxury. Now it seems... Chen Gu's target audience isn't just those low-level people on the ground...

Although no one knew Xiaoga Yexiong's inner turmoil, he felt a burning sensation on his face.

As soon as he entered his house, he saw his servants hurriedly hiding something.

Xiaoga Yexiong's expression changed. "What are those things!?"

The servants, not daring to disobey, nervously brought out the items. Xiaoga Yexiong was furious to see they were various supporting props for Chen Gu's competition!

Moreover, each item was of excellent quality, not the usual, crudely made kind. They actually fit the "taste" of the floating island.

Xiaoga Yexiong exclaimed angrily, "You are all fans of Chen Gu?"

The servants didn't dare to hide it. "Young Master, it's not just us... We can't afford such expensive supporting props. The Young Miss gave us the money to purchase these. During the competition, she's planning to lead us all, forming a 'Chen Gu Supporter Fan Xiaogasa Family Squad'..."

"Silence!" Xiaoga Yexiong was on the verge of exploding with rage. What kind of absurd formation was this? Didn't they know our Xiaogasa Family is in a life-or-death struggle with Chen Gu and Aviloya?!

But his anger was impotent. He was keenly aware of his position within the Xiaogasa Family. Frankly, he was merely a "utility person." The Young Miss, however, was the Family Head's youngest granddaughter, the pearl of the family. Cherished and meticulously protected since birth, she remained innocent and carefree, blissfully ignorant of all the dirty and vile political struggles.

At her age, fifteen or sixteen, it was no surprise she would like a big star like Chen Gu.

Xiaoga Yexiong was frustrated but couldn't vent his anger. He desperately wanted to go over and stomp all those fan props to pieces, but if he actually did that, with the Young Miss's temper, she would definitely come looking for trouble with him. Shaking his head, he stormed inside.

Once in his study, he sat alone and stewed for a while before he turned on the Star Internet to look closely at how much money Chen Gu could earn from this so-called commercial competition and why it had garnered such grand attention.

Then he realized there was no need for him to perform laborious calculations himself. Some eager netizens had already created a thread, updating in real time the sponsors and broadcasters who were constantly joining the competition.

The competition would start in three days. To date, all the major live-streaming systems in Star Sea were vying for broadcasting rights. The platforms that had secured broadcasting rights so far were each offering prices ranging from three hundred million to nine hundred million Starshield, depending on the

scope of their "exclusive broadcasting rights." This only covered the broadcasting rights for about half of Star Sea; the rights for the other half were still being fiercely competed for.

And there were even more sponsors, one familiar brand and company after another appearing on the list. Advertising sponsorship prices started at two hundred million Starshield, with the highest one now at six hundred and seventy million Starshield!

The current total income was calculated at fifty-seven billion, four hundred ninety-seven million Starshield. According to everyone's estimates, the final income from the competition would surely exceed one hundred billion Starshield!

Xiaoga Yexiong felt his vision blur, a bit lightheaded. Just one competition, and the income is over a hundred billion?! Have people gone mad? Is Starshield not considered money anymore?

After calming down, he started to analyze the competition carefully and soon understood why the income was so high.

Chen Gu, leveraging the Behemoth Alliance, had successfully hyped this competition to an extreme level, with all platforms continuously providing in-depth coverage.

Not only was Heibo packaged as a "down-and-out middle-aged man fighting for his dream," generating a universal eagerness to watch the competition, but Chen Gu was also portrayed as "willing to help the underdog, with great sympathy and professional ethics," simultaneously donning the mantle of "dream achiever."

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Both he and Heibo harbored dreams and were willing to give their all for them. The only difference was that Chen Gu was a bit more "successful."

Moreover, this match boasted many gimmicks, the most attractive of which was the ultimate showdown of the Energy Gathering Mechanical Species!

Xiaoga Yexiong sighed deeply. No wonder the hype is so intense. After researching it for a while, even I'm starting to feel eager and can't wait to watch this match.

Then he checked the ticket prices for attending the event live. Even he silently closed the purchasing page; the prices had been inflated too much. Buying even a regular ticket would be a painful expense he'd feel for half a year.

He felt his face burning with embarrassment again. This commercial match was no "small change" affair; Chen Gu's income was astonishingly high!

Even if Xiaoga Yexiong reached the heights he aspired to in the future, he might not earn as much money as this.

Xiaoga Yexiong calmed down after a while and resumed his analysis of the match. He then noticed a detail: almost all the sponsors were Chen Gu's, with very few on Heibo's side. This meant that after the match, the lion's share of the revenue would flow into Chen Gu's pockets, leaving only a tiny fraction for Heibo.

At this point, Xiaoga Yexiong still didn't know that Heibo was an arrangement by Beniers and his group. He could only sneer inwardly. That Chen Gu is truly insidious!

