

## Scavengers 331

Chapter 331: Sophistry

"Stingy?"

Hearing this word, Ji You, with sharp ears, suddenly lifted her head from her deep thoughts, her gaze following the source of the sound towards a corner of the spectator stands—

What she saw was a dense crowd of people, indistinguishable from each other, and the constant chirping of discussions around her... These disturbances prevented Ji You from finding the person who called her stingy right away.

The person had said it only once and didn't continue, so after looking around, Ji You had no choice but to give up.

But—

Thinking about how this person inadvertently pointed out the true reason she used an antique mech, Ji You couldn't help but twitch her lips slightly, but it was just for an instant. She quickly returned to normal and then grinned, thinking: "So what if you figured it out? Nobody believes it anyway."

Hmm~

Even if she steadfastly denied it, could that person actually find any evidence to expose her?

Impossible.

Besides, Ji You genuinely believed that being 'stingy', apart from sounding slightly unpleasant, wasn't something to be ashamed of. Being extremely frugal is essentially being stingy, right?

Hmm~

Right.

That's it.

Convincing herself with a twisted logic, in an instant, Ji You didn't feel ashamed at all, nor was she afraid of being exposed. She even thought, what does it matter if her real reason for using the antique mech gets revealed?

She had to be stingy, and she would still be stingy.

In the spectator stands, aside from discussing the recent battle between Rag Queen and King's Expedition, the most pressing question on the minds of these audience members was:

"The countdown to the end of the event is almost up, I wonder how many points the Rag Queen will earn this time?"

"Conservatively speaking, at least 20,000 points, right?"

"Only 20,000? I think it might be 50,000 points!"

"50,000, that guess might still be too conservative. I estimate at least 100,000!"

"100,000, that much? It's not much! I think so too."

"With King's Expedition betting odds at 1.5 times and Rag Queen's at 3.5 times, with so many fans of King's Expedition out there, at least several hundred thousand must have bet on King's Expedition, right? All those people lost, Rag Queen is the real big winner. So, I also think her points this round should start from 100,000."

...

Staring at her own points entry information, Ji You's lips twitched and twitched again. Now hearing the audience's discussions, her whole face stiffened.

20,000?

50,000?

100,000?

These clueless spectators, aren't they holding her in too high regard?

In reality?

System: [Points from this round: 2250 points.]

2250!

Believe it?

Ji You's eyes widened, she nearly stared the digits into forming a flower, but she still couldn't convince herself to believe this number.

The system must have made a mistake.

Impossible!

In a competition watched by over a million spectators, even if each person only bet 1 point, I shouldn't be getting so little in commissions. If it's not a system error, then what could it be?

However—

She had just sent a request to the system to investigate the commission error, but it was rejected. The Star Network system, with robust evidence, fiercely gauged Ji You and told her the calculations were not wrong.

As for the reason behind so few points, the Star Network system also provided a very reasonable explanation.

It turned out, among the million spectators on site, 90% were fans of King's Expedition, but for some reason, only 5% of these fans chose to bet on King's Expedition, while the remaining 85% abstained.

Abstaining meant voluntarily giving up the right to bet in this competition.

Ji You twitched the corner of her mouth and couldn't help but mock, "Turns out, not only my fans are fake, but the fans of King's Expedition are too. And to think they cheered so vigorously in the arena."

In this way, Ji You felt somewhat consoled.

Afterwards.

She immediately decided to leave the arena.

Ji You checked her number of participations, reaching 50 times with a win rate of 80%. Advancing to the next round was a sure thing.

Continue fighting?

Or exit?

Ji You checked the time; there was still 1 hour left until her regular bedtime, but these past few days, in order to make the most of her time competing, she hadn't completed many assignments for her Material Department. After weighing it out in her mind, Ji You decided to go offline.

After logging off Star Network, Ji You hurried to finish her homework. First, she had to redo the assignment that Professor Ye Hong had returned, and then, catch up on the others.

Elsewhere.

After the competition ended, the atmosphere in the entire room where King's Expedition and Hero King were staying turned sour, as they both appeared quite upset.

After a while.

Hero King said, "Ajing, since it's already in the past, don't think too much about it. Overthinking is useless. Get ready for the upcoming qualifier."

The preliminary round had, after all, become a thing of the past.

King's Expedition furrowed his brows, biting his lip, "I really can't understand—why did I lose to her?"

In terms of speed, combat skills, experience, strength, mecha... he didn't believe he could lose, but the reality was, he had lost.

Lost.

And it was a crushing defeat!

In 15 seconds—he was defeated by his opponent.

King's Expedition couldn't accept this fact.

Looking at King's Expedition still stubbornly sinking in that thought, Hero King slightly displeased, furrowed his eyebrows, "Ajing, you losing to her is not unjust at all. Before the match, I had warned you, instructed you not to be careless. But during the official match, instead of seizing the initiative to secure victory, you chose to flaunt your speed in front of her—"

King's Expedition, upon hearing this, lifted his head and said, "I didn't—"

Hero King waved his hand, "Don't be hasty to refute me. Rag Queen is aggressive and defensive, fast and powerful in her burst strength. Although you slightly surpass her in speed, in all other aspects, you're not as good as her, whether in adaptability or combat consciousness... you're simply not her match. I've watched all her match videos and found that she's very adept at assessing the situation and using it to her advantage... Well, what's the big deal in admitting defeat? Just be more vigilant next time."

King's Expedition didn't say more.

Hero King didn't try to console further, in reality, these words were meant not just for King's Expedition, but also for himself. He thought his careful planning would allow them to trample over Rag Queen and become an overnight sensation on the network, but unexpectedly, the plan totally backfired, and the loss was devastating. Hero King, if not for his deep resourcefulness, would have taken a long time to recover from this blow.

Originally, Hero King had approached King's Expedition to let him take advantage of his speed to defeat Rag Queen. If Rag Queen's current momentum had collapsed, it would have transferred to his side's King's Expedition.

Having tried twice without success, Hero King said, "Next, let's prepare well for the qualifier and make sure to perform well in it."

Chapter 332: Mengmeng

When night fell on Lanyue Star, dots of stars twinkled above, and its natural satellite was a planet even bigger than the Moon, casting down even brighter light.

Ji You originally planned for an hour of homework, but encountered a small mishap. Following Xiao You's instructed method, she made a slight error halfway through, resulting in a product that greatly deviated from what was intended. Helpless, Ji You and Xiao You analyzed the situation together and

concluded that the theory and practical operation were not well-coordinated. Consequently, Xiao You offered guidance, and Ji You remade the assignment.

Back and forth, it ended up taking an hour and a half and still wasn't completed.

A gentle breeze blew in through the open window, brushing Ji You's face with a hint of coolness, which momentarily cleared her somewhat rigid thoughts.

Ji You perked up and continued her meticulous crafting.

Then, after another half hour, she finally processed all the assignments that were sent back, and used a detector to check the Material's efficiency, which surprisingly reached 95%. Seeing the result, both Ji You and Xiao You were shocked.

Ji You couldn't help but ask, "Xiao You, what was the efficiency of our previous assignments that were returned?"

Xiao You, although with a good memory, now looked at the new result with a hint of uncertainty in her voice: "Um... was it 80%?"

"A 15% improvement!!!"

Both exclaimed in unison, and then laughed softly together.

As they laughed, the light in Ji You's eyes grew brighter: "Oh my, Xiao You, you're too amazing, able to increase it to 95%!"

Don't underestimate this 15% improvement. The higher the efficiency, the harder it is to improve going forward. People who could slightly improve already standardized basic Materials in the market, even by just 1%, are talents that major laboratories earnestly seek to hire.

The more fundamental the Material, the smaller the room for improvement because the basics have been thoroughly researched and explored by predecessors... Therefore, someone who can still enhance basic Materials is indeed precious.

