

Scavengers 591

Chapter 591: Just a Meal

Feeling the peculiar gaze from his classmate Ji You beside him, Liu Fufeng stiffened but still managed to endure it, not displaying any abnormality. He sat up straight, his back erect, eating the food in small, elegant bites.

Beside him, Ji You was gobbling down her food in large bites.

After eating for a while, she sneakily glanced into Liu Fufeng's bowl and couldn't help swallowing saliva, but kept a serene composure on her face.

Then, she continued to eat in large bites.

What about Mengmeng?

Mengmeng was an extremely conscientious little alpaca. After spending some time close to its Master, it didn't want to neglect 'big sister', so it trotted over and snuggled up to Ji You, staring at her with hopeful eyes.

Ji You swallowed a mouthful of rice, then raised her hand to pat the alpaca's head, smiling, "Mengmeng is such a good child. Don't worry, your sister isn't angry! I'm too happy seeing Mengmeng to feel angry with you."

Mengmeng's big watery eyes suddenly brightened up.

Then, Ji You pointed to her chest and said: "Even if Mengmeng turns out to be a lousy alpaca that only likes your Master and not your sister in the future, it will pain me here, but I will definitely not blame Mengmeng. Your sister will always wait for you to change your mind."

Mengmeng suddenly cried out: "Ao!"

No!

Mengmeng is not lousy!

Mengmeng will always like big sister.

"Pffhaha..." Ji You burst into raucous laughter, without any decorum, holding her chest while laughing and stroking Mengmeng, saying, "Mengmeng, you're too funny. I was just teasing you, don't take it seriously."

Saying this, she raised her hand and pointed to the stars in the sky, saying, "See those stars? They're full of Mengmeng's sincerity towards me, as well as mine towards Mengmeng. As long as the heavens and earth last, the stars will remain, and the affection between me and Mengmeng will also endure forever, never dwindling through the ages!"

Mengmeng: "Ao ao~"

Exactly!

The affection between Mengmeng and big sister will never die, everlasting through the ages!

Hearing these words, Liu Fufeng's hand holding the chopsticks trembled slightly.

The hotpot restaurant owner said with a smile, "Classmate Ji You really has a way with words."

Her mouth seemed to be coated in honey, charming both humans and the alpaca alike, leaving his young master so astonished he couldn't hold his chopsticks properly.

However—

The young master's temperament has been too subdued lately; having such a lively classmate around is good for him.

While Liu Fufeng and the hotpot restaurant owner each had their own thoughts, over there, Ji You with her belly full, patted Mengmeng's forehead and said, "Mengmeng, I'm full now, and you still haven't finished your eating task for today. Hurry up and go!"

Mengmeng: "Meh~"

Doesn't want to go.

Ji You put on a serious face: "Hurry up! Right now, immediately!"

Mengmeng: "Ao~"

Alright then.

But—

A kiss is needed~

Ji You raised her hand and rubbed the alpaca's head, "Good~"

Mengmeng: "Meh~"

Going now.

Instantly—

Mengmeng hopped and skipped into the ranch, lowered its head, and started nibbling on the grass. However, while nibbling, it would occasionally raise its head to glance at Ji You and Liu Fufeng, ensuring they were both around. Only then did it settle down and continue eating the grass.

Ji You sighed, "With such good fodder and still refusing to eat, Mengmeng has really been pampered too much."

The hotpot restaurant owner quickly nodded and laughed, "Yes, yes... So it's all thanks to classmate Ji You who has a way with Mengmeng's picky and reluctant eating habits."

"Cough~" Ji You put on a stern face, "Overindulgence isn't the same as pampering! You, the owner, need to get a sense of measure."

The hotpot restaurant owner replied with a smile, "In the future, we'll still need to trouble classmate Ji You quite often."

Hey~

Are they planning to continue to hire her to coax Mengmeng to eat?

Ji You wasn't pretentious and directly said, "As long as I'm at school and have time, I'll come over without any second thoughts."

The hotpot restaurant owner showed a genuine smile and said, "That's great."

Mengmeng is not very affectionate towards people, even the owner himself, and wasn't too willing to cozy up except to the young master; Ji You is the first one Mengmeng has taken the initiative to approach and stick to. As it turns out, Mengmeng has a great eye for people, really accurate in judging them.

The owner believes that Student Ji You's true feelings for Mengmeng are definitely no less than his and the young master's.

About ten minutes later, Mengmeng seemed to be full, trotted over, hesitated between Ji You and Liu Fufeng for a moment, but then took a firm step towards Ji You.

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Ji You said with a smile, "Mengmeng, you did great today! Keep it up! One day, you will become just as excellent as your sister."

Mengmeng: "Ao ao!"

Keep it up!

To be as excellent as sister.

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng was feeling very conflicted inside.

Ji You checked the time, and there was still enough time to take Mengmeng for a walk around the ranch to aid digestion. So, with a wave of her hand, she said, "Let's go! Off we go to help our digestion!"

Mengmeng: "Meh~"

As the duo of one person and one alpaca walked further away, moving deeper into the ranch, the hotpot restaurant owner remarked, "Mengmeng and Student Ji You really are very close."

Liu Fufeng suddenly asked, "How does she manage to understand Mengmeng's sounds?"

He has been guessing and fumbling through interactions with Mengmeng, ever since he found her, raised her, and until now.

"Uh..." The owner didn't quite know either, he just laughed and said, "I don't really know, maybe... maybe she's just guessing..."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng shook his head, saying, "It doesn't seem like that, Mengmeng completely understands her."

"Ah?" The owner was surprised and opened his mouth to say, "I've always thought that they were having conversations akin to chickens talking to ducks." He really hadn't considered that.

Liu Fufeng didn't continue on this topic.

Then, the two talked about other things.

Before long, Ji You and Mengmeng returned. When Ji You was getting ready to leave, Liu Fufeng had already said goodbye to Mengmeng and left first.

Although Mengmeng was reluctant, she still blinked and watched her master leave.

As Ji You was also leaving, the hotpot restaurant owner suddenly said, "Cough cough... Student Ji You, our young master is delicate and has a soft personality, so sensitive that he couldn't take a punch from anyone, cough cough... If possible, could you please take more care of our young master?"

Ji You: "..."

The owner felt a bit shameless saying this but still ploughed on, "Consider it—on account of Mengmeng's face." He didn't dare suggest it was for his sake, feeling that his clout wasn't that significant.

"I will provide some compensation to Student Ji You."

After saying it, the owner felt his face burning up with embarrassment.

Ji You's mouth twitched, immediately understanding why Liu Fufeng had left so quickly!

Turns out he was too bashful to ask for help himself and had enlisted the hotpot restaurant owner as his spokesman.

Am I really that unprincipled?

Me, a big shot, how can I just take on a little brother?

No!

Absolutely not!

"Cough cough..." Ji You cleared her throat and said, "Well... about that compensation, it's embarrassing to even speak of it."

The hotpot restaurant owner instantly understood her meaning and immediately said, "Compensation must be provided. Whenever Student Ji You comes here to eat, it will be free of charge, whether it's just you or me, or if you bring friends along, it's all free."

Just a meal?

And he thinks he can buy me over?

Really?

Ji You immediately said, "Okay."

Chapter 592: Empress Xia Man

Ji You very principledly accepted the bribe from the hotpot restaurant owner and promised to give Liu Fufeng a bit of special attention from among the classmates.

Hearing her response, the hotpot restaurant owner was overjoyed inside, and directly smiled beamingly: "Classmate Ji You really has a warm heart. Our young master is truly lucky to have you as a classmate."

Ji You lifted her hand to scratch her head, revealing a simple and honest smile: "Hehe..."

As for being lucky or whatever, that's all good as long as you, boss, don't forget the matter of eating for free.

Ahem...

Of course, these words are not appropriate to say directly.