Then, he slowly closed all the browser tabs. A strong surge of envy for Chen Gu spontaneously arose within him...

The next day at work, Xiaoga Yexiong and Sanhime tacitly avoided mentioning that "commercial match."

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Heibo lived on an ordinary colony star, but these past few days he had been taken to Capital Star by the Alliance to prepare for battle.

Alliance photographers followed and filmed his entire training process.

Footage that could be broadcast directly was immediately sent to platforms that had purchased the live broadcast rights. Confidential segments were preserved and would later be used as material for a documentary, which could then be sold again.

The training facilities and coaches provided by the Alliance for Heibo were top-notch. He felt as if he were in a dream—this was a level of treatment he had never dared to imagine before.

Moreover, these coaches quickly made him realize that many of his previous training methods were flawed. If he had access to such high-caliber coaches from the beginning, his achievements would undoubtedly be far greater.

After that day's training, the photographers uncharacteristically turned off all their cameras and stopped tracking his daily life.

An Alliance official approached him, trying to sound as affable as possible, "Someone wants to see you."

Heibo was no fool. In fact, thanks to his years spent navigating chaotic, low-tier leagues, his judgment and instincts were remarkably sharp. "Chen Gu?"

The official smiled. "Not just him. Come with me; you won't be disappointed."

"Heh," Heibo sneered. Not be disappointed? Is this implying Chen Gu will offer me a large sum of money to deliberately lose the match? It's always the same old routine. That's the habitual thinking of those wealthy people—believing money can buy anything they desire.

Heibo didn't object. He packed his things, took a shower, and went with the official.

While showering, he discreetly hung a miniature device on the inside of his clothes.

The people secretly backing him had given it to him beforehand, telling him it would inevitably prove useful at some point.

See? It's already proving useful.

As soon as Chen Gu proposes any dirty deal, this device will record the entire process. Then, at the opportune moment, I will expose this recording and utterly destroy Chen Gu's reputation!

The vehicle transported Heibo and the Alliance official to a restaurant secluded deep within a garden estate.

Chen Gu quite liked this place. He increasingly felt like a "great antagonist." In the movies and TV shows he had acted in or watched in his previous life, this was a common trope: the main villain would often entertain their rivals in such imposing, high-status locations.

Upon entering, Heibo merely shot Chen Gu an indifferent glance before casually plopping himself down, thoroughly displaying his contempt for the "authority" Chen Gu represented.

Chen Gu chuckled, tilted his head to look at him for a while, and then suddenly said, "You're so ugly; how could you possibly have such a beautiful and adorable daughter? She definitely takes after her mother..."

Heibo shot to his feet, his eyes blazing with fury as he roared, "If you dare use my daughter to threaten me, I'll fight you to the death!"

Chen Gu waved his hand dismissively. "Bullshit. I'm not that crass. Sit down."

He gestured, and an adjacent door opened. A girl with an expressionless face walked in. Chen Gu said, "Today, I've arranged this reunion for you and your daughter. I simply hope you can approach the upcoming match with an undistracted mind. We have many sponsors who have invested heavily, and they are anticipating a perfect performance."

When Heibo saw the girl, his eyes moistened. He wanted to step forward, but her cold, indifferent expression made him hesitate to approach.

Chen Gu sighed inwardly, got up, and walked out, leaving the private room to them.

He beckoned to a waiter. "Just get me a bowl of pickled greens beef noodles."

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Upscale restaurants can always satisfy their guests' every whim. For example, "Sour Cabbage Beef Noodles" weren't even on the menu, but the smiling head chef somehow managed to prepare a bowl for him.

Chen Gu even had an additional request, "Add more chili and more vinegar."

Chen Gu didn't know whether high-end ingredients were used. Regardless, the service they provided and the fees they charged were certainly proportional.

When the bill finally came, Heibo and his daughter's total bill was twenty thousand Starshields; his bowl of noodles alone cost nine thousand Starshields.

Mr. Chen's heart ached. He secretly resolved that for similar occasions in the future, a small street-side shop would suffice. After all, being a hidden master in a bustling city had its own ultimate coolness. Effective yet inexpensive—perfect.

With the influence Chen Gu now had at his disposal, finding Heibo's daughter and convincing her to meet her father was not difficult.

Chen Gu did this because he felt Heibo's challenge stemmed from a personal desire for success, a desire that others had exploited.

Deep down, Heibo, having lived underground for many years, did indeed harbor ambitions of using him as a stepping stone. But when you're already at the top, you can't stop those below from having such thoughts.

Chen Gu genuinely pitied Heibo, who never understood that success couldn't restore lost family ties.