In the enclosed space, the girl blushed when she heard Ji You's clear and unabashed praise, feeling an increasingly warm sensation in her chest around a tangible spot...

Ji You, unaware of the girl's expression in the enclosed space, cheerfully said, "I always knew my Xiao You is a genius! A genius! When we submit this assignment, let's see if that sharp-tongued old professor dares to return our work!"

Having their assignments returned with harsh criticisms had always weighed on Ji You's mind; but now, she finally felt she could hold her head high, her tone brimming with excitement.

Xiao You heard her sister's praises, her face blushing as she gently nodded, "Yeah, it definitely won't be sent back."

Ji You's eyes watched with satisfaction and excitement at the assignment Xiao You guided and she crafted herself. Then, she heard a sweet voice in her head saying, "Sister, it's time for you to sleep."

Ji You, surprised, exclaimed, "Huh? What time is it?"

After checking the time, she found that it was already over an hour later.

Ji You grinned, "I'm happy today; it's okay to sleep a bit late." Just thinking about the old professor's shocked face when he received the assignment made her too excited to sleep.

Who knew, suddenly Xiao You sternly said, "No! You must sleep! If not, I won't talk to you for three days."

Ji You: "Ah ha... I'm going to sleep then."

Saying that, she quickly jumped into bed and covered herself with the blanket, then said in a flattering tone, "Look... I'm really going to sleep now, very obediently, right?"

That pleading tone for praise, unfortunately, Xiao You's reserved personality kicked in; she struggled for a while but couldn't utter any praise and instead strictly said, "No talking either!"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You fell asleep as instructed by Xiao You, and slept very sweetly.

The next day.

Ji You, after a night of sweet dreams, woke up refreshed and energized, went for a run around the dormitory area, made a little money off Sheng Qingyan, then hitched a free ride to class with Sheng Qingyan.

After the intensive training, Ji You and her classmates had even more to learn each day. Besides time for eating and sleeping, all their time was spent studying, leaving no energy to care about anything else.

So—

Ji You always felt like she had forgotten something, but after recounting her daily activities since returning, she found no omissions.

Thus, she didn't think much more about it and continued her intense studying.

When the bell rang signaling the end of class, Ji You charged toward the cafeteria with Yue Qiguang and Chu Jiaojiao, just as they got in line for food, she suddenly received a call from an unknown contact.

Ji You confirmed she did not recognize the number, thinking it was a wrong number, she declined the call. However, the person insisted and called again, prompting Ji You to pay attention and quickly answer.

After picking up, there was silence on the other end.

Ji You with a puzzled face asked, "Hello, who are you looking for?"

From the other side, she could faintly hear some heavy breathing, but still, no one spoke.

Ji You was confused and muttered, "It must really be a wrong number."

She was about to hang up when suddenly she heard a male voice from the other side, "Hello, is this Ji You? I'm sorry to disturb you right now. I'm the owner of the hotpot restaurant on Commercial Street. Mengmeng hasn't seen you for a while and really misses you, so I wanted to ask on its behalf when you might have time to come by?"

Ah!

Ji You slapped her forehead, suddenly remembering what she had forgotten!

—Mengmeng!

—Alpaca Mengmeng!

She had promised Mengmeng that she would visit it periodically to play...

Ji You quickly said, "I'm free, I'm free, I'll be right there."

Wondering if Little Cutie Mengmeng might be upset?

Hearing her response, the restaurant owner sighed with relief and said with a smile, "Ji You, you haven't had lunch yet, have you? I've already prepared the food. If you don't mind, you can come here for lunch."

Wow~

What a treat.

How could Ji You say no?

Instead of dealing with scumbag He Bi's stinginess, she'd rather go have lunch with adorable Mengmeng.

True to her word, Ji You immediately walked out of the food line. Chu Jiaojiao saw Ji You's action and couldn't help but remind her, "Ji You, where are you going? You can't have someone else buy your lunch."

Ji You waved her hand and said, "I'm going to eat on Commercial Street."

Chu Jiaojiao then asked curiously, "Do you have money?"

Ji You replied, "...What kind of question is that? Even if I'm poor, would I not have enough money for a meal?"

Once Chu Jiaojiao said it, she felt it sounded a bit odd, scratched her head, and giggled, "...I don't mean you're poor. In my eyes, whether Ji You is poor or rich, you are the most beautiful person in the world."

Ji You: "..."

Chapter 333: Playing Hard to Get

After listening to Chu Jiaojiao's flattering nonsense, Ji You couldn't help but smile slightly, immediately turned around, and strode away. In order to get to the business district sooner, Ji You gritted her teeth and reluctantly spent 5 credit points to take an automated Floating Car.

By noon, the business district was bustling with activity. Many students who had money in their pockets and didn't want to squeeze into the cafeteria opted to dine in restaurants here. The hotpot restaurant was no exception. When Ji You entered, it was filled with students.

As soon as Ji You stepped in, she bumped into the hotpot restaurant owner and was taken aback, "Owner? Why are you standing at the door?"

Upon seeing Ji You, the restaurant owner also let out a sigh of relief, a smile promptly appearing on his face: "Classmate Ji You, sorry to keep you waiting. I've been waiting for you on purpose."

Ji You: "???"

The restaurant owner led Ji You toward a special staff-only corridor, explaining as they walked, "Mengmeng has been a bit unhappy lately, hardly grazing at all, so I'm a bit worried. Just a few days ago, while accompanying Mengmeng watching the news, it saw your figure on the screen and kept bleating at you. Thinking it likes you so much, I invited you over to please talk to Mengmeng and give it some encouragement."

Ji You: "..."

Honestly, she didn't know how to comfort a llama, but? Judging by the look on the face of the hotpot restaurant owner, she knew it must be true; Mengmeng must be troubled by something to be so unhappy.

So, Ji You immediately said, "I'll try my best."

"Ah!" The hotpot restaurant owner let out a sigh, saying, "Mengmeng will definitely be very happy to see you."

Scratching her head, Ji You said, "I've missed it quite a bit after not seeing it for so many days." As she spoke these words, she felt a tad guilty—truth be told, she had been back for several days and had only cared about studying and competing, not sparing a thought for anything else, having pushed Mengmeng aside in her mind.

Of course, that's not something she could outright say to the owner, nor could she let Mengmeng know; if the little guy found out, who knows how heartbroken it would be.

As they talked, walking through numerous spaces, they were soon approaching where Mengmeng lived.

Suddenly, the restaurant owner stopped and said, "Mengmeng is right here. It's been giving me the cold shoulder these past few days, so I won't go in. You go in alone, classmate Ji You. If there's anything you need, just ring this bell, and I can be right over."

Ji You blinked and said, "Mengmeng's temperament is quite something, huh? Owner, you always indulge it like this?"

Hearing this, the restaurant owner sighed softly and said quietly, "Our Mengmeng has always been very well-behaved, everyone's Little Cutie. It only gets temperamental when it's unhappy. Speaking of which, Mengmeng really is a pitiful kid. If it weren't for..." He suddenly realized he was saying too much and quickly stopped, saying, "Knowing that you're coming today, Mengmeng must be very anxious. I won't go in."

Ji You didn't ask further and nodded, "Alright."

Following that, the door opened at her command, and only then did Ji You realize that the hotpot restaurant had actually set aside a few hundred square meters as a ranch for Mengmeng, filled with fresh grass.

She couldn't help but admire the extravagance of it all.

Admiring inside, Ji You's eyes immediately fixed on the llama in the midst of all the green. She grinned broadly and said cheerily, "Mengmeng, I've come to see you."

Mengmeng looked up, gazing at the ceiling, and didn't respond.

"Aw! Little Cutie Mengmeng, I've missed you so much..." As Ji You spoke, she rushed over, reaching out to hold Mengmeng's head firmly, wanting to give it a good rub—

Just as her hand reached out, Mengmeng suddenly stepped back, avoiding Ji You's embrace.

Ji You: "..."