After Ji You had eaten her fill and also coaxed (tricked) Mengmeng into eating grass, she thought it was time to hurry up and clean the rabbit shed. Thus, she stood up, ready to bid farewell, when suddenly, she saw the hotpot restaurant owner looking at her with a hesitant expression.

Ji You: "???"

The corners of the hotpot restaurant owner's lips turned up into a smile as he said: "There are a few words, I'm not sure if I should say them."

Ji You, who is straightforward and dislikes beating around the bush, signaled: "Boss, just say whatever you have to say. However, there is one thing, if it's about borrowing money, then please don't start."

Hotpot restaurant owner: "..."

Hotpot restaurant owner: "Cough cough... Classmate Ji You really knows how to joke."

Ji You seriously said: "Although you and Liu Fufeng seem to come from a wealthy and big family, there could be some hidden issues, like owing lots of external debts. It's quite normal to borrow money, isn't it?"

What's more, didn't your little master just borrow points from me a few days ago?

Cough cough...

People should always leave room for mercy, so it's better not to mention Liu Fufeng's embarrassing matters anymore.

After hearing this, the smile in the hotpot restaurant owner's eyes deepened. He lifted a hand lightly over his face to stop his laughter and with a serious face said: "Classmate Ji You, you really don't need to worry about such things. Our young master's status, as you all probably know, is such that his net worth is enough for him to have no worries for several lifetimes, and he has not a single debt. As for me? I've been operating the hotpot restaurant here for over 150 years. Although I'm not enormously wealthy, maintaining my living is not a problem."

Ji You: "Huh?"

She really was shocked: "Boss, you've been operating a store here for over 150 years?"

The hotpot restaurant owner smiled and said: "Yes."

With just two simple words, his tone was filled with profound memories.

Ji You couldn't help asking: "Boss, may I ask how old you are this year?"

The hotpot restaurant owner didn't look old, around in his forties or fifties, but since human genes have been strengthened nowadays, lifespans typically reached around 300 years old. Many people in their two-hundreds still maintained the appearance of someone in their forties or fifties, so it was not easy to directly judge someone's age by their appearance.

Upon hearing the question, the hotpot restaurant owner smiled slightly and said: "I am 250 years old this year."

Ji You: "Boss, I think you look very young."

"Ha ha~"

"I'm old."

"I'm old," the hotpot restaurant owner raised his hand, rubbed his face, and said with a smile: "I can't compare to you kids anymore." While saying this, he suddenly paused, then continued: "Classmate Ji You, actually, what I want to tell you is about the relationship between me and our young master."

Ji You raised her head, silently looking at him without interrupting, but showing a listening attitude.

The hotpot restaurant owner said with a smile: "Actually, this is a private matter between the young master and myself, and it's not really suitable to bother you with it. But considering that you are the young master's classmate and given the young master's status, I, an old fellow, am always worried that he will feel ostracized at the Military Academy or fail to fit in with the group. That's why I was hoping you could take extra care of the young master."

Ji You continued to listen.

The hotpot restaurant owner went on: "Actually, I used to be the cook and butler for Miss Xia Man, the young master's mother. Later, when Miss Xia Man married the Emperor of the Galaxy Empire, she intended to bring me along, but I missed my homeland and didn't want to leave. Although Miss Xia Man was reluctant, she still let me go. Moreover, Miss Xia Man was worried about my livelihood, so she gave me this hotpot restaurant location. You might not imagine it, but the Lanyue Star Military Academy used to occupy only one-third of its current size. Everything from the commercial street, your first-year Combat Department, Mechanical Manufacturing System, Material Department, canteen, and all of this large area, was owned by Miss Xia Man's family. About 140 years ago, when Lanyue Star Military Academy faced a crisis due to insufficient educational land, Miss Xia Man, at that time already the Queen of the Empire, personally decided to donate this land to the Military Academy for expansion..."

"This matter was properly handled by the old dean of the academy, Miss Xia Man's Affiliated Officer team, the Alliance Notary Office... several parties working together."

"Besides our Lanyue Star Military Academy, the neighboring Agricultural College also received a lot of benefaction from the Xia Family, with half of the college's land being donated by them. As to why there is no one left from the Xia Family..."

At this point, the hotpot restaurant owner suddenly sighed and said with a sad tone: "My employer's family, the Xia Family, was a very respectable family. The young and strong members of their lineage were valiant warriors. Unfortunately, in the Beast Tide a hundred years ago, they perished while defending against the Beast Tide's invasion."

Having said that, the hotpot restaurant owner's tears quietly slid down; he turned his back slightly, wiping his tears, and said: "I'm making you see a joke."

Hearing about the inside story, Ji You felt as if a heavy rock was pressing on her chest and she couldn't catch her breath. She put on a stern face and said solemnly: "Boss, there is nothing funny about this. I will forever hold the highest respect for Lady Xia Man and all members of the Xia Family!"

The hotpot restaurant owner suddenly said: "Although I no longer have the official title of employer and employee with the miss and the young master, I will always identify as an employee of the Xia Family. So, I've never changed my way of addressing him, still calling him 'young master.' I hope you don't think I'm old-fashioned, sticking to outdated ideas."

Ji You's eyes, bright and clear, nodded in agreement: "The Xia Family is worthy of your commitment."

The hotpot restaurant owner let out a slight sigh and said: "Ever since my employer Miss Xia Man learned about the family tragedy, her health has been poor for over a hundred years. She has a personality of only sharing good news and not the troubles. Whether her life in the Empire is good or bad, we don't have a clue. Since her departure, the young master rarely returns to Lanyue Star, and I also don't get to know about the young master's condition..."

"But after reflecting on the Empire's decision to appoint a new Crown Prince, I presume things might not be so good."

Upon reaching this point, the hotpot restaurant owner began to stealthily wipe his tears again, "Our young master has been physically weak since childhood. He suffers from a very serious..." The hotpot restaurant owner suddenly stopped, looking apologetically at Ji You and said: "This is the young master's private matter, and it's not right for me to disclose it."

Ji You nodded her head, expressing understanding.

Based on previous gossip among her classmates, Ji You guessed that it probably involved a genetic disease.

Chapter 593: The Elder's Good Intentions

Then, there was silence.

It was silent for quite a while before the hotpot restaurant owner wiped the tears from his face and said, "Regarding the Emperor's decision to change the crown prince, actually, many years ago, Miss Xia Man had a premonition that the young master's health was not up to bearing the responsibilities of a monarch. Therefore, a month before Miss Xia Man passed away, she suddenly mentioned to me that after the young master steps down from his position as crown prince, she hoped he could return here to Lanyue Star to enjoy his later years."

Ji You still said nothing.

The hotpot restaurant owner said, "At that time, I didn't quite understand Miss's words, but now I think about it, I vaguely understand. The young master might truly be happy if he returns to the Xia Family's ancestral home."

Ji You said softly, "In this lifetime, no matter what, being happy is the most important! Naturally, live comfortably in whatever way you want!"

The hotpot restaurant owner laughed, "Right."

"But—" The hotpot restaurant owner's brows furrowed slightly as he said, "It was Miss Xia Man's decision to have the young master return to Lanyue Star under the Alliance, and it was also agreed upon by the Emperor, but—"

With a heavy tone of sorrow, the hotpot restaurant owner continued, "After all, there's no one left from the Xia Family here, and the young master's identity is very special and sensitive. If malicious people were to use or harm him... his future on Lanyue Star and within the Alliance would still require the protection of powers. Thus, Lanyue Star Military Academy and the Agricultural College are the two best forces."

Ji You nodded, expressing understanding.

The hotpot restaurant owner said, "Our Lanyue Star Military Academy's former principal, Principal Hong, learned of this and did not decline; he took on the responsibility. The Agricultural College is a bit special, but showed no intentions of refusing either, although their Combat Power is not high..."

Ji You blinked, "Huh?"