He thought of his own adult son, which was why he was willing to give Heibo a chance at reconciliation with his family. He would never admit it, but he did this partly hoping his own son would give him a chance too.

What he didn't know was that the Alliance videographers following Heibo had stealthily turned on their cameras upon arriving at the restaurant, even capturing Chen Gu's noisy slurping of noodles.

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Inside the Special Operations Division, Charles furtively poked his head out from his desk and scanned the room with shifty eyes. Chen Jixian's office door was closed, and Gong Shuxu wasn't around.

His head retracted like a periscope. Then, with a snicker, he quickly opened a betting website and impulsively wagered three months' salary.

Boluo appeared beside him like a ghost. "Who did you bet on?"

"Chen Gu, of course. I'm not stupid. We all know that guy is absurdly strong. And that Combat Rooster—we've all witnessed its true power. In the Colossal Beast League, there hasn't been a single opponent capable of making that creature get serious."

Boluo tilted her head, pondering. "That makes sense. We can't miss out on such easy money."

Without any hesitation, Boluo dumped half a year's worth of her salary on the bet!

Charles was surprised. "How do you have so much money?"

Charles came from a family that was wealthy for three generations, so he could disregard that bit of salary.

Boluo sighed. "As a 'single dog,' where would I even spend money..."

Word spread quickly. Soon, the entire Special Operations Division was betting on Chen Gu to win. However, since Chen Gu's odds were low, the bookmakers were confident they wouldn't lose money overall.

"The Old Master is back!" The young woman on lookout duty rushed back with the news. Everyone scrambled back to their posts, feigning diligence.

Gong Shuxu walked in calmly, seemingly oblivious. As he reached his office door, he suddenly turned to Charles. "Silver Eagle, bet one hundred thousand Starshields on Chen Gu to win for me."

"Huh?" Charles stammered, flustered. "Yes, Old Master."

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Red Princess clutched her private savings account. The three sisters gritted their teeth as they looked at the betting odds on the screen. "We must bet on Heibo! Chen Gu is the Young Master's enemy!"

Though they said so, they still hadn't placed any bets.

"The Young Master's enemy is our enemy! We must stand firm!"

But still, no bets were placed.

"Let's use our five years' worth of saved-up pocket money to show our loyalty to the Young Master!"

Their words were fierce and assured, but still, no bets were placed.

After a moment of silence, White Princess hesitated. "But if we can make our enemy earn money for us, wouldn't that be a grand victory?"

Red Princess's and Blue Princess's eyes lit up, and they looked at their sister in approval. "You make a good point!"

"Then let this opponent, Chen Gu, earn us more spending money!"

"This counts as him providing for us!"

"This is truly a genius idea, so satisfying!"

Three delicate, fair fingers pressed down together on the button to bet on Chen Gu.

"Six hundred thousand, bet on Chen Gu to win!"

Then, as they watched their private savings account empty rapidly, they exchanged guilty glances. "Well, at least we've done a tiny, insignificant thing for the Young Master."

"There's no need to bother the Young Master with such trivial matters; he's very busy every day."

"Exactly! We shouldn't waste the Young Master's time and energy on such things. It's best if we just silently support the Young Master from the shadows."

The three sisters quickly reached a tacit understanding: this matter absolutely must not be mentioned to the Young Master.

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A series of web pages opened up in front of Xiaoga Yexiong, displaying various "professional analyses" of the "commercial match" scheduled for two days later.

Nearly all the commentators uniformly judged the odds at fifty-fifty.

Judging solely from the past combat footage of both participants, such an assessment was perfectly reasonable. Consequently, most fans agreed with this viewpoint.

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Xiaoga Yexiong sneered, "A bunch of idiots!"

The battle between professionals and ordinary people cannot be judged by common sense! This match will undoubtedly be won by Chen Gu.

He glanced at the betting interfaces. Most odds favored Chen Gu, meaning the bookmakers also favored his victory. The reason was simple: Chen Gu was, after all, a star in the top league.

Xiaoga Yexiong felt he could hardly control his fingers. They were always itching to press Chen Gu's betting button...

I can't! he roared internally, stopping himself. He's my opponent!

Red Princess and the others support me so much. They would be terribly disappointed if they knew I was using Chen Gu to make money.

But this is free money! There's nothing easier than this.

So what if I'm from a top-tier family? People from top-tier families can be short on money too. It's a pity to miss such a good opportunity.

I am their Young Master, their superior. Every action of a superior is profoundly significant. There's no need to inform subordinates, much less explain!

So, I can decide this matter myself. There's no need to let those three know.

DING-DONG!

Bet placed successfully!

Xiaoga Yexiong looked at his bet with satisfaction, then closed the interface and waited for the match to end to collect his money.

Bernice was in his office, listening to a subordinate's report. "Chen Gu brought his daughter to see him?"