After dodging, Mengmeng gave Ji You a squinting glance, then turned its head away, even snorting softly through its nose.

Ji You: "..."

This—

Was it acting haughty?

Or was it angry?

Or perhaps, both?

Wondering what the reason could be, Mengmeng, which had remained stationary, suddenly turned its back deliberately, presenting its rear end to Ji You, its refusal clear and unmistakable.

Oh, dear!

This is really a little proud one, with such a temper.

Ji You softened her voice and quickly coaxed: "Little Mengmeng~"

"Little baby~"

"Little Cutie~"

"Sweetheart~"

Ji You spouted these cheesy lines as if they cost her nothing, one after another non-stop. Thankfully, her audience was an alpaca; otherwise, any person would have been intolerable.

In fact, after hearing this, the alpaca Mengmeng didn't react at all.

Ji You didn't get discouraged and quickly explained: "Sister didn't come to play with you right away because there were a lot of learning tasks unfinished, I couldn't leave them, so I was delayed a little bit. Our Mengmeng is so smart, cute, and lively, surely you won't be mad at your sister, right?"

Mengmeng snorted through its nose but still didn't turn around.

Hmm?

Could it be that it's not upset because I haven't seen it for so long? Maybe it's been feeling gloomy recently? That's why it's unhappy?

Ji You racked her brains but couldn't figure it out. Instead of guessing the alpaca's thoughts, she went straight on: "Let me tell you, my special training this time introduced me to so many interesting things..."

Yada yada... She briefly shared her experiences at the Space Station with Mengmeng.

This time, Mengmeng's ears slightly quivered, and it even scratched the grass under its hooves with its front paw, but it still refused to turn around. Ji You guessed that the little fellow must have cooled down by now, willing to listen to her chatter.

With a twinkle in her eye, Ji You immediately said: "It seems, Mengmeng doesn't like me anymore and doesn't want to listen to me either, so I'll just leave."

After dropping those words, she immediately lifted her foot and walked toward the doorway.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

...

Ji You silently counted, and by the fifth step, she already heard a whooshing sound from behind. She knew Mengmeng was chasing after her, but she didn't rush, continuing unwaveringly toward the door with her sixth step.

"Ow~"

As Ji You's hand was about to grasp the doorknob, a gust of wind rushed at her, and the alpaca's long mouth latched onto her sleeve.

— As it turns out, playing hard to get not only works on humans but on alpacas as well.

The ancients did not deceive me!

Ji You's heart was already blooming with joy, but she still stubbornly said: "Mengmeng! Since you don't welcome me, I will go back first."

Mengmeng: "Ow~"

Ji You didn't look back and tried to pull the door open—

Mengmeng: "Wu~"

It clung to Ji You's sleeve with its mouth, refusing to let her continue opening the door, and made a series of pitiful cries. Listening to them, Ji You's heart softened instantly.

She immediately turned around and hugged Mengmeng's head: "Mengmeng! Little treasure! Are you not angry with your sister anymore?"

Mengmeng's head leaned close to Ji You and affectionately rubbed against her cheek, showing with its actions that it was no longer upset.

#### Chapter 334: Coaxing the Alpaca

Ranch.

A person and an alpaca cuddled up together, a scene that was anything but harmonious.

After making up with Mengmeng, Ji You talked nonstop. She was already somewhat of a chatterbox by nature, and facing Mengmeng, who she knew loved listening to her stories, she told Mengmeng all about her special training experience at Taoyuan Space Station.

When she spoke of teaming up with her classmates to trap a level 4 Star Beast, Mengmeng vigorously dug its paws, showing signs of excitement.

As Ji You went on to tell how she cleverly led her friends to scavenge in the starry sky and made a fortune, Mengmeng nudged its head over and affectionately kissed Ji You's cheek.

Then—

When the topic turned to the sacrifices of Senior Yang Bin and Senior Lu Zhen, Ji You's expression dimmed, and Mengmeng, sensing a cloud of sadness enveloping this human, looked somewhat baffled but still gently cuddled up to Ji You and rubbed her cheek.

This was its way of offering comfort.

Ji You's inner sorrow was briefly tucked away as she raised her hand to pet Mengmeng's head and said softly, "Mengmeng, I've put my sadness aside. I lift my eyes to look forward, step forward, my strength is still too weak, so I must urgently improve myself. From now on, I'll spend every day striving with all my might."

Mengmeng did not understand, but it could feel a strong momentum emanating from the good-looking and nice-smelling human beside it. Mengmeng stretched its head forward and opened its mouth:  
"Awoo~"

Ji You smiled with pressed lips: "Are you telling me to keep it up? I've got the message. I'll definitely keep going!"

Mengmeng: "Meh~"

Too cute.

Also way too silly and lovable.

Ji You couldn't help herself and hugged Mengmeng's head, giving it a vigorous rub: "Mengmeng, you're such a sweet Little Cutie, such a good kid, good kid, good kid..."

As she spoke, she felt her stomach growl.

Only then did Ji You remember she hadn't had lunch yet. With heavy training and lots of study tasks each day, she had to eat on time or she'd feel famished.

Of course, she didn't rush off to eat. The reason for her visit was to carry out a task given by the hot pot restaurant owner, which was to persuade Mengmeng to eat its green grass properly and not be stubborn and refuse food.

Thinking this over, Ji You reached out to feel Mengmeng's shrunken belly, laughing as she offered, "Mengmeng, are you hungry? Wanna eat some grass?"

The area around them was full of lush and tender grass, natural food specifically for alpacas.

After hearing this, Mengmeng snorted with its nose, seemingly a little unwilling.

Ji You asked, "Can you tell sister why you're being stubborn and not eating?"

Goodness!

Before, the restaurant owner had said that this alpaca often got depressed and refused to eat grass when it did. Ji You had doubted it at the time, but having now seen it firsthand, she realized it was true.

This won't do.

Even humans often go hungry, living day to day on nutrient solution, while Mengmeng, born into such a good home, with such a caring Master treating it like a child, still frequently threw temper tantrums. Either Mengmeng was being overly spoiled, or there had to be some underlying reason.

Regarding this, Ji You wasn't in a hurry. Since the store owner himself couldn't completely change Mengmeng's personality, she couldn't either, at least not right away. However, Ji You had a plan in mind and pressed a bell.

Instantly, the hot pot restaurant owner walked over. Seeing Mengmeng and Ji You so close together in a harmonious atmosphere, he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief, thinking to himself: It was indeed the right decision to invite Student Ji You over.

However, as soon as the restaurant owner entered, Mengmeng immediately turned its head away.

The hotpot restaurant owner saw Mengmeng's performance and didn't mind it. Without going over to coax Mengmeng, he turned his head towards Ji You and smiled, "Ji You, I've already prepared a hearty lunch for you, do you want to go out to eat now?"

Ji You also witnessed this scene and laughed, "There's no need to go out, if it's not too much trouble for the owner, you could bring the lunch in here, and I can have lunch with Mengmeng."

Eh?

Mengmeng is willing to eat?

As soon as the hotpot restaurant owner heard this, his eyes lit up. There was no reason to say no, and he immediately replied, "Okay, I'll bring it over now."

After that, he went out for a bit, and before long, the hotpot restaurant owner personally brought in lunch. Ji You almost drooled at the sight, but thankfully, she's now a person who has seen the world and wouldn't lose her composure over a lavish meal.

The hotpot restaurant owner laughed, "Actually, my specialty isn't just hotpot. This seared Long-legged Chicken is also my specialty, but it's quite complicated to make, so I haven't included it on the menu."

Speaking of which, he placed the glossy, golden-hued Long-legged Chicken on the table, which was the main dish. There were also several side dishes, fruits, beverages... all made from natural food, emitting the fragrance of natural food.

In short, this meal, if ordered in the restaurant, would definitely cost no less than 10,000 credit points.

Uh—

Ji You was a bit torn.