This was not what she observed.

Initially, Aunt Zhang Si and Teacher Mu Jianling were passing the buck back and forth for a long time, showing no intention of taking Liufufeng under their wings.

The encounter between Zhang Si and Mu Jianling that day was widely known after being spread by some people. The hotpot restaurant owner also knew and chuckled lightly, "That was all just for show, not to be taken seriously."

Ji You: "!!!"

Damn!

Impressive!

So the two teachers were just putting on a dramatic act?

What's an Oscar winner then?

What about my little bit of acting!

In front of real masters, that's all worth nothing!

The hotpot restaurant owner laughed, "It's all for those with intentions to see, and also to let the young master enroll as an ordinary and inconspicuous student, to avoid drawing everyone's focus onto his sensitive identity."

Ji You's mouth hung open, "Got it! Understood."

The hotpot restaurant owner continued to laugh, "So, Student Ji You, you must not bully our young master; he truly has powerful backing."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You chuckled and said, "What are you talking about, sir? Am I that kind of person?"

Why would she bully Liu Fufeng?

Is she full to bursting?

Such a god of wealth, one would be too busy to worship.

Cough cough...

The hotpot restaurant owner smiled warmly and said, "Not that I meant anything by it. I'm telling Student Ji You so much today to, in fact, hope you could look out for the young master at the right time, helping him integrate into the school environment sooner."

Ji You couldn't help saying, "Boss, you are worried too much, I see Student Fufeng has integrated quite well already, he doesn't need anyone to bring him along. Now when he queues up for meals at the canteen window, he's already attracting quite a few female fans."

Those female fans, so enthusiastic, absolutely speechless.

"Cough cough..." the hotpot restaurant owner cleared his throat awkwardly and said, "I actually don't quite agree with him taking this part-time job, but—he likes it, so I didn't dissuade him."

Ji You couldn't help but retort, "Dissuade what? Being self-reliant is nothing to be ashamed of. Besides, you have no idea how much I want to work part-time in the cafeteria serving meals, but alas, I don't have that opportunity."

Then she thought, Liu Fufeng, that backstage-hound, got it so easily!

It's just so unfair.

Hotpot restaurant owner: "Cough cough..."

Ji You chuckled and said, "Uh... Boss, could you please quietly tell Student Liu Fufeng to be a bit more generous when serving my meals? To stop shaking the spoon and not skipping the soup—it's really annoying."

Hotpot restaurant owner: "Cough cough..."

This—

He really didn't know that the young master could be so humorous.

Ji You's eyes sparkled as she said, "Please do talk to him about it for me. We can keep it a secret, and he doesn't have to obviously favor me."

"Cough cough..." The hotpot restaurant owner cleared his throat and forced a smile, "I... I'll try to bring it up subtly."

Ji You narrowed her eyes, smiling, "Thank you so much, boss! I'll have Liu Fufeng's back in school from now on."

Hotpot restaurant owner: "Okay."

With the matter settled, Ji You didn't linger there any longer. She bid farewell to Mengmeng, and under Mengmeng's reluctant gaze, hurried away.

The first thing Ji You did was rush to the rabbit shed.

Inside, hundreds to thousands of rabbits were waiting for her to clean up.

As soon as she entered, she hurriedly started her chores, and without a doubt, her arrival still made a bunch of rabbits physically uncomfortable. But now Ji You was gaining some experience; as soon as she walked into the rabbit shed, she declared, "I'm full today, not eating rabbits!"

As dominantly as one walks in here, it's just—

—just to scoop your poop!

Damn!

Despite her declaration, a good number of rabbits still panicked and scampered all over.

Ji You kept her head down and worked, but her mind dwelled on what the hotpot restaurant owner had told her. She didn't doubt the authenticity of his words, because matters concerning Empress Xia Man and the Xia Family could all be found on Star Network.

What he said basically matched.

As for the details, having been the Xia Family's former steward, the hotpot restaurant owner would naturally know more.

Given his age and being childless, the hotpot restaurant owner's affection towards Student Liu Fufeng must resemble the selfless love of an elder for a younger one. It really must be hard on him.

Liu Fufeng, although in poor health and having become the ousted crown prince, sounded quite pitiable; however, with so many people around him caring, loving, and protecting him, along with vast wealth that he could never exhaust...

Cough cough...

Liu Fufeng should be able to feel the protection from those around him, right?

It's just—

His weird habits of sticking pins in voodoo dolls and drawing circles to curse... That part isn't very nice. Who knows who spoiled him into these bad habits!

The competition is over, but Ji You felt for some reason that the last doll Liu Fufeng stuck pins in was cursing her.

The reason?

—From the instinct of a big-shot!

Chapter 594: This Pooper Scooper Can't Do This Anymore

Ji You was shoveling rabbit poop for the rabbits, only halfway through, and she thought today's task was definitely going to be a piece of cake. Who knew that halfway through, there would be another rabbit rebellion, specifically the batch belonging to Liu Fufeng.

These rabbits had just arrived and weren't yet obedient. A few with wild natures were hard to tame and even dared to challenge Ji You's dignity. At that moment, Ji You looked at those huddled rabbits and didn't pay much attention. She bent over and began cleaning with her broom, and just then, three rabbits suddenly leaped out like a gust of wind, scraping straight towards Ji You's fair cheeks—

Whoosh~

As a member of the Combat Department, the future's greatest Mechanical Warrior, Ji You had to react quickly. Without fully making out what was coming her way, she raised her hand and blocked the attack. The three rabbits simultaneously fell to the ground.

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

After hitting the ground, the three rabbits lay motionless.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You frowned: "Playing dead?"

As soon as she finished speaking, she squatted down to take a close look, only to discover one of the rabbits with a crooked mouth and nose, trembling all over, and then it completely stopped moving.

Having faced numerous big scenes and still steady as an old dog, Ji You suddenly became a little panicky. She hurriedly checked the other two rabbits and found that one was already cold.

The other one still had a faint breath.

Ji You quickly called out, "Administrator! Administrator! Administrator! Hurry up and save the rabbits ahhhh!!!"

The mechanical administrator of the rabbit shed immediately came in and tried to resuscitate the rabbit that was still breathing. However, a few minutes later, the robot very regretfully announced, "Sorry, the resuscitation failed, it has passed away."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You took a deep breath: "You... you must be kidding."

The robot spoke solemnly: "The life form is no more, there's no need to kid."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You gingerly asked, "So... what now?"

The robot put on a stern face, and said, "Now we start calculating the cost for the three rabbits. The first one, the dressed weight is 5 Jin and 4 Liang, the fur is... the second one... The current market price for meat rabbits is..., but these three rabbits are breeding rabbits, much more expensive than meat rabbits, so..."

The more Ji You heard, the worse her expression became: "So?"

The robot expressed some sympathy and said, "So, student Ji You with the number 4444, the compensation you face is 113,805 credit points."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You defiantly said, "The culprits were these rabbits! It has nothing to do with me!"

The robot said, "No, rabbits lack spiritual power and cannot be considered at fault, you're the culprit, the one mainly responsible."

Ji You clenched her teeth and said, "But they attacked me first, I was only defending myself legitimately, how did I become the culprit? Are there no human rights anymore? Anyway, these rabbits should bear half of the responsibility."

The robot said, "Rabbits bear no responsibility; you used excessive defense, you are fully liable."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You took a hard breath and said, "This is deathly boring, can't talk about this anymore."

The robot said, "Regarding this matter, there's surveillance footage within the rabbit shed that has recorded everything. I have already sent the details to Teacher Mu Jianling, who is in charge of the rabbit shed, as well as to the rabbits' owner, Student Liu Fufeng. Student Ji You just has to wait for them to initiate the claim."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You clenched her fists: "I can't clean this rabbit shed anymore."

Damn it~

Just shoveling some rabbit poop, and accidentally shovel away 110,000!