The subordinate nodded respectfully. "Yes, but they didn't talk about the match."

"Heh," Bernice sneered. "Is Chen Gu playing the sympathy card? That shows a lack of confidence. But he underestimates Heibo. After all these years, Heibo's desire for victory and fame far exceeds everything else."

His subordinate asked with some concern, "Sir, Chen Gu is a professional. Can Heibo really handle him?"

"I wasn't sure before. I only put Heibo forward to test the waters. Success would be gratifying, of course, but even failure wouldn't result in much loss. Now, I'm very confident Heibo will win."

Chen Gu bringing Heibo's daughter here is definitely a gesture of weakness, a plea for mercy.

The subordinate nodded. After concluding the report, he stepped out, immediately found a secluded place, opened the betting interface, and, gritting his teeth, placed a hefty sum on Heibo.

Lord Bernice is truly a great man. His insight is sharp, and his judgment is never wrong—otherwise, he wouldn't hold his current position.

The closer it got to the match, the more overwhelming the promotions became. During this period, this event was the hottest topic, pushing all other news into the background.

Even news of a certain superstar's marital infidelity was only discussed repeatedly among his own fans. Surprisingly, not many outsiders were interested in this 'melon.'

Previously, Chen Gu's movie had been in its late screening phase, with box office growth slowing considerably. However, leveraging this wave of attention, sales surged by several hundred million!

Chen Gu had now broken the box office record for movies starring giant beast celebrities, raising that record by three hundred million. With signs of further increase, it was steadily climbing into the 'Top Ten' action movies of the Starry Era in cinematic history!

The old orangutan was practically soaring with arrogance recently. He was incredibly smug! He had indeed been a gold-standard producer before, but that was in the music industry. In films, he usually only held an insignificant, nominal role in movies involving singers under him. Alternatively, he might get a chance to act as a producer if a financier wanted to promote an unknown newcomer. But this time, with a major production and his own team, he'd made a sensational debut!

Lately, he often found himself scratching his head and muttering, How did I never realize before that Chen Gu, this goofball, is my benefactor? If only he wouldn't keep eyeing our family's little bok choy... that would be perfect...

Meanwhile, Chen Gu was diligently preparing for the battle.

He had collected recordings of nearly every match Heibo had fought.

Heibo had obtained the Nine-Headed Serpent's egg quite early on. However, raising such a massive creature to adulthood was not easy. All of Heibo's income, apart from what was needed for his basic living expenses, was poured into his Energy Gathering Mechanical Species.

Even so, this was surely insufficient. According to a normal growth cycle, a thirty-year-old nine-headed beast... would at best be in its 'adolescent' stage.

This guy must have had some fortuitous encounter; otherwise, the Nine-Headed Serpent couldn't have grown to this extent.

Each head of the Nine-Headed Serpent possessed a unique attack method, making it extremely powerful among Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, placing it firmly at the top of the food chain.

Moreover, Chen Gu's analysis showed that Heibo had only started coordinating with the Nine-Headed Serpent this year. Previously, he would just find any giant beast to fight his matches.

His win rate hadn't exceeded twenty percent.

If the Nine-Headed Serpent had grown progressively, Heibo would surely have spent the preceding years gradually accustoming it to competitions.

It must be due to some fortuitous encounter that his Energy Gathering Mechanical Species matured so suddenly, Chen Gu concluded. Even if it has participated in several matches this year, its combat experience and fighting spirit must be lacking.

This is the key to defeating it.

He was planning his strategy when his home's smart hub system announced again, "Heibo is visiting."

Chen Gu felt irritated. Ever since he had brought Heibo's daughter to meet him, the man kept assuming Chen Gu had 'ulterior motives' and constantly wanted to 'have a talk' with him.

Chapter 667: Pecking Rice Like a Chick_3

Chen Gu indeed had no other purpose and was too lazy to meet him, wanting to avoid being captured by reporters from those small media outlets and having unfavorable news fabricated about him.

He declined without hesitation, "Refused."

Outside the villa, Heibo stomped in frustration. He had been uneasy these past few days. During that dinner, he and his daughter had a heart-to-heart talk, which had somewhat eased their father-daughter relationship.

He repeatedly hinted and inquired if Chen Gu had any demands from his daughter, but she knew nothing.

Heibo had clawed his way up from the chaotic and conspiracy-filled lower-tier leagues. He always believed that "the fewer the demands, the higher the price," which was why he was restless, determined to confront Chen Gu and demand an explanation: What the hell do you want?!

But Chen Gu just wouldn't see him—this unintentional act, however, successfully unsettled Heibo further.

Now, having been "Refused" once more, Heibo couldn't take it anymore. He stood outside the gate, pointing at the surveillance equipment, jumping and roaring, "Chen Gu, come out and clarify this for me!"