Should she pay for it?

Or should she not?

...

The hotpot restaurant owner smiled, "Please, Ji You, enjoy the meal and eat to your heart's content. Having you come over to take care of Mengmeng is a favor that cannot be compared to a meal."

Ji You felt a bit embarrassed: "How could I possibly accept this?"

But after considering it, she decided not to be overly polite and straightforwardly said, "Then I will accept it without ceremony."

Upon hearing this, the hotpot restaurant owner was delighted and said, "Ji You, if you need anything else, just ring the bell."

Ji You: "Okay."

Afterwards, the hotpot restaurant owner walked out.

Having eaten someone else's food meant that she naturally had to put in more effort. Ji You looked at Mengmeng beside her and said, "Mengmeng, are you not hungry and don't feel like eating? Then I won't wait for you, I'm going to eat."

This seared Long-legged Chicken was crispy on the outside and tender inside, the flavor was indescribably delicious, so good that Ji You could almost wish to swallow her fingers, teeth, and tongue

along with it. She tore off two chicken legs in a row, smacking her lips, and finished them off in just a few minutes.

As she ate, she also made appreciative noises, and this indulgent display even enticed Mengmeng, who only ate green grass and not meat, to have a huge appetite. However, looking at the green grass under its feet, Mengmeng who wanted to take a bite hesitated a bit: all set to fast to the end, if it gave in too easily—

—Mengmeng would feel it had lost face.

Ji You caught Mengmeng's little gesture, secretly snickered, and suddenly said out loud, "Humans need food like iron needs steel, without a meal one gets jittery. Mengmeng is iron, the grass is steel, without a meal Mengmeng gets jittery too, right? Mengmeng must be hungry too, right? So what are we waiting for? Let's eat together."

Mengmeng: "Meh—"

With a bellow, Mengmeng immediately lowered its head and began happily munching on the grass beneath it.

Ji You patted Mengmeng's head and laughed, "Mengmeng is such a good child, both cute and well-behaved. I'll always like Mengmeng."

Hearing this, Mengmeng happily raised its head, "Ao ao ao..."

Chapter 335: Hard-Won

Ranch.

A person and an alpaca, you eat meat and I eat grass, each taking a bite, they glance at each other, the scene is unexpectedly harmonious, the hotpot restaurant owner pushes the door and enters, upon seeing this scene, he is visibly moved.

Immediately.

He closes the door and quietly leaves.

After a while.

Ji You has eaten her fill, looking at Mengmeng next to her, who has also finished grazing around her body, Ji You can't help but think how good and obedient her own child is, feeling very content at the moment. She raises her hand, rubs Mengmeng's approaching head and says, "Mengmeng, do these green grasses taste good?"

Mengmeng: "Baa~"

"Yeah, they're delicious," Ji You smiles and says, "But do you know how hard it is for these grasses to grow little by little?"

Mengmeng looks puzzled: "Baa?"

Ji You doesn't mind whether it understands or not, she pretends as though it does and continues, "The owner has specially created these ranches so that you can eat fresh grass anytime. Do you know how hard it was? How much manpower and effort it took?" As she speaks, Ji You shakes her head, sighing, "You don't know."

Mengmeng looks up: "Baa baa?"

Ji You, sighing, says, "Mengmeng, do you know how much time and effort it takes for these grasses to grow from a seed to become so tall and juicy?"

Mengmeng widens its eyes.

Ji You shakes her head again, saying, "You still don't know."

Although Mengmeng doesn't quite understand, it can roughly feel the emotion in Ji You's words, and it can't help but nuzzle closer to Ji You's palm with affection: "Baa???"

Ji You suddenly breaks into a radiant smile, "The owner went through so much trouble, and these grasses strived to grow, all for Mengmeng to be happy and enjoy eating grass!"

Seeing the smile bloom on Ji You's face, Mengmeng is instantly affected and feels happy too. It listens to these words, half understanding them, but can feel the sincerity within.

Thus, Mengmeng wants to get even closer to Ji You, and mimics a smile.

Seeing Mengmeng's naturally adorable expression almost makes Ji You lose her composure, but she holds back the urge to rub Mengmeng vigorously, laughing and saying, "Mengmeng, promise sister, from now on, always eat your grass well and on time, do not let down the owner's love for you, and do not waste the grass's effort to sprout and grow, okay?"

Mengmeng immediately cries out, "Baa!"

Success!

But it still needs another coax, oh no! Further guidance!

Ji You looks at Mengmeng with a serious expression, "Comrade Mengmeng, no matter how unhappy you are in the future, you must eat meals, can you do that?"

Mengmeng gazes with its bright shiny eyes, loudly cries: "Awoo!"

Ji You raises her hand, strokes its head, and smiles, "I believe in Comrade Mengmeng! Because Comrade Mengmeng is an excellent alpaca, and can surely keep its word!"

Hearing this, Mengmeng is even more encouraged, instinctively sticks out its tongue and licks Ji You's palm, mouthing, "Awoo awoo..."

Soon, it's almost time for class, Ji You clarifies this to Mengmeng, though Mengmeng is very reluctant, it still lets Ji You leave, but as Ji You walks away, it follows behind her.

Only when Ji You has left the ranch does Mengmeng stop, but it continues to stare at Ji You.

Those pure eyes and reluctant expression almost made Ji You cave in and bring the alpaca to class, but she dismissed the idea.

If she really dared to bring the alpaca into the classroom, she guessed that teacher Mu Jianling would be the first to "strangle" her.

Scary...

The hotpot restaurant owner saw that Mengmeng had fully recovered, his face was always smiling as he escorted Ji You to the entrance of the store, still incessantly expressing his gratitude.

Just as Ji You was about to board the Floating Car, the hotpot restaurant owner sighed lightly and said, "Ah... Mengmeng used to be very lively, it only became like this after its Master and little Master left one after another..."

Ji You widened her eyes: "What???"

Feeling he had said too much, the restaurant owner seemed slightly embarrassed and added, "Actually, I wasn't the one who raised Mengmeng. It was sent here for foster care. Because it was deeply attached to its previous Master, it often misses them and that's why it's often unhappy." He explained, but did not provide detailed information about Mengmeng's Master.

So that's it. Ji You nodded, "It's understandable that Mengmeng, being quite sensitive, feels unhappy."

The hotpot restaurant owner then smiled and said, "So, I hope Ji You can come to keep Mengmeng company whenever possible. Even just sitting for a few minutes would make Mengmeng very happy."

Ji You said, "I will."

It's a simple effort to help someone, why not do it? Moreover, Ji You naturally got along with Mengmeng, who was such an adorable little creature.

After leaving the hotpot restaurant, Ji You immediately searched for an automated Floating Car and rushed to the Combat Department's training room.

After returning from the special training, teacher Mu Jianling intensified the first-year training program, not only increasing the difficulty but also the amount of daily basic training.

Many students didn't understand the reason, wondering why they still had to practice these basic movements so frequently. However, Mu Jianling didn't explain and merely instructed the students to train.

Teacher Mu Jianling's method of supervising the students was very straightforward and brutal but effective:

Those who finish can leave class on time.

Those who don't finish, class ends later.

In any case, although the students had slight complaints, they obediently fulfilled each training item as required.

Ji You and the other 100 students who had been to the Taoyuan Space Station, didn't complain at all and conscientiously completed their daily training tasks, even the notoriously difficult Yue Qiguang didn't raise any objections.

— Because everyone felt the urgency, knowing the secure life of studying they enjoyed was created by countless warriors who continued to advance with heavy burdens.

Things hard-earned are treasured.

...

After class, a group of students sat around the dining table for a meal. Ji You quietly chewed her food, but her thoughts shifted to tonight's online competition. It was the beginning of the promotion matches today, and she wondered what they would be like.

Just then, she overheard Shen Changqing next to her asking, "Any guesses about tonight's individual promotion matches?"

Hmm?