Utterly insane!

Ji You didn't want to do this anymore!

She took off her gloves and mask, ready to throw in the towel, but the robot administrator saw her and asked, "Are you planning to desert? Just to let you know, Teacher Mu will be very angry if she finds out."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You, swallowing her indignation and shouldering the burden, put her mask and gloves back on, and even forced out a smile, saying to the robot, "I was just joking just now. There's no need to tell Teacher Mu about this."

Ahhhh!!!

So frustrating!

I'm going to shut down!

Thinking of the 110,000 credit points she was about to lose, Ji You couldn't help saying, "By the way, please tell the rabbit master for me, say I've got no money, and ask him how he wants to settle this?"

Cough~

It's a fact that I'm a broke soul, I reckon everyone in the whole school knows it.

So~

Maybe I can play the sympathy card, try to get a bit of pity. If I could just get the compensation waived, that would be even better.

The robot butler took a glance at Ji You, slightly suspicious that she was trying to dodge the bill, but still very dutifully conveyed Ji You's words to Mu Jianling and Student Fufeng.

Then~

Ding-dong—

Mu Jianling sent a communication request, Ji You hurriedly answered, and as soon as the video connected, she saw Teacher Mu's cold face: "You killed three rabbits?"

Ji You's face stiffened, and she quickly explained, "Ah no, the rabbits attacked me, and I just lifted my hand like this, and they all just fell dead! Really, they just fell dead, I truly didn't use excessive force."

Teacher Mu Jianling's gaze lingered on Ji You's two hands and cheeks for a few seconds, then she said, "Pay whatever the compensation is due."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You, with a sour face said, "Teacher... isn't the compensation too much? Can we reduce it a little?"

Mu Jianling said, "No."

Two words that completely epitomized cold-heartedness.

Ji You's face was even more bitter than a bitter melon and more wrinkled than a muggle's: "Teacher... isn't this a bit too unfair?"

Mu Jianling snorted coldly and said, "Didn't you read the rabbit care instructions? Every error is your fault for not being able to control your own Strength. It's only right that you suffer a loss."

Ji You: "..."

After being reprimanded by Teacher Mu like this, Ji You felt even more aggrieved: "I'm just a small fry, someone who only scored 11 points on the entrance Strength test. My Strength isn't even as great as a rabbit's. How was I supposed to know that just by raising my hand in defense, I could kill them?"

She was truly wronged.

Mu Jianling, seeing Ji You's silly appearance, wasn't very angry initially, but suddenly got irritated, and scolded, "Spiritual power is also included in the Strength system. You should reflect on your own about the reasons for causing the rabbits' deaths. Also, write a 5,000-word reflection report for me!"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You's lips quivered slightly with disbelief, "Tea...Teacher... I'll compensate the money promptly, isn't the reflection report unnecessary?"

Mu Jianling's eyes flashed coldly: "Have I ever taken back what I've said?"

Ji You's little heart trembled: "There's always a first time for everything, right? You haven't made an exception before, but you could do it for me this time."

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow: "Do I look idle to you?"

Ji You: "..."

Mu Jianling scolded, "Stop the nonsense, get the cleaning done quickly, and prepare the confession and reflection for me, send it over."

Click~

The communication was cut off just like that.

Ji You felt like she was going to lose it...

Chapter 595: Black-hearted Teacher

Ji Qizha, watching the disconnected communication, was teetering on the edge of exploding when suddenly, her communicator rang again. It was still Teacher Mu Jianling calling.

Ji You felt delighted and quickly answered: "Teacher, have you changed your mind?"

Mu Jianling gave her a sidelong glance, raised her hand, pointing to the three rabbits beside her, and said, "Have the robot assistant send these rabbits to me."

Ji You: "!!!"

Ji You could hardly believe what she heard and asked, "Do you mean these three rabbits?"

Mu Jianling to her: "Hurry up."

Ji You, gritting her teeth, said, "Teacher, I just compensated Liu Fufeng with over 110,000 credit points, shouldn't these rabbit corpses belong to me now?"

Is that how it works?

Mu Jianling snorted coldly, too lazy to argue with Ji You, and directly ordered, "Send them quickly."

Click~

The communication was disconnected again.

Ji You stared at the now-off contact number: "..."

There's no justice.

Then~

Before Ji You could start slacking off, the nearby robot administrator seemed to have received the notice too and promptly arranged for a robot assistant to pick up the corpses of the three rabbits, preparing to transport them to Teacher Mu Jianling.

Ji You jumped up, blocking the way: "Don't go, leave me one! Just one would be fine!"

Robot administrator: "Student Ji You, please do not obstruct our work, or you might risk losing points."

Ji You sheepishly moved her hand away.

The robot assistant immediately took the corpses of the rabbits and left quickly.

Soon~

Liu Fufeng made contact with the robot administrator as well. After listening to the robot recount the situation, he fell silent for a moment and then said, "I accept the compensation."

Ji You hurriedly said, "Student Fufeng, but I don't have the money, what should I do?"

Liu Fufeng continued to be silent.

Ji You thought this guy wouldn't care about a mere 110,000, right? Perhaps he could also round it off for me?

Then—

Liu Fufeng spoke: "I can accept an IOU."

Ji You: "..."

This student is impossible to deal with!

She can't cover for this student!

Ji You, feeling depressed, said, "Never mind, it's just 110,000, I can afford it."

"Cough..." the robot administrator suddenly spoke up, interrupting: "Student Ji You, the compensation amount is 113,805 credit points, please do not round off the change."

Ji You rolled her eyes: "If you don't speak up, I won't think you're mute."

The robot administrator seriously said, "Teacher Mu Jianling has ordered, compensate the exact amount, not one credit point less."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You was so frustrated, she directly transferred 113,810 credit points to Liu Fufeng and cursed, "The extra 5 credit points are for your emotional compensation!"

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng softly said, "Thank you."

As Liu Fufeng was about to disconnect the call, Ji You instantly regretted it and quickly said, "Um... I impulsively transferred 5 extra credit points, cough cough... Can you transfer the 5 credit points back to me?"

Of course, Ji You had her pride, and she stopped before finishing her sentence.

Liu Fufeng raised his face, his beautiful eyes seriously staring at Ji You.

Facing such a gaze, Ji You couldn't bring herself to utter the words, feeling a bit annoyed, she waved her hand saying, "Alright, alright, a gentleman's word is his bond, stop blinking at me, hurry up and hang up!"

Otherwise, she would really regret it.

Liu Fufeng whispered upon hearing these words, "Thank you, Ji You. You are a good person."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You, who had been given a good person card, was not happy.

After hanging up the call, Ji You resumed cleaning the rabbit shed.

Now, she was even more cautious than before, not daring to retaliate even when attacked by overconfident rabbits. For a moment, this allowed the rabid rabbits to grow bold, with several daring to attack Ji You.

Ji You narrowed her eyes, and her aura heightened.

In an instant, the rabbits trembled with fear.

Ji You deeply reflected—

Why could she easily kill rabbits?

Firstly, there was no doubt that both her Physical Strength and spiritual power had increased. However, although her strength had increased, her control power over it had not.

Secondly, the issue of precise control. This was something Ji You had encountered in online competitions before. Fragile creatures like rabbits could only endure a spiritual power threshold of 1-2 from Ji You, but she could only manage to control her spiritual attacks to a minimum threshold of 3. Thus, the rabbits would die.

...

Ji You took a deep breath, finding the rabbits extremely delicate; she didn't dare use them for experiments, only able to carefully control each Spiritual Silk, each release of spiritual power threshold...

To control her strength more simply and effectively, Ji You planned the amount of strength based on distance.

At 10 meters from the rabbit, what to do...

At 5 meters from the rabbit, what then...

At less than 0.5 meters from the rabbit, what now...

...