"What exactly do you want?"

"I will give it my all in the match! You're dreaming if you think I'd throw the fight!"

"I warn you, this is between us. If you're still a man, compete with me fair and square, and don't you dare target my daughter!"

Unfortunately for Heibo, his roars went unheard. The smart home system didn't convey any of his words to Chen Gu; its master had already given the instruction: "Refused."

Heibo shouted, jumped, and cursed for a while until he was out of breath. He wasn't a Professional; the past few years had been unkind to him, leaving his physical fitness merely average.

Sitting on the steps to rest, he couldn't help but secretly admire the idols his daughter liked. Singing and dancing through an entire concert... those young men must be in incredible shape.

After some thought, he took out a pen and paper, quickly scribbled a note, stuck it on Chen Gu's door, then turned and left, deciding not to overthink things anymore.

Focus on the competition. As long as I win, I'll have money and fame. No matter what schemes Chen Gu has, I'll have the means to deal with them.

Only with money and status can I protect my daughter!

Inside the villa, Chen Gu opened his Dimensional Prison Ring but did not let Combat Rooster out. He was instructing it remotely: "This match is very important. You must give your all and not take it lightly."

Combat Rooster, having been confined in its cage and unable to play for a while, was brimming with petulance!

It huffed with a bit of dissatisfaction. Chen Gu instantly fumed, knowing this blockhead surely hadn't taken his words to heart. He raised his voice sternly, "Take this seriously!"

"I'm not kidding. Your opponent this time is very strong. You must use your full strength and take this seriously!"

"If you don't obey, you'll stay in this cage forever!"

"KREEE!" Combat Rooster's feathers bristled all over its body as it let out a piercing cry. Stay in here forever? Impossible!

Seeing that the creature had finally gotten the message, Chen Gu nodded and closed the Dimensional Cage.

「It was a new day, and Chen Gu still hadn't shown up for work.」

And Sanhime, as usual, was waiting respectfully at the entrance of the Capital Star headquarters to greet the Young Master. Ten minutes before work was due to start, Xiaoga Yexiong's car arrived, punctual as ever.

"Greetings, Young Master!"

Today, however, all four of them seemed unusually cautious, each more apprehensive than the last.

「The Alliance specifically chose a day without other matches to hold Chen Gu and Heibo's competition—the hype for this match was already on par with the "Beast Emperor Showdown"!」

Advertising and sponsorships had sold for sky-high prices.

And the venue for the match was set at the largest and most technologically advanced "Peak Stadium" in the entirety of Capital Star.

Chen Gu arrived at the arena two hours early. The surroundings were already bustling with activity, as most fans had already gathered. Outside the venue, fans of both sides were everywhere, wearing T-shirts printed with their favorite contender's image and holding various cheering props. Some zealous fans had even rented out nearby holographic advertising spaces to display custom support slogans for their chosen contestant.

Heibo had also arrived. The platform that purchased the live broadcasting rights streamed his arrival. When Heibo showed up, his Behemoth truck looked very worn, with mended patches visible in many places. This garnered him another wave of sympathy, solidifying his "grassroots underdog" persona.

In contrast, Chen Gu was in a much better position; his truck, supplied by the Behemoth Alliance, was covered in sponsor advertisements.

The match was still scheduled for 8:00 PM. By 7:30 PM, all spectators had entered, and every private box was filled.

In Chen Gu's box, the Special Operations Team, Bai Yunpeng, and the others had settled in early.

Chen Zili, arriving late with his "female classmate," walked in only to find... it was packed, and no seats were left.

The young man was dejected. Why am I always the unlucky one?

Inside the arena, twelve holographic projectors were active: six displayed Heibo's past battles, and six showed Chen Gu's.

The audience was growing restless, cursing the slow passage of time and wishing the match would start immediately.

Finally, the host began introducing both contestants. The audience's cheers swelled, wave after wave, until at last, the two competitors made their entrance.

Heibo and Chen Gu stood opposite each other in the center of the field. Heibo glared fiercely at Chen Gu. "No matter what conspiracy you're plotting, you won't succeed!"

Chen Gu smirked. I do a good deed and still get blamed? He smiled faintly. "Quite the persecution complex."

Chapter 668: Pecking Rice Like a Chick_4

The referee took the stage, read the rules to both competitors as a matter of routine, and finally, the match was about to begin.

Each returned to their linkers. Then, the huge gates on both sides of the arena opened. With a roar, the nine-headed serpent burst out first, roaming the field. Its massive body caused the Energy Field around the arena to shake with resounding thuds—a pre-emptive strike! Just this display of power alone gave its supporters a surge of confidence.