Ji You's eyes gleamed.

As soon as Shen Changqing finished speaking, Yue Qiguang said, "What's there to guess? It's probably just random matching. Win and you advance to the next round, lose and you're out."

No sooner had he finished his sentence than Yue Qiyuan rolled his eyes at him. He didn't pay attention to Yue Qiguang but looked at others and said, "Random matching is possible, but I think this year's online competition might not be so simple."

Chapter 336: Bursting with Confidence

"When troops come, a general blocks them; when water flows, a mound of earth will cover it! What's there to fear?" Chu Jiaojiao spoke boldly as she bit into a piece of meat, completely indifferent to how the rules of the competition might change. In her opinion, any obstacle could simply be crushed with sheer force!

Such words truly exude a strong aura of kingly power, assaulting the senses.

However—

Ji You looked up and couldn't help but glance at Chu Jiaojiao, her eyes filled with complexity: Chu Jiaojiao may seem carefree, but she is actually meticulous and deep, never relying solely on brute strength in any competition—appearing to win with ease, but in reality...

There's so much about her that Ji You could learn from.

Just as Ji You was gathering her thoughts, she suddenly heard Yue Qiyuan say, "As for what changes there might be this year? The rules have not been announced online, nor is there any way to find out. I have reviewed the information of the Alliance Network Competition over the past few years, and every time during the qualification matches, opponents are matched randomly. Therefore, to reach the finals, one must keep winning. A single loss disqualifies the chance to advance. If the random matching from previous years continues, nobody should be careless; we must give it our all."

Shen Changqing pondered for a moment, then nodded, "There may be some changes this year, but we don't know them. Jiaojiao is right, overthinking it is useless. We should just plow through with our full strength."

This 'strength' doesn't just refer to physical strength, but also intellect and perseverance...

Following that, the group exchanged a bunch of information. Ji You quietly finished her meal without joining in the discussion. Just as she was about to take a sip of water, she suddenly heard Yue Qiyuan say, "We need to pay special attention to that Rag Queen—she's our major enemy! Aqing and I have both been defeated by her."

Ji You managed to suppress the water she was about to spit out, but still couldn't help choking: "Cough cough cough..."

Yue Qiyuan glanced at her, slightly suspicious, but didn't make much of it.

Yue Qiguang, however, responded indifferently, "If that person meets me, Daddy Universe Strongest, she'd only meet her end! Too bad she's too cowardly to fight me directly; otherwise, I would have kicked her out of the competition yesterday!"

Ji You: "Cough cough..."

Heh—

Such a boastful statement.

He's not worried about choking on his own words!

Suddenly—

An idea struck Ji You, and she looked up at Yue Qiguang.

Noticing that the person number 4444 beside him was staring with an inquisitive gaze, Yue Qiguang shouted, "Idiot, what are you looking at? Someone weak like you should just focus on eating; what we're discussing isn't meant for your ears."

Ji You: "..."

Confirmed.

That 'Daddy Universe Strongest' must be this fool, Yue Qiguang.

Originally, she wasn't certain, but now, hearing the way Yue Qiguang spoke, and connecting it with his online alias and his combat style in several matches on the Star Network, it's not hard to guess.

Of course, if it weren't for the fact that Xiaoqing was Shen Changqing being exposed earlier, Ji You might not have connected the dots so quickly.

And then?

Yue Qiyuan said he and Shen Changqing had both lost to her, so what could his alias be?

The people who have lost to Ji You are numerous, and before this, she didn't make any associations because the Star Network is so vast, with millions of people traversing it. Relying purely on luck to come across someone familiar is even more difficult than winning the lottery. Even though the competition they are joining is just a localized network set up by Alliance University on the Star Network, the Alliance encompasses six star systems with countless universities spread throughout. They are categorized into regions—Northeast, Southwest, and so on. Within one region, there are still hundreds of millions of students. To randomly encounter someone in the same region purely by chance is extremely difficult.

So, Ji You had not prepared herself to meet Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, and the others in a competition, nor had she sought out information about them.

Now that she knew Yue Qiyuan had competed against her, she began to wonder: who was the person connected to Xiaoqing and had lost to her? Moreover, someone who has a similar personality and combat style to Yue Qiyuan?

Eliminating the possibilities one by one, Ji You's eyes flashed: [Dominate the Universe]

Could it really be Dominate the Universe?

And from what they said, does everyone at this dining table qualify for the advanced competition?

If Dominate the Universe is Yue Qiyuan's alias, then who is Chu Jiaojiao?

And who is Sheng Qingyan?

What about the usernames for Lou, Lance, and others?

...

Ji You could hardly restrain herself from directly asking these people, but remembering her identity as the Rag Queen, she wanted to deceive everyone until the last moment and only then reveal the truth, looking forward to the expressions on everyone's faces—

The thought made Ji You excited and she forcefully suppressed the urge to blow her cover.

As Ji You's thoughts were soaring, Sheng Qingyan across from her, who was eating and not joining in the discussion, suddenly threw down her chopsticks with a touch of petulance, "You guys go ahead and play, why drag me into it? Now that old witch wants me to reach the Alliance's top 100, how could someone as delicate as me possibly make it into the top 100..."

Eh?

Ji You's heart stirred, looking up, Sheng Qingyan met her gaze with a kind of resignation, "I wish I were really as weak as number 4444— at least the old hag wouldn't be so unreasonably demanding—"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You waved her Light Computer, her gaze dark and profound, "I'm very sorry, classmate Sheng Qingyan, but coincidentally, I recorded your recent remarks. Do you want to guess what would happen if I sent this to Teacher Mu Jianling?"

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan cursed in a fit of anger, "You poor dead thing, dare to threaten me? Be careful or you'll see what I'm capable of—"

This threat, effeminate as it was, didn't concern Ji You at all, and she said, "You are welcome to try and see whether your fist or Teacher Mu's fist is harder."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Stomping her foot in frustration, Sheng Qingyan could only grumble helplessly and without any force, "So annoying, Little Cutie is angry."

Ji You was immune to Sheng Qingyan's scolding and simply asked out of curiosity, "What did you just say? That it's Teacher Mu Jianling who demanded you reach the top 100 in this Alliance competition?"

Puffing her cheeks in irritation, Sheng Qingyan refused to speak to Ji You. Chu Jiaojiao overheard Ji You's question and eagerly answered, "Yes, Ji You, you looked so cute secretly recording earlier."

Ji You: "..."

Having received confirmation, Ji You glanced at Sheng Qingyan and, with a curl of her lips, teased unmercifully, "Weaklings! The teacher's requirements for you are too low, just getting into the top 100?"

Could she tell all the weaklings present that Devil Teacher Mu Jianling's requirement for her was to rank within the Alliance's top 10?

Comparing the top 100 with the top 10, it's not just one or two meters' worth of difference—it's a distance between star systems!

Seemingly out of nowhere, Ji You suddenly felt a surge of grand ambition:

This must mean, in Teacher Mu Jianling's eyes, she is hundreds, thousands of times more formidable than all the students present!

In an instant, Ji You's confidence inflated enormously!

Chapter 337: Lying

Ji You was somewhat incredulous about Sheng Qingyan's family's claims and turned to look at Chu Jiaojiao next to her, asking in an intentionally exaggerated and shocked tone: "Jiaojiao, did Teacher Mu really ask you guys to get into the top 100 of the Alliance? Being in the top 100 is no joke. With tens and

hundreds of millions of Freshman students in the Alliance, getting into the top 100 is incredibly difficult, right? How could she make such an unreasonable demand of you?"

Chu Jiaojiao saw Ji You's expression and chuckled, waving her hand: "Although Teacher Mu is a bit strict and has high expectations, don't worry, Ji You. I won't disappoint you. I will definitely make it into the top 100."

Chu Jiaojiao was not modest about her own abilities at all; instead, she was full of confidence.