Thus, the pressure of cleaning the rabbit shed drastically increased for Ji You, but fortunately, no rabbits died tragically anymore. And — as Ji You continued doing this, the rabbits' rejection of her gradually decreased...

Faculty Canteen.

Three rabbits, after deep processing, turned into a sizzling roast rabbit, a spicy dry pot rabbit, and a homestyle stewed rabbit.

At the dining table.

There sat three diners: Principal Hong, Doctor Luo, and Teacher Mu Jianling.

Principal Hong jiggled his leg, savoring a sip of liquor with a bite of rabbit leg and clicking his tongue twice, saying, "Rabbit with liquor is truly delicious."

Then—

Principal Hong simply sipped his liquor, contentedly eating and drinking.

On this side.

Doctor Luo asked with a smile, "Jianling, that girl has been so oppressed by you, and she really hasn't resisted?"

Mu Jianling smiled and said, "She's bound by a contract and debts."

Hearing this, Doctor Luo burst into laughter and said, "Ah! You're making me somewhat sympathetic towards her. Poor girl..."

Mu Jianling coldly said, "What's there to pity? Being pressured now is better than being clueless and waiting for death on the battlefield."

Doctor Luo smiled and said, "That's true. Although her spiritual power is special, she has fewer Spiritual Silks and a poor physique, so she should put more effort into training than ordinary people. Advancing in fine control is indeed the best way out for her."

Mu Jianling: "Hmm."

Doctor Luo said, "It's just a question whether the girl will understand your thoughtful intentions. It's been so long, and I think she hasn't yet realized the ingenious purpose of taking care of these rabbits."

Mu Jianling said coldly, "That's why I had Zhang Si provide Liu Fufeng with those 200 rabbits, switching them for a more delicate yet more irritable, active, and aggressive breed. I don't believe she can still slack off by intimidating the rabbits to complete the task."

Hearing this, Doctor Luo laughed out loud and said, "It seems then, we will still have rabbit meat to eat."

Principal Hong immediately said, "If there's rabbit meat, don't forget me, Old Hong."

Mu Jianling said, "I estimate we can still eat around 30-50 more rabbits."

Chapter 596: Before the Team Competition

Ji You had no idea about the ins and outs of the staff canteen or the scheming plans of a few unscrupulous teachers. If she did, she would have been enraged all over again.

Of course, even without knowing Teacher Mu Jianling's sinister plot, she would never comply with their wishes.

119,381 credit points spent on a lesson was already enough for Ji You!

Once was enough, how could she keep suffering losses?

As a future big shot, Ji You only allowed herself to make a mistake once. Therefore, she cleaned the rabbit shed even more diligently, putting in an enormous amount of effort. Normally, she could only

release spiritual power at a threshold of five, but in less than half an hour, Ji You forcefully reduced it to three!

Under great pressure, progress is indeed the quickest.

Afterward.

Ji You noticed the differences between the school's rabbits and the batch raised by Liu Fufeng. Although their fur and size were similar, Ji You still spotted some differences.

First, temperament was the most obvious difference.

The school's rabbits were noticeably more docile.

Liu Fufeng's rabbits? They were aggressively belligerent, weak yet always trying to challenge Ji You's authority. Despite three rabbits having died, of Liu Fufeng's remaining 197 rabbits, many were Iron Fools, repeatedly provoking Ji You. She feared she couldn't control her strength and didn't dare retaliate, so she adopted the policy of neither striking back nor intimidating, leaving them be completely.

Then—

Ji You's face was clawed into a mess by the rabbits.

Secondly, the physical strength of the school's rabbits was clearly better than Liu Fufeng's. Liu Fufeng's rabbits, just like their master, were excessively frail. Ji You refrained from scaring or attacking them, yet these rabbits even fought amongst themselves, injuring each other. Ji You was utterly speechless about this.

If the rabbits injured each other while fighting and casualties resulted, blaming it on Ji You would truly be more wrongful than the case of Dou E.

Therefore, Ji You couldn't completely ignore them; she had to intervene when necessary to stop them from fighting. Here, she had to use spiritual power. Fortunately, Ji You's refined control over spiritual power significantly improved during this tough process. With a threshold of three, she would never exceed 3.1, and if it was 3.2, it would never be below 3.1.

...

To gain a deeper understanding of these rabbits' characteristics, Ji You even phoned Aunt Zhang Si, but got no useful information. She didn't know if Aunt Zhang Si did this intentionally.

Ji You had no choice but to browse the Star Network and delve into the Agricultural College's forum. She read a vast amount of information related to the habits of these rabbits and finally picked up some tricks for taking care of them.

Ah!

In short—

Creating a Soul Device by herself was not as tough as this.

Finally, today's cleaning duty was over.

Once done, Ji You left the rabbit shed and was heading back to her dorm when she bumped into Chu Jiaojiao and others. They were sitting in a milk tea shop on the commercial street, drinking cold beverages, and juices...

Chu Jiaojiao raised her hand and shouted, "Classmate Ji You, come have a drink."

Ji You promptly asked, "Who's paying?"

Yue Qiguang rolled his eyes: "Dig into your own pocket."

Ji You turned away: "Goodbye."

Everyone: "..."

Sheng Qingyan said disdainfully, "I told you, this poor dead wouldn't spend money on milk tea."

Seeing Ji You walking further away, Chu Jiaojiao hurriedly said, "Classmate Ji You, come back! Come back! I'll pay."

The next second.

Ji You was sitting opposite Chu Jiaojiao, smilingly asking, "Really?"

Yue Qiyuan looked doubtful and asked, "Since when did you become so fast?"

This hundred-meter distance was truly covered in the blink of an eye!

Ji You glanced at him sideways and said irritatedly, "I train tirelessly day and night, I'm not just loafing around."

Yue Qiyuan contemplated for a moment and said, "Still, it's too fast. According to your physical strength, you shouldn't be able to achieve this level."

Shen Changqing also said, "Ji You, your physical strength has indeed improved very quickly recently."

Ji You rolled his eyes and said, "Would you believe me if I told you that I've taken on a debt of 500 million credit points just to improve my physical strength?"

Everyone shook their heads and said, "We don't believe."

Ji You pursed his lips and said, "Well, there you have it. Even if I speak the truth, you wouldn't believe me."

Everyone: "..."

Then—

Everyone stared at Ji You's bruised face for a long while. After hearing the cause and effect, they couldn't help but feel sympathy. After sympathizing, they laughed anyway! Yue Qiguang slapped his thigh hard, laughing uproariously, "So, you lost the money for the rabbits and didn't even get to eat the rabbits?"

Ji You nodded gloomily.

Yue Qiguang laughed out loud, "Fool! If I were you, I wouldn't even ask Mu Jianling that old hag but just eat the rabbit meat first."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You gloomily asked, "How can you eat a freshly dead rabbit?"

Yue Qiyuan smirked and said, "You could immediately grill it over a fire, it's not like you've never done that."

Ji You glanced at the twin brothers sideways and said annoyed, "How can I start a fire in the rabbit shed? Besides, it's full of surveillance and robots guarding, would they let me grill the rabbits on site?"

"Pfft—" Everyone burst into unapologetic laughter once again.

Ji You held a cup of watermelon juice and took a fierce sip. Just when he was about to sip again, he found out the straw couldn't suck anything up anymore—it was empty.

Ji You hurriedly asked, "Jiaojiao, can I have another cup?"

Chu Jiaojiao looked at his bruised face, which despite being a mess, still carried a sense of confidence and ease, attractive indeed!

So, Chu Jiaojiao nodded, "Sure."

Ji You immediately beamed with joy, raising his hand, "Another cup of watermelon juice."

Soon, the milk tea shop's intelligent system delivered the watermelon juice he wanted right in front of him—

Shen Changqing suddenly said, "Let's get back to business! For the team competition tomorrow, let's first speculate on what the rules might be."