And the Combat Rooster... This clod strutted out lazily, seemingly uninterested in its opponent. It just stood there, glancing sideways at the agitated nine-headed serpent with a hint of disdain.

Lord Rooster is destined to become a super lifeform.

This reptile thinks it's worthy of fighting Lord Rooster?!

In a luxurious VIP box at the top, an attendant wearing a dark red vest and black trousers pushed in a champagne trolley.

"Sirs, please enjoy," said the attendant.

Bernice waved his hand, and the attendant withdrew.

Xiaoga Hanami picked up a glass of champagne, looked down at the somewhat "listless" Combat Rooster, and said optimistically with a smile, "In terms of momentum, Chen Gu has already lost a step. His Combat Rooster seems a bit timid."

Du Lifeng was also very pleased. "Heibo's move is very clever. By suppressing Chen Gu's momentum first, the subsequent strife within the Bureau of Mystic Security will be more advantageous for us."

Ding Zhou, too, was very satisfied. Leaning back lazily on the soft sofa and sipping his drink, he was already prepared. After this match, as long as Xiaoga Yexiong defeated Chen Gu, he would immediately start his pursuit of the Ninth Power Level.

...

Once the link was complete, Chen Gu also took his opponent Heibo very seriously. He communicated with the Combat Rooster, preparing to personally control it to face the enemy.

But this time, the Combat Rooster sent over a disdainful thought, indicating to its master: Leave it to me.

Chen Gu was somewhat uneasy, but the Combat Rooster was full of confidence: I guarantee a win that's clean and decisive!

Chen Gu thought about it and cautiously agreed.

Then he watched as the nine-headed serpent charged fiercely forward. A gaping maw led the way, spewing a pillar of azure flame that engulfed the Combat Rooster with a BOOM!

That clod actually didn't dodge or evade; it just stood there and took the full brunt of the attack!

Chen Gu was so furious he almost cursed aloud. But then, the Combat Rooster sent a thought through the linker: Relax, Lord Rooster is holding steady.

Pressing its advantage, another of the serpent's huge heads, staying close to the ground, slipped forward under the cover of the flames. It opened its mouth and unleashed another massive bolt of lightning.

BOOM—

The lightning exploded brilliantly, arcing chaotically through the sea of fire.

The lightning was brighter than the flames. The Combat Rooster, originally swallowed by the fire, reappeared within the dazzling electric light—a form wreathed in lightning.

Because of the linker, Chen Gu could feel everything the Combat Rooster endured.

The Combat Rooster's earlier refusal to dodge the sea of flames had truly given Chen Gu a scare.

But this second time, he was much calmer. He sensed that these two attacks... had, in fact, not seriously harmed the Combat Rooster.

He relaxed, though he was also puzzled: Is this it? Or has that clod, the Combat Rooster, evolved again and become stronger?

The nine-headed serpent had hit its target with both attacks. For a moment, its confidence swelled because, in past fights, its opponents would typically have lost their ability to fight back after such a double strike.

So it lunged forward fiercely, its massive body bearing down from above, attempting to ensnare the Combat Rooster.

It was at this precise moment that the Combat Rooster moved for the first time.

THWACK!

A precise peck landed on the largest, central head of the nine-headed serpent.

A huge, scythe-like horn grew atop this head, incredibly sharp and fearsome. In past battles, it often used this single horn to deliver the finishing blow.

And the Combat Rooster's peck landed squarely on this scythe-like horn. With a CRACK, the horn shattered, large metallic fragments reflecting the light as they scattered everywhere.

The nine-headed serpent shrieked miserably and retreated in disarray, while the Combat Rooster remained motionless amidst the flames and lightning, standing firm.

The prolonged cheers abruptly ceased. In the highest VIP box, Bernice and the others, who had been comfortably sipping champagne, all let out a soft "Hmm?" They sat up straighter, their attention now fixed on the arena.

Chapter 669: The Club

Inside the connector, Heibo's head buzzed. A searing pain shot through his skull, and his vision darkened as if an iron chisel had viciously hammered his forehead.

Although the Nine-Headed Serpent had retreated after taking a significant beating, its ferocious nature remained unchanged. It vigorously slammed its massive tail against the ground, the thudding sounding like war drums.

However, it no longer dared to approach rashly. Though it didn't understand why its opponent remained motionless, this presented an opportunity. The serpent began to circle the Combat Rooster, unleashing a barrage of long-range attacks. Instantly, explosions, lightning, and flames surged, completely engulfing the Combat Rooster.

Heibo's supporters watched this scene, their recently quieted cheers rising enthusiastically once more. On the surface, at least, it seemed the Nine-Headed Serpent had the upper hand. Even that last hit seemed to prove the Combat Rooster could only employ a "defensive counterattack" tactic. And why use such a tactic, if not because it's outmatched?