Hearing this, Ji You's mouth curved up, saying: "Jiaojiao, I of course believe you can definitely make it into the top 100, but as for the others..."

As she spoke, her gaze seemed to casually fall on Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Shen Changqing, and a few others.

Feeling the contempt in that gaze, Yue Qiguang was the first to jump out, cursing: "Number 4444, what's with that look? What do you mean? You dare to doubt my abilities?"

Ji You glanced at him and said, "I'm not questioning your abilities, I'm questioning your intelligence."

Yue Qiguang stomped his foot: "Number 4444! Come meet your doom!"

Ji You grimaced, "Boring."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Seeing his mentally challenged brother get defeated again, Yue Qiyuan's eyelid twitched; he still stood up, glancing sideways at Ji You and said: "Fine, whether we can make it into the top 100 or not, it's not for Ji You, who couldn't even make it to the promotion tournament, to worry about. If you're not too tired, when we compete, you can come cheer for us from the spectator seats."

Ji You's lips curled:

[Aiyō~

Such big talk.

But if this 'Dominate the Universe' classmate knew that his so-called proud strength had been bested by me, this weakling, twice, I wonder what his face would look like then.]

Hmm~

Ji You hummed lightly, saying, "By then, I'll definitely come to cheer for you guys, don't worry."

After a slight pause, Ji You scanned the others in the group and her eyes finally landed on Shen Changqing. Her expression immediately softened, and she unconsciously spoke in a flattering tone: "As for whether the others can get into the top 100, I can't say, but Shen Changqing, you definitely can make it into the top 100!" She stared at him with bright, sparkling eyes, fists clenched, shouting loudly: "Shen Changqing, you are amazing! Believe in yourself; you can definitely make it into the top 100."

Shen Changqing: "..."

Student number 4444, Ji You, was blunt to everyone else, but every time she spoke to him, there was always a strange tone in her voice—it didn't really seem like fawning, flattering, or sucking up. Nor did it seem like admiration, respect, or adoration. Love? As soon as this thought appeared, Shen Changqing suddenly shivered, his face changing color slightly.

No!

Impossible.

But when did her attitude start to change?

He remembered that Ji You wasn't like this before...

However, although he couldn't understand the reason, Shen Changqing still tried to maintain his composure, speaking modestly: "I will do my best."

Ji You chuckled: "Little bro, good luck!"

After this exchange, Ji You returned to her dormitory, but after some inquiries, she was now certain that Teacher Mu Jianling only demanded the top 100 from all Combat Department students, even from the strong ones like Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Shen Changqing...

But!!!

For herself, Teacher Mu Jianling demanded the top 10! What did this mean?

It meant she was truly the number one powerhouse recognized and valued by Teacher Mu in the entire school.

Indeed—

Below me, all are inferior!

Hahaha...

With a confidence inflated to the extreme, Ji You returned to her dormitory, immediately brewed herself a cup of Cloud Mist Milk Tea, and felt an immediate sense of refreshment throughout her body and mind upon drinking it!

Her entire Spiritual World, and the Six Spiritual Threads, felt as if they were basking in warm sunlight, thoroughly cozy and delightful, nearly intoxicatingly sweet.

However, the effect of a cup of milk tea could only last about a minute; after that, the deep, heartfelt comfort would gradually dissipate.

Ji You smacked her lips, unable to resist reminiscing about the taste of the milk tea...

Then, her eyes fell on the jar where Cloud Mist Tea was stored, and her face soured slightly: it's a pity that the quantity of Cloud Mist Tea is so small; each time, only a little can be used—if only she could have a full meal of it, that would be wonderful.

Of course—

Ji You clearly understood that such a thought was mere wishful thinking. But well, people do need to dream often to make life more splendid.

Just then, the phone rang.

Ji You looked and saw that it was a call from Teacher Mu Jianling. She immediately stopped her giggling and hurriedly answered, "Teacher... You called me, don't tell me you knew my Cloud Mist Tea is running out and want to send me some more, right?"

Mu Jianling snorted coldly: "Wishful thinking. You should get your brain checked."

Ji You, undeterred, giggled and said, "I was just dreaming a little."

Mu Jianling said, "Let's talk business."

Ji You quickly became serious.

Mu Jianling did not beat around the bush and directly asked, "After drinking Cloud Mist Tea for three days straight, do you feel any change in your spiritual power?"

Ji You's smile stiffened, and she thought to herself, should she make up some changes? After all, aside from changes observed in Xiao You, Ji You genuinely felt no change herself.

But—

Even facing Teacher Mu Jianling, Ji You wouldn't disclose anything about Xiao You.

So—

Should she say there were no changes, or perhaps fabricate a little lie?

Mu Jianling, through the holographic video, saw the expression on Ji You's face and knew immediately what she was thinking, frowning and saying, "Tell the truth."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You scratched her head and said, "Um... Teacher... please don't be disappointed, but I feel no change in my spiritual power after drinking it..."

Upon hearing this, Mu Jianling's face darkened.

Ji You quickly shifted her tone, speaking earnestly, "It must be because the amount was too little! That's why there was no change. As they say, quantitative change leads to qualitative change. I believe if I could drink more Cloud Mist Tea, there definitely would be a change. So... um... Teacher..."

Mu Jianling, frowning and ignoring Ji You's imploring looks, thought for a moment, then turned to Ji You and scolded, "Do more, dream less. Okay, I'm hanging up."

As he was about to end the call.

Ji You hurriedly called out, "Wait! Teacher, wait! I have something I want to ask you."

## Chapter 338: An Inauspicious Start

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow: "What is it?"

Ji You, filled with anticipation, watched the powerful teacher eagerly and asked quietly, "Teacher... I want to know, why do you only require Jiaojiao and Yue Qiguang to rank within the top 100 while demanding that I place in the top ten? Does this mean ... that you have higher hopes for me? Do you think I'm the strongest in the Combat Department?"

Guesses are just guesses, but since she was speaking to Teacher Mu directly, Ji You couldn't hold back and wanted to have a clear answer.

Of course—

Asking this wasn't due to a lack of confidence. In fact, Ji You felt that her whole being, even the air she breathed out, was oozing with confidence. Primarily, she wanted to hear the teacher admit it personally.

As soon as Ji You threw out this question, Mu Jianling's lips twitched slightly. She had considered many possibilities, even that Ji You would ask why she was being given special treatment, even going so far as to bring out the Cloud Mist Tea...

But!!! Mu Jianling never expected Ji You to ask such a dumbfounding question.

So, the atmosphere became a bit tense.

Ji You, brimming with confidence, was waiting to hear praise from her teacher.

Suddenly—

Mu Jianling said: "Dreaming is not a mistake, but if your head is full of muddled thoughts all the time, then there really is a problem with your brain."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You felt a tightness in her chest and almost collapsed on the spot, but still undeterred, she persisted stubbornly: "But... teacher, you really do have higher expectations of me." That was no lie.

Mu Jianling glanced at her and said, "I told them to make it to the top 100 because I know their abilities are up to it, but you—"

Ji You had a bad feeling.

Mu Jianling looked at her with a mixture of care and pity for a mentally challenged child and continued: "My expectations for you were just blurted out. Since you won't even make it into the top 100, what difference does it make, whether more or less?"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You's mouth quivered, and her hands shook, feeling the world spin and blacking out...

Mu Jianling said: "Cheer up, facing the facts is not a bad thing. Alright, I'm busy, hanging up now."

Click—

Mu Jianling cut off the communication without hesitation.

However—

After hanging up the call, Mu Jianling's brows knitted slightly, and a few traces of concern flashed across her face: Could it be that the Cloud Mist Tea really has no effect on student Ji You?

Or was it simply not enough?

...

Mu Jianling had been teaching for many years and had countless students with a variety of talents, but Ji You's case was exceptionally bizarre, something not found even in billions of people.

To say her talent was low was factual, with her ceiling clearly in sight, almost instantly apparent, there was virtually no room for improvement.