Huh?

So this group gathered here to discuss how to tackle the team competition?

Ji You's eyes subtly lit up.

Yue Qiguang was the first to say, "What's there to ponder about? The rules will naturally be announced tomorrow, and then we'll see how to play depending on the situation! With so many of us, can't we still win?"

"Cough..." Yue Qiyuan glanced at his not-so-smart brother and said, "People who are not so bright should at least have the self-awareness to shut up on their own."

Yue Qiguang's eyelid twitched, "What do you mean, Yue Qiyuan?"

Yue Qiyuan: "Just what it sounds like."

Seeing Yue Qiguang about to explode, Shen Changqing said, "Let's set aside the squabble between you brothers for now, for the team competition, it's still better to think ahead about our tactics, better safe than sorry."

Chapter 597: Little Cutie

Shen Changqing's words had just ended when Chu Jiaojiao said, "I agree with classmate Shen Changqing, we should brainstorm about the competition rules beforehand, better safe than sorry."

Chu Jiaojiao and Yue Qiguang are both Talents with S-level physique, but the biggest difference between them is that Chu Jiaojiao is mentally active, while Yue Qiguang doesn't like to think at all and prefers action.

This is also why, despite having similar talents, their strength varies significantly.

Since Chu Jiaojiao said so, no one else objected.

"Before that—" Yue Qiyuan thought for a moment, and somehow, his gaze unintentionally swept over Ji You as he said, "Let's guess who the Rag Queen is, after all, we did spend 10,000 points to bring her into the team."

Shen Changqing: "Cough cough..."

It was Shen Changqing who initially suggested spending 10,000 points to invite the Rag Queen. At this moment, a hint of discomfort appeared on his face as he said, "Spending 10,000 points to have her join us isn't a loss."

Yue Qiyuan said, "It's not a loss. But we never expected she would actually be one of our classmates."

Thinking about how they had spent such a large amount of points to invite one of their own classmates, for some reason, it just felt off. At the outset of the online competition, they had already screened through all the Combat Department students with potential, confident that they wouldn't miss out on any exceptionally talented students, but!!!

Rag Queen proved to be the exception.

Really!

Chu Jiaojiao blinked, asking, "So, who exactly is she?"

Yue Qiguang slightly agitated, scratched his head, and cursed, "She's being secretive, definitely not a good person."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You almost couldn't hold it in and wanted to fiercely retort Yue Qiguang, but being just a spectator, she played her role diligently, not being curious, not inquiring, not participating in discussions...

Suddenly, Shen Changqing said, "No matter who she is, one thing we must know is that she is definitely not an enemy." Since she is a classmate, everyone's goal is definitely the same, which is to strive for the highest ranking together.

Previously, thinking she was from another school, even though a high price was offered, there were still concerns about her integrity, fearing she might take the money and not contribute, but now knowing she's our fellow Combat Department classmate dispels those concerns.

It can be said that Shen Changqing's mindset is very good, very open-minded.

"Hm—" Yue Qiyuan said, "The fact that she is our classmate, that's also good news, right?"

At this time—

As a god-level actress, Ji You timely asked, "Did you guys really spend 10,000 points to invite that Rag Queen to the team?"

Chu Jiaojiao nodded, "Yes, yes."

Ji You was somewhat speechless, saying, "Do you guys have too many points or what? Why not invite me? I only ask for 5,000 points!"

As soon as these words fell, several people looked at her with disdain.

Chu Jiaojiao scratched her head, giggling, "Classmate Ji You, stop joking, haha."

Yue Qiguang cursed, "We need a teammate who is strong!"

Ji You immediately got upset, "My strength is not strong? Which eye of yours saw that my strength isn't strong?"

Yue Qiguang opened his mouth, wanting to say you're the strongest at bragging, but the words weren't even spoken when Shen Changqing and others stopped him.

Ji You muttered, "Really! You guys actually don't include me? 5,000 points might be a bit much, but we could totally negotiate the price, as long as you guys are willing to take me to the competition, I'd join for free too."

The spots have been fixed, adding more people?

Impossible.

"Alright, calm down." Chu Jiaojiao quickly appeased Ji You, saying, "Ji You, let's not talk about this. Let's discuss the rules of the team competition. The rules could impact a player's performance by at least one-third."

Ji You pouted, "When you lose, you'll know it's not my fault. Hmph~"

Everyone ignored her.

Shen Changqing said, "Last year's rule required the qualifying ten teams to race to rescue hostages. The team that rescued a hostage first won." Meanwhile, teams would attack and deplete each other to reduce their opponents' chance of success and increase theirs.

Zhou Qiyuan said, "The rules from the year before last were similar to the singles competition; every two teams fought each other, and the last victors would advance until the top three were decided..."

Yue Qiguang said, "Three years ago, the rules were a massive melee between ten teams, with the last surviving team winning."

...

Chu Jiaojiao stroked her chin, saying, "So, the rules change every year. What will they be like this year?"

Shen Changqing frowned in thought, then said, "I'd guess it will be a massive team melee + rescuing hostages or something similar; that's the most likely."

Zhou Qiyuan said, "Aqing, your guess might be right or wrong. Either way, no matter what the approach is, we need to prepare our team's weapons and equipment in advance, just in case."

Lou chimed in, "Absolutely! Our equipment must be fully equipped, and we must use whatever weapons and mechas we are familiar with! This is not the time to be stingy."

Shen Changqing nodded, "Having a full set of equipment is necessary; our team's points should be enough to equip everyone with good gear. I'm not worried about anything else; my only worry is that this year's rules will be completely different from before."

Yue Qiguang was the first to shake his head and deny, "Impossible! Some aspects may change, but the essence remains the same. As long as the requirement for the ten teams to determine the winner remains, no matter how much other things change, it's not a problem."

...

The group discussed for half an hour before breaking up.

Ji You listened for a while and realized that in the end, everyone was just making various guesses and briefly discussing how to respond to each. During this time, Ji You hardly spoke and simply sat there quietly, like a bystander sipping watermelon juice.

After disbanding, Ji You rode back to the dorms with Sheng Qingyan's free ride. That guy Sheng Qingyan was truly lazy; while everyone else discussed, he finished his milk tea and dozed off on the table throughout.

Fortunately, his friends knew his quirks, or else, they might have been driven mad by him.

It's just Ji You, who, after their last competition with Sheng Qingyan, had much respect for him. Despite his laziness, he was incredibly strong. If he were a bit more serious, wouldn't he be—

Cough cough!

But no matter how strong he is, he can't be stronger than herself.

Ji You straightened her back and held her head high: Sheng Qingyan? Just a defeated underling!

Little Cutie?

Spicy Eye too!

Anyway, no matter what, this guy was just a spiteful defeated underling, not worth making a fuss over.

Just then, Sheng Qingyan, who had been feigning sleep with his eyes closed, suddenly opened his eyes, stared at Ji You, and asked a question that startled her: "Hey poor dead, are you the Rag Queen?"

Ji You: "!!!"

Chapter 598: Pop Quiz

Fraud?

Or?

When this question was posed, Ji You nearly lost her breath in shock. After a moment of astonishment, Ji the "Drama Queen" tried her best to feign composure and disdainfully said, "What a joke, Rag Queen is such a weak chicken, how could I possibly be her?"

Sheng Qingyan asked lazily, "Is she really that weak?"

Ji You straightened her back, saying, "Compared to a genius like me, she's definitely a little weak chicken!"

Sheng Qingyan's stunningly bewitching eyes slightly glanced at Ji You and teased, "Don't you dare admit it? Afraid you'll get beaten to death?"

Ji You: "..."

Sheng Qingyan's lips curled, her tone languid, "Don't worry, I have no interest in exposing your alter ego, and I definitely won't tell anyone else."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You stubbornly denied any connection, saying, "Keep spouting nonsense, and I'll get upset! Sheng Qingyan let me tell you, I'm very dissatisfied with your guesses and doubts, extremely dissatisfied! Rag Queen is such a sleazy, thick-skinned person, what does she have to do with a little cutie like me?"