Up in the VIP box, Bernice and the others, who had been somewhat tense moments before, relaxed. Smiles blossomed on their faces once again.

"Chen Gu's Combat Rooster certainly has strength," Bernice commented. "The Nine-Headed Serpent has grown impatient. Its opponent, though not as strong, isn't easily defeated. It just needs to be more patient, and victory will eventually be its." Her words earned nods of agreement from everyone else, except for Ding Zhou. He frowned privately, sensing something wasn't quite right.

However, he quickly composed himself. This was just a colossal beast combat match, and its outcome had limited impact on the grand scheme of things.

Chen Gu also seemed to have discerned the Combat Rooster's intention and chose not to interfere further.

Amidst the Nine-Headed Serpent's terrifying onslaught, the Combat Rooster's once-colossal body had vanished from sight.

The Nine-Headed Serpent attacked fiercely for over ten minutes. It was like a grand fireworks display; at the very least, the sound and light effects were spectacular, much to the audience's delight.

The atmosphere at the venue was electric.

Only Chen Gu's supporters felt terribly stifled. What on earth is happening? they wondered. What does it mean to just stand there and take a beating?

After more than ten minutes, the Nine-Headed Serpent tried to close in again, preparing to end the match.

This time, however, it was even more cautious. One of its heads quietly circled behind the Combat Rooster and opened its mouth wide. A flexible, whip-like sword shot out, aiming for what it had identified as a "weak point" on the Combat Rooster.

Under the cover of the surrounding explosions and flames, this attack was extremely covert, almost impossible to detect.

Yet the Combat Rooster, which had remained steadfast the entire time, suddenly twisted its neck. With a sharp THWACK, it accurately struck the metal whip.

It was as easy as snatching an insect in its beak.

CRACK!

The metal whip snapped instantly, its tip flying off to who knows where.

The Nine-Headed Serpent howled in pain, its body trembling. But the Combat Rooster was cunning. After snapping the metal whip, it didn't let go. Instead, it clamped down on the remaining part and, with a vigorous twist of its neck, gave a hard pull!

The metal whip was connected to one of the Nine-Headed Serpent's heads and could be considered that head's "tongue." Whether biological or mechanical, having one's tongue yanked rendered a creature utterly helpless.

The Nine-Headed Serpent's body shuddered and collapsed. It was dragged across the ground for several dozen meters, a large amount of sickly green fluid gushing from the gaping maw of the afflicted head.

The Nine-Headed Serpent was ferocious, however. It raised another head and fired two laser beams from its eyes. BOOM! The lasers sliced through the metal whip.

Only then did it escape the Combat Rooster's grasp.

Chen Gu's fans erupted in cheers, finally able to vent their frustration!

The Nine-Headed Serpent retreated again. It was now missing a horn and a tongue. While these weren't mortal injuries, it was clearly flustered.

Its eyes now showed not only anger but also a hint of doubt and uncertainty.

It had a vague feeling that its opponent's immobility might not stem from "fear." This battle wouldn't end so easily.

At this point, it felt somewhat at a loss. Long-range attacks seemed to have no discernible effect on the Combat Rooster, and it wasn't confident it could wear down its opponent that way.

Yet its two attempts at close combat had ended in utter failure—a true case of trying to steal the chicken only to lose the bait.

Heibo, controlling his colossal beast, decided to stake everything on one last, desperate effort.

The Nine-Headed Serpent quickly rallied and launched another barrage of relentless attacks, this time even employing its powerful, energy-draining laser eyes.

The Combat Rooster, as before, remained motionless, allowing its opponent to unleash its assault.

Suddenly, one of the Nine-Headed Serpent's ordinary-looking heads rose.

All the other heads had various "attachments," but this one was plain, simple, and had never been used in battle before.

Outsiders speculated that this head hadn't completed its "development" and that its special attack capabilities hadn't yet emerged.

But at this moment, the mouth of this head opened, seemingly spraying something out—yet the audience saw nothing at all.

However, the flames and lightning surrounding the Combat Rooster were instantly swept away by some unknown force, leaving the area around the Combat Rooster completely clear!

The Combat Rooster's body exhibited a peculiar fluctuation, its massive metal frame suddenly erupting with a cacophony of CLANGS and BANGS.

Chapter 670: The Club_2

Someone immediately recognized it. "This is... Ultrasonic Waves! My God, the nine-headed serpent can actually unleash such an attack! This is an absolute killer move against Energy Gathering Mechanical Species!"

This type of Ultrasonic Wave could severely damage metallic structures, causing the body of an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species to completely collapse!

The Combat Rooster also seemed to be in great pain from such an attack, its body growing slack, but it slowly turned its head towards the nine-headed serpent and then, step by step, walked towards it.