But it was also biased to call her untalented since her performance recently had repeatedly surprised her. She wasn't only on par with other students, but she could even challenge a level 4 Star Beast...

As a teacher, Mu Jianling could not bear to watch her student come to a standstill with no further progress. She believed Principal Hong would feel the same.

...

After pondering for a moment, Mu Jianling set aside the issue and decided to wait until Ji You had consumed Cloud Mist Tea for a while longer before conducting a detailed examination for her.

Over here.

Ji You wore a bitter expression; her inflated confidence deflated the instant she heard Mu Jianling's words, and even more so, she felt that even a breath she took was filled with dejection.

How——

How is that possible?

If you don't have faith in yourself, why do you demand that you make it into the top ten of the Alliance? Isn't that making a joke of yourself? Teacher Mu Jianling wouldn't be so childish, would he?

It seems, not only does Teacher have peculiar taste in TV dramas, even his style of joking is this strange.

After being dejected for a moment, Ji You could only console herself in this way.

Then, she immediately began to catch up on Material Department courses, which was the study plan Ji You had set for herself, executed without fail even when she was supposed to participate in online competitions.

After learning, organizing her notes, and catching up on homework, Ji You had already processed the blow dealt by Teacher Mu Jianling, her brows even flashing a determined light:

Looking back, since she entered Lanyue Star, nobody had been optimistic about her. Yet here she is.

What do other people's words count for, after all?

The truly terrifying thing would be if she didn't even trust herself.

When Ji You competed on the Star Network, to explain why she always used an antique mech, the words she said in the arena weren't completely bluster.

—To challenge herself, to break through her own limits.

It was also at this moment that Ji You truly calmed her heart, casting aside all her impatience to the winds: from now on—she didn't need to compare herself with anyone, her opponent would never be others, but herself.

—As long as she made a little progress every day, any progress was good.

With this determination set, Ji You's entire demeanor changed in an instant, becoming more resilient and more reserved.

Then, she logged into the Star Network again, quickly entering the Alliance's internal network. Today, the promotion matches had already begun, but what exactly were the rules of these matches?

Ji You was very curious.

Soon, she discovered a bustling noise all around, many people were discussing the strategies of the matches, only—it seemed not to be one-on-one, but a brawl?

Huh?

Ji You craned her neck to listen in, after listening for a while, she somewhat understood. It turns out in this promotion match, all advancing contestants were randomly matched into groups of a hundred, entering a battlefield, then fighting individually; the last ten survivors would advance to the next round, and the losers were immediately eliminated, with no next round.

Ji You stroked her chin: This is a bit tricky.

In a brawl like this, it's very easy to suffer accidental injuries. One wrong move could mean death, and with failure meaning complete elimination, it implies that everyone will bring their A-game, without holding anything back.

Moreover——

A melee of a hundred people, and with random matching, means you can't arrange for teammates to watch each other's backs in advance.

...

In short, the rules are extremely cruel.

Ji You thought for a moment, instead of rushing into the arena, she sifted through some posts on the forum, carefully reading the latest intelligence, and after a complete understanding, she was ready to accept the challenge.

The challenge had no enforced time restrictions, allowing her to schedule her own time, which was very user-friendly.

After submitting her application, the system didn't immediately transport Ji You into the battlefield, instead she waited in the waiting room until the player count was met, then she was immediately teleported into the arena.

About ten seconds later, Ji You entered the battlefield.

She stumbled in only to find herself colliding with a large stone, scraping her scalp.

Ji You: "..."

That's not a good start.

Chapter 339: Original Battlefield

Arena.

The shadows of the trees swayed, and cold wind blew in gusts...

Ji You couldn't help but shiver with goosebumps. If she didn't know she had entered the arena, she would have thought she was filming a horror movie. The environment around her was too realistic. Every blade of grass, every stone, every grain of sand was almost indistinguishable from reality, blurring the lines between illusion and real life...

The wound on her forehead was still bleeding. Ji You had to find a way to stop the bleeding, or else she would become weaker due to blood loss, which would reduce her speed, Physical Strength, and agility.

She crouched down and proceeded step by step, also trying to find some hemostatic herbs in the grass along the way, but after looking around, she found none. This was also one of the rules of the competition: to stop the bleeding and treat the injured body, one must find a medical kit. But where could it be?

Residences!

She proceeded with extreme caution. Fortunately, Ji You was lucky. Soon, she saw a thatched cottage in the woods.

A cottage?

This primitive?

Ji You's eyes flickered: Could it be that this arena was actually set in an ancient environment? The kind that still used cold weapons, or perhaps an era like the 21st century that used Basic thermal weapons?

That being said, are there no Mecha, Particle Cannons, energy weapons... these kinds of interstellar era technological products anymore?

Having roughly come up with an idea, Ji You did not rush into the thatched cottage. Instead, she nestled in the grass and stood still, carefully observing her surroundings. She found nothing unusual, but she did not dare to let her guard down—who knew if someone might suddenly appear and slaughter her.

At that moment—

The system suddenly popped up a message: [3 people have died, 97 remain.]

Ji You's heart skipped a beat. Glancing at the timer, the match had started for less than 5 minutes, and already 3 people were eliminated. Wasn't this too fast?

Brutal.

But it was this system prompt that made Ji You realize her situation:

No weapon.

Slightly injured.

No armor.

...

Just any person with a knife or someone hiding with a gun could easily take her down.

The best course of action was to hurry to the straw cottage and look for something handy.

No longer hesitating, Ji You bent her back, crouched, and quietly approached the straw cottage. She listened carefully and detected no movement inside, so she pushed the door open and entered—

But just as she was about to step in, she suddenly felt a slight airflow. Ji You instinctively leaned back, avoiding the incoming attack.

The opponent was startled but quickly recovered, lifting the Big Chopper in his hand and swiftly aiming for Ji You's head.

Click—

Ji You flung the door open, and the man's Big Chopper struck the door panel. It was this motion that allowed Ji You to get a clear view of her opponent—a burly and rugged-looking boy.

Ji You, grinding her teeth, said, "Big brother, cutting down someone without a word of warning, that's not the right way to be a person."

The boy retorted, "Who do you need to be in the arena?"

Ji You: "..."

Her logic seemed flawed, but she found herself at a loss for words.

The blade of the knife flashed before her eyes, and the boy's ferocious attack came slicing at her again. Ji You tilted slightly, dodging while feeling deeply the hardship of her situation: bare-handed against the foe's Big Chopper, she was at a significant disadvantage.

Although the boy's strikes were fierce and he seemed to wield the Big Chopper with great vigor, his grip on the knife looked awkward, particularly when he needed to rotate the handle, his movements were incredibly stiff—

What does this mean?

It means this person is not good at using knives.

Ji You's eyes flashed slightly, and she shouted, "So you mean, instead of being human, you opt to be a beast?"

The male student felt a bit annoyed, thinking this girl was really talkative. Taking advantage of the gap, he swung his knife hard and slashed over, "Be quiet and accept your death!"

Just as her head was about to be split open, Ji You didn't dodge this time. Instead, she met the attack head-on. The male student's eyes lit up with joy as the blade reached Ji You's forehead, but at that moment, he felt a pain in his wrist and looked down to see the girl had grabbed the hand holding the knife.

With a bit of effort from Ji You, the male student's firm grip on the chopping knife became unsteady.

But—

He gritted his teeth, gripped the knife tightly, and chopped down fiercely—

In critical moments, one must be calm. Ji You was not in a hurry. While guarding against the male student's potential attacks, she exerted a clever force on the wrist she was holding and suddenly, the knife loosened.

The moment the knife was about to drop, she kicked the male student's chest fiercely.

Bang—

The male student became unsteady and hit the wall of the thatched hut.

Just as the Big Chopper was about to hit the ground, Ji You darted over and grabbed the handle.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

The male student's pupils contracted as intense pain pierced his chest. Staring wide-eyed, he opened his mouth, "Spare... a life under the knife..."