"Oh oh oh—" Sheng Qingyan suddenly sat up, raised her pale index finger, and gently shook it, saying, "Remove the 'little cutie', that's my exclusive nickname!"

Ji You: "..."

Sheng Qingyan continued, "I told you, whether you admit it or not isn't important, I won't snitch anyway."

Ji You frowned, "If you keep this up, I'll have to apply for my reputation protection rights."

Sheng Qingyan, glancing at her, continued, "Poor dead, when you enter the team competition tomorrow, remember to protect the weak, pitiful, helpless little cutie—me. It'd be best if you could let me win lying down."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You cursed, "You might as well go die right at the start."

Sheng Qingyan covered her mouth with her hand, yawning, and said, "I actually thought about it—only, Jiaojiao and Aqing will surely be furious, so I think not, I'm not that nasty."

Ji You was impressed, "You really thought about that?"

Sheng Qingyan pulled a troubled face, "It's not feasible."

Ji You: "..."

Silently, they reached the dorm.

Ji You stood up ready to leave, repeatedly asserting, "I am not the Rag Queen!"

Sheng Qingyan said, "Oh—"

Ji You: "I really am not."

Sheng Qingyan: "Oh—"

Ji You: "I really, really, truly am not."

Sheng Qingyan yawned, "You're so noisy—"

With that, she raised her hand and closed the door.

Thump—

Ji You: "..."

Staring at the closed dorm door, Ji You felt so choked up she nearly couldn't resist dragging Sheng Qingyan out and shaking her fiercely, crying, "I am not! I really am not!"

Whimper~

Getting exposed was no fun at all.

...

The next day.

After a morning run and breakfast, Ji You still hitched a free ride with Sheng Qingyan to the training room. Inside, the students had already found their seats in twos and threes, waiting for Teacher Mu Jianling to arrive.

Once Mu Jianling arrived, he immediately said, "We'll watch the team competition in the morning, and the Basic Driving assessment for the Mecha will be held directly in the afternoon. Get ready."

The students: "..."

Someone couldn't resist asking, "Teacher, having the assessment in the afternoon, isn't that too soon?"

Mu Jianling: "Soon?"

With just one word, spoken calmly and without even a rise in tone, the questioning student dared not ask any further.

Mu Jianling narrowed his eyes and said, "If anyone feels it's too soon and isn't prepared, then let's change it to tomorrow."

"Wow—"

The students were immediately shocked, almost unable to believe their ears. Was Teacher Mu Jianling so easygoing? It must be a joke, a deception, right?

Yue Qiguang was the first to react, "Terrible—Teacher Mu, were you serious just now?"

Gosh~

He almost blurted out 'damn old woman', thankfully he was quick-witted and corrected himself.

Hearing the first word uttered by Yue Qiguang, Mu Jianling's eyes suddenly narrowed, and Yue Qiguang quickly recoiled, saying, "From what I just heard, I really can't believe it, Teacher, were you serious?"

Cough, cough...

This turning point, after Yue Qiguang finished speaking, he was secretly delighted in his heart: believing this was the first time he was so clever and the transition was so natural.

Mu Jianling's eyes twinkled slightly, and he said with a light smile, "Of course I'm serious."

"Wow—"

"Teacher! You are truly an angel."

"Wow—"

...

In an instant, the entire training room was filled with successive praises from the students. Listening to such praises, Mu Jianling's smile grew bigger and bigger...

Then—

Mu Jianling changed the subject, saying, "However, there will be a small assessment in the afternoon."

Students: "..."

Just knew it!

They knew it wouldn't be that simple.

Mu Jianling watched as the students' expressions turned incredibly gloomy in the blink of an eye, looking as if they had swallowed dung, and he barely suppressed a smirk, saying, "Who are you looking so gloomy for? This afternoon, everyone will have an acting skills assessment."

"Pfft—"

Quite a few people burst out laughing.

Ji You's eyelids twitched non-stop; she loudly asked, "Teacher, you aren't kidding, right?"

Is this for real?

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow, "Do I look like I'm joking?"

Ji You opened her mouth: "But... but we're not an acting major, why assess acting? Besides, no one has studied acting in advance."

Chu Jiaojiao also hurriedly chimed in, "Yeah, yeah, teacher, we haven't studied it, how can we be assessed?"

Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan both frowned so tightly, it looked like they could trap flies...

The other students also didn't look too pleased.

Mu Jianling did not answer Ji You and Chu Jiaojiao's questions, but instead suddenly said, "The acting skills assessment, as a bonus question for the final exam, those who pass will receive an additional 10 academic points."

Wow~

With that statement, the students collectively boiled over!

academic points!

10!

That's a lot!

Let's go for it!

Isn't it just acting? What's so hard about it?

At this point—

Ji You, sticking to her cautious principles, shyly raised her hand and quietly asked, "Then—teacher, if the assessment is not passed, will points be deducted?"

With that question, the students who were just about to jump for joy collectively fell silent.

Right.

Don't celebrate too early, with the lure of extra points, there's also the trap of losing points, isn't there?

Hearing this, Mu Jianling's eyes, sharp like a falcon's, lightly swept over Ji You, immediately frightening Ji You, making her cower and hunch over just like the good-for-nothing Yue Qiguang...

Seeing this.

Mu Jianling then said, "No. If the assessment is not passed, no points will be deducted."

"Wow!"

"Can't believe it!"

"No... no way?"

...

The students were all stunned by this happiness!

But!!!

Happiness came too quickly, like a tornado, always mixed with unstable factors, making people feel uneasy.

Indeed—

Mu Jianling said with a smile, "However, students who fail the assessment will have their natural food supply canceled for the upcoming week."

Students: "..."

That's dreadful!

Chapter 599: Counting on You to Watch My Back

As Mu Jianling's words fell, the atmosphere in the training room instantly went from boiling to freezing.

Mu Jianling didn't feel like she had said anything offensive. On the contrary, she thought she was very kind and gentle for only making the students take nutrient solution for a few days without deducting

academic points or physical punishment. Mu Jianling even smiled slightly and asked, "This kind of punishment is nothing for you guys, right?"

Students: "..."

The students grimaced, not wanting to talk to her.

Mu Jianling raised her hand, tapped the table, and said, "Alright. That's settled then. Now, focus on watching the competition."

Students: "Meow~"

Mu Jianling suddenly turned cold, raising her voice, "Silence, everybody!"

The students immediately became as quiet as chickens.

Then came the team competition of the Alliance University on the Star Network—

Ji You rubbed her fingers nervously. After all, team competitions required cooperation, unlike individual competitions. Although she knew her teammates well, she was in disguise and preferred not to reveal it if possible.

Beside her—

Shen Changqing said to a few classmates, "Remember to put on your equipment as soon as we enter."

Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Chu Jiaojiao, and others nodded, "Mhm."

Sheng Qingyan raised an eyebrow and asked, "Will your newly hired Rag Queen arrive on time? Don't let everybody down, alright?"

Ji You: "..."

Is this guy doing this on purpose?

Shen Changqing shook his head, "She won't. I trust Rag Queen. She has her basic integrity."

Sheng Qingyan covered his mouth with a hand, yawning, "Not necessarily, I think she's very likely to take the money and run."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You frowned, suddenly turned around, and glared at Sheng Qingyan, cursing, "You're so noisy, disturbing my viewing."

Sheng Qingyan looked over, saying, "Who's going to protect me later, this weak, pitiful, helpless Little Cutie?"

Under the table.

Ji You stretched out a leg and kicked over, "Keep it up, and I'll cut out your tongue."

Sheng Qingyan then shut his chatterbox.