The nine-headed serpent frantically spat out these Ultrasonic Waves, hoping to utterly defeat the Combat Rooster.

However, as the Combat Rooster walked, it shook its body, unbelievably neutralizing the effects of the Ultrasonic Waves.

It gracefully walked up to the nine-headed serpent and then, under the serpent's terrified gaze, struck fiercely with a peck.

THWACK!

A large, transparent hole appeared on the nine-headed serpent's central head.

Then the Combat Rooster pecked repeatedly, THWACK! THWACK! THWACK! THWACK...

A transparent hole now pierced each of the nine-headed serpent's nine heads.

CRASH—

Its massive body collapsed completely. The audience cried out in disbelief; Heibo's supporters even involuntarily covered their mouths or eyes.

Afterward, the vast "Peak Sports Arena" fell deathly silent. Even the referee was stunned. How could the nine-headed serpent, which had clearly been dominating, be so instantly overturned and just fall like that?!

The referee was so stunned it took him a full ten seconds to snap back to reality before he loudly declared, "Chen Gu and his Combat Rooster are victorious!"

"Oh yeah!" Chen Gu's supporters leaped up from their seats, cheering excitedly.

In contrast, Heibo's supporters were crestfallen, still unwilling to believe this outcome. But seeing the Combat Rooster strutting confidently on the stage, with the nine-headed serpent lying at its feet as if dead, the cruel reality was undeniable.

Was the so-called grassroots counterattack, the dream chaser's path, ending just like this? This... this isn't the script we wanted to see at all!

They all looked towards the Combat Rooster and Chen Gu, feeling utterly helpless. This is a true demon king!

By this time, the audience also understood. The Combat Rooster stood motionless, letting the nine-headed serpent attack, not because it couldn't dodge, but because it disdained to. It was as if it was saying, 'I'll just stand here and let you hit me; you can't harm me at all.' 'I'll let you use all your tricks, then I'll defeat you and make you lose all hope.' 'All this talk about a showdown between the strongest Energy Gathering Mechanical Species was nonsense. The Combat Rooster wanted to use this to show everyone that the nine-headed serpent isn't even worthy of challenging its status as the strongest mechanical species!'

The entire battle, all told, lasted less than half an hour. The sponsors and live-streaming platforms were dumbfounded. It's over? Just like that? We spent so much money, and it ended this quickly?

But upon reflection, they quickly understood. It must have been because Chen Gu and the Combat Rooster considered our investment and expected returns that they dragged it out until now.

A quick calculation showed the Combat Rooster had only struck three times in total, with each engagement lasting no more than ten seconds...

If the Combat Rooster had simply wanted an easy win, this highly publicized match would have ended in ten seconds. That would have been a real financial disaster for us! It had already stood there motionless, letting the nine-headed serpent bombard it for over twenty minutes. But the opponent was just too weak. Even with the Rooster Lord going easy on it, the fight only managed to drag on for less than half an hour. What more could it have done?

Thus, these paying sponsors found their fondness for Chen Gu and the Combat Rooster soaring. Now **this** is a responsible partner!

Looking at Heibo and the nine-headed serpent, however, filled them with scorn and resentment. What garbage! Their pre-match slogans were thunderous, but once on stage, their pathetic incompetence was

laid bare, making us waste so much money! Blacklist them! Blacklist them! We will never invest in such partners again!

Huh? It seems we originally signed with Chen Gu, so this Heibo has nothing to do with us, right? Hahaha, that's fantastic! We should definitely get in touch with Mr. Chen Gu more often in the future.

「In the top-floor VIP box」

Everyone was silent. Bernice wore the ugliest expression. Ding Zhou, however, having anticipated some of this and mentally prepared himself, wasn't too disappointed.

Ding Zhou stood up, waved his hand dismissively, and said, "It's just a commercial match. Winning or losing doesn't affect the grand scheme of things, so let's not dwell on it. That's all for today. I'll make my leave."

He pushed open the door and saw Bernice's assistant, who had been waiting outside, now slumped against the wall, clutching his chest in pain.

"What's wrong with you?" Ding Zhou thought he might be having a heart attack.

The assistant waved his hand weakly. "I'm fine, Your Excellency. I'm just... a bit heartbroken..."

Ding Zhou had a realization. What a loyal subordinate, to be so distraught because his direct superior's plan failed.

He smiled at the man and turned to leave. The assistant glared venomously towards the interior of the box. Why did I trust Bernice's judgment? Why did I invest so much money... Now, it's all over.

Inside the box, Bernice looked utterly humiliated. As if rubbing salt in his wounds, Xiaoga Hanami said, "It's alright. Xiaoga Yexiong will defeat him on a true battlefield."

Bernice got up and left.