Ji You pulled out the knife, looked at the 'corpse' before her, grinned, and said, "Spare what? You said yourself you're not a person."

This fight had made quite a commotion. If someone had been lying in ambush nearby, they surely would have noticed. This place was not safe to stay for long. Ji You quickly searched the 'corpse' of the male student and found nothing else, her mouth twitching, "A poor dead soul."

Then she dashed into the thatched hut, flipped it inside out, and except for the chopping knife in her hand, found almost no useful weapons—but fortunately got a hold of a box of ointment.

She quickly applied some herbal medicine to the wound on her forehead to stop the bleeding.

Ji You didn't delay and quickly left the thatched hut.

She had barely left when two people arrived right after. One looked at the traces left around and frowned, "There was a fight here recently, all the stuff inside might have been taken."

The other one said, "The bloodstains are still fresh. The person probably hasn't gone far. Should we give chase?"

"Chase!"

Hidden in the dry yellow weeds with straw sticking out of her head, Ji You saw this scene and was secretly alarmed: Good heavens, lucky I slipped away quickly. A moment later and I would have to face these two directly. One of them had a gun and the other a bow and arrow. If I had run into them, I would have been doomed.

Also—

She hadn't expected that in less than a few minutes after starting, people had already formed alliances.

This made Ji You realize that it would not work if she continued to fight alone. But—to make alliances, if there wasn't a basic level of trust between each other, it could easily backfire.

So—

You can't just randomly form alliances with anyone.

Quietly staying put for a few seconds, after seeing that the two who had left were not coming back, Ji You eyed the messy straw sticking to her, and a thought flashed through her mind. Without any hesitation, she took out her strongest life skill and fashioned a straw coat for herself. The design was simple, but it covered her arms and legs, leaving only her eyes exposed.

After putting on the straw coat, Ji You lay down in the weeds, and from the outside, it was virtually impossible to tell that a person was hiding in the weeds.

Chapter 340: Weak Chicken

System: [13 people have died, 87 remain.]

Less than 10 minutes into the game, 13 people have already been eliminated. The pace is fast, and the system's timely announcement of death tolls undoubtedly keeps the remaining contestants' nerves continually on edge.

Ji You is no exception.

Her current situation is far from good. Although using a woven straw coat to hide in the bushes grants her temporary concealment from danger, without a solid weapon in hand, she's doomed if she encounters someone armed with guns.

Ah!

Moreover, continuous hiding, though seemingly safe, presents a greater risk over time. At the beginning of the competition, when everyone is unfamiliar with the environment and opponents, it is the time to gather strength and arm oneself. Missing this opportunity would spell disaster once all competitors strengthen, and even the best hiding spots won't save her.

Ji You grits her teeth, contemplating abandoning this small hut when she suddenly hears soft footsteps.

Hmm?

Someone is coming.

Is it one person?

Or two?

Ji You quiets down again, standing her ground.

Soon, the distant footsteps get closer and closer—clearly coming from behind Ji You.

Listening to this, Ji You is sure it's just one person.

So—

As this person approaches the hut, their steps lighten, obviously cautious of any nearby dangers. Ji You holds her breath, allowing this person to come closer to her.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

All around is eerily silent except for the light footsteps drawing closer as if nothing else alive remains.

Ji You holds her breath and concentrates, gauging the distance: 10 meters—5 meters—3 meters—

Suddenly—

The person stops, muttering, "Amitabha... God bless..."

Ji You: "..."

What the hell?

Then.

The person stops moving altogether.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

Ji You: "..."

Holding her breath, she's almost suffocating herself. This person stopped just 3 meters away – it's a slightly awkward distance; Ji You isn't confident about striking accurately if she leaps out.

Moreover, it's unknown whether the opponent is unarmed or armed.

Thus, Ji You can only continue holding her breath, hesitant to make a rash move.

Then—

The person, stooping, and finding the surroundings quiet, carefully moves forward a step, a half-step, a quarter-step...

Ji You listens with a tilted ear, discerning the frequency of the man's movement, nearly suffocating herself. If she had a gun, she'd definitely send this coward to meet God right away.

Ji You counts the steps of the opponent, calculating the distance between them, and estimating the right moment to strike. Suddenly, a gust of wind blows, rustling nearby tree branches and swaying the bushes—

Hmm?

Ji You tenses her nerves, gripping the handle of her knife, when the person drawing near, perhaps startled by the wind-induced noise, suddenly stumbles toward Ji You's direction—

Thump—

Just when it fell, coincidentally, it landed right in front of Ji You. Seeing this sudden big face in front of her, in that short moment of delay, Ji You quickly drew her machete and was about to chop down.

The other party stared in surprise, never expecting someone hiding in the bushes, and suddenly shrieked, "Mercy, good sir!"

Mercy what?

Ji You wouldn't listen, her hand raised and the machete came slashing down—

Bang!

She actually missed.

Ji You stared in disbelief, fixating on her sharp blade edge: "!!!"

She narrowly dodged the strange man's attack who was shivering and said, "Mercy... mercy..."

While he pleaded, he shuffled his legs, slowly increasing the distance from Ji You. Ji You looked up and saw that this cowardly weakling's body was frail, his face utterly plain, and he showed clear signs of terror, constantly shouting, "Mercy, good sir, I'm just passing by, just passing by, don't kill me..."

Ji You: "..."

Confirmed! This is the ultimate coward! A fear-monster!

She couldn't help but look up, gazing at the sky: Is this really the arena where everybody is killing each other, do or die?

It was during this 1 second that Ji You looked up at the sky that the boy had already run 10 meters away—how he managed that...

Let go?

Or slaughter him?

Without a second thought, Ji You chased after him with a knife in hand, and as soon as the boy saw Ji You coming after him, he panicked and started to sprint. However, Ji You's speed was not slow either, she caught up in moments and grabbed the man's neck. At this moment, Ji You could clearly see the man's name tag, which read: [Weak Chicken].

For a while, Ji You was speechless.

Others choose names to announce their reign, bitterly desiring to conquer everything... And here he is, having chosen such a name for himself, truly unheard of.

'Weak Chicken's' expression was extremely terrified, "Don't kill me... waah waah... I'm scared..."

"..." Ji You smirked and said, "Not killing you—is impossible."

Weak Chicken's eyes widened, his limbs flailing, trying to break free, but this girl's strength was surprisingly strong, and even his brute force couldn't help him break free.

Weak Chicken was even more terrified, screaming continuously.

Ji You had no patience left: "Shut up!"

Killing such a weakling, truly lowered her own standards.

With a fierce scold above her head, Weak Chicken hesitated with his lips, not daring to shout any more.

Of course, Ji You did not relax her vigilance; she understood that in this entire battlefield, only she herself was the most reliable. Even though this person seemed very weak with no weapons in hand and was cowardly... it didn't mean he posed no danger at all.

That's it—

Ji You was somewhat interested in the skill he had just shown dodging her blade – knowing that she chopped directly at his head but he could still avoid it and she hadn't noticed beforehand. This skill was definitely worth noting.

Spiritual power interference?

Or?

Ji You stared at Weak Chicken's face, sizing him up with interest.

That look, as daunting as the Devil's, made Weak Chicken's body tremble continuously, but he still mustered his courage and said, "Big... big boss... mercy, I... I know a good place, if you're willing to spare me, I'll take you there." Because of his fear, his speech was a bit disjointed at first, but as he spoke, he became more fluent.

"Right!"

"There's a good place, I'll take the big boss there!"

Ji You was not interested at all and directly said, "How did you dodge my knife just now? Better speak quickly so I can send you on your way sooner."

Weak Chicken: "..."

Such a ruthless person.

She wasn't influenced in the slightest.

But—

Weak Chicken wasn't so easy to bully, haven't you heard that villains die from talking too much?