Soon—

All the competitors entered the Star Network. The team competition consisted of ten people. Shen Changqing's gathered personnel were: Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan, Lou, Lance, Ji You, and the two unexpected ones for Ji You were brothers, Xuzhou and Zhang Ye.

Seeing Xuzhou and Zhang Ye, Ji You blinked and almost couldn't help but shout, "My boys! Daddy's here!"

However, Ji You held back tight.

At the same time, Shen Changqing and his team quietly breathed a sigh of relief when they saw the Rag Queen appear on time:

[She didn't take the money and run.]

Cough cough...

As this thought popped up, Shen Changqing immediately straightened his face, resumed his serious expression, and went over the team's plan with his teammates again, mainly for Ji You, of course.

She nodded, "I understand, I'll do my best to cooperate with you."

Shen Changqing said, "Thank you."

Ji You gestured, "What's there to thank? For our kind of business deal, just make sure the payment is right, no need for pleasantries."

Shen Changqing: "..."

This Rag Queen really was somewhat indescribable.

Immediately—

As the captain, Shen Changqing submitted the entry application to the system, the screen shifted, and a team of ten people was teleported into the arena.

The arena is an entire simulated planet, with oceans, land, rainforests...

Everyone gathered together, looking at each other, all with the same question popping up: "What are the rules of the competition?"

Yue Qiyuan said in a deep voice, "The competition rules have not been announced yet."

Shen Changqing patiently said, "Just wait a bit longer."

Then, the system's voice rang out: "The competition is about to start. The winning condition is to kill the level 9 Flame Beast in Yunding Mountain. For other rules and taboos, all participating teams must figure them out on their own."

Whoosh—

Level 9!

What does that mean?

Although this is a Star Beast simulated by the Star Network, the contestants are all first-year students who have just started their freshman year! They are all Mecha novices!

Kill a level 9 Star Beast?

This—

It seems impossible just thinking about it.

Moreover, there are a total of 10 teams participating in the competition, and these teams must watch out for each other and fight among themselves...

Tsk tsk!

What's even more speechless is that the rules are not transparent or public; instead, you must explore by yourself. This is truly a pitfall within pitfalls!

So, it seems the difficulty of this year's online competition is much higher than in previous years.

Not only does Ji You and her team think so, but other teams think the same, and the audience outside the field is also clicking their tongues endlessly.

Audience A: "From this perspective, the team led by Bai Jiu from the North District seems to have the highest chance of victory."

Audience B: "I think the team led by Little Shengsheng from the East District also has a great chance of winning."

Audience C: "Does my grand West District not deserve a name? Our players from the West District aren't bad either; we have strong overall strength."

Audience D: "Cough cough... Did you guys see that team? The one that has gathered Drunk Lying on the Beauty's Knee, Little Cutie, Rag Queen, Xiaoqing, Daddy Universe Strongest, Dominate the Universe...? That team?"

Audience A: "These individuals have strong abilities, but who knows how well they will work together? Our Bai Jiu from the North District is leading a team that almost all made it into the top 20 of the Alliance. No matter what, we must be the champions of the North District this time!"

...

Before the competition officially started, the audience in the stands was already hyped up. In the individual matches, players from the East District have shaved the heads of the Western, Southern, and Northern regions, so to speak. Right now, people from the other three regions definitely do not want the team competition to be dominated by the East District again. Therefore, the audiences from the other three districts are frantically cheering for their respective players.

Just then, the system announced: "The countdown has ended, please be ready for combat."

Woosh—

The competition begins!

Ji You and her team quickly landed on the ground. This is a tropical rainforest with very lush vegetation. One can only see tall trees and intertwined vines, as well as a ground covered with dead leaves and moss...

It's very quiet around.

Shen Changqing extended his hand, made a gesture, and said, "Everyone, get your Mechas ready."

Everyone acted in unison and logged into their Mechas.

Just as Ji You connected to her Mecha, she suddenly heard a subtle rustling sound behind her. She clenched the control keys, almost firing a shot backward, but upon catching sight of Sheng Qingyan behind her, she was momentarily speechless.

Sheng Qingyan covered her mouth and said, "Oh Rag Queen, I'm very fragile, you have to cover for me today."

Ji You: "..."

This shameless creature, she couldn't possibly be thinking of sticking to me, right?

Chapter 600: Investigator Xuzhou

Ji You suspected that Sheng Qingyan would stick to her like glue. A few seconds later, this suspicion became a reality. It turned out that Sheng Qingyan was indeed intentionally clinging to her; whenever Ji You moved, Sheng Qingyan followed closely in her Mecha, keeping the distance between them less than 1 meter. It made Ji You almost think she had spontaneously grown a tail or something.

A few minutes later, Ji You felt speechless and said, "Little Cutie, we don't seem to be familiar, do we? Why are you following me all the time?"

Sheng Qingyan covered her mouth and whined, "I'm scared because I'm such a coward. I can only feel a bit safe when I'm next to a big shot like you."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You admitted defeat, thinking to herself: Fine. It's just a tag-along bug behind me, just pretend it doesn't exist.

So—

Ji You started focusing on dealing with the situation at hand.

Swish~

Swish~

Swish~

The trees swayed rhythmically. Xuzhou and Zhang Ye, who were in charge of scouting ahead, suddenly paused. Xuzhou said, "Be careful, there's movement."

The group stopped immediately.

Shen Changqing spoke over the team channel, "Zhang Ye, go find out what it is. Everyone else, stay put."

Both Zhang Ye and Xuzhou piloted 'Chasing Sun' Mechas, a combination of scout and vanguard types, and both were bold yet meticulous. They quickly determined that the disturbance ahead was a level 3 Star Beast.

After pondering for a moment, Shen Changqing said, "Chu Jiaojiao, go take care of that Star Beast. Be discreet and avoid making any big noise."

Chu Jiaojiao said, "Give me one second."

One second later, the level 3 Star Beast fell silently to the ground, not getting up again, and Chu Jiaojiao promptly rejoined the group.

Everyone gave a thumbs up and praised, "Impressive."

Chu Jiaojiao giggled, then sidled up to Rag Queen and said, "Don't be frightened, Rag Queen. I'm here for you, and I will definitely protect you."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You managed a smile and said, "Well, thank you so much, Drunk Lying on the Beauty's Knee. You're really kind-hearted."

Chu Jiaojiao replied, "It's an honor to serve a beauty."

There she goes again, shameless and unabashed.

Really—

It's impossible to deal with her.

However, with Xuzhou and Zhang Ye scouting ahead, Yue Qiyuan covering the rear, and people like Lou, Lance, and others in between, plus combatants like Chu Jiaojiao and Yue Qiguang, Ji You was comfortably in the middle of the team, living the easy life of mooching off others; her days couldn't get any better.

In the following tens of minutes, the team didn't encounter any significant crisis, making Ji You almost believe that she had come not for a group battle, but for a leisurely outing.

Suddenly—

Rustling~

Rumbling~

...

There was a violent shaking and sound of explosions from ahead. Everyone was startled and stopped collectively.

Zhang Ye cautiously moved forward to investigate and reported back, "Ahead, there are two groups fighting each other. Should we go around, or should we lie low like a mantis stalking a cicada?"

After a moment of thought, Shen Changqing whispered, "For now, let's go around. Our objective isn't to get into a melee, but to reach Yunding Peak as quickly as possible and hide."

Exactly.

After a unanimous discussion, they decided to head to Yunding Peak early, find a spot to hide in, and then wait for the other teams to beat each other down, or after they had fought several battles with level 9 Star Beasts and worn each other out. Only then would they come out to snatch the advantages.

Cough cough...

This approach, while not particularly honorable, well, what's the need for honor on the battlefield?

As long as victory is achieved, isn't that enough?

Of course, this proposal wasn't made by Shen Changqing, but was raised simultaneously by Ji You and Sheng Qingyan, with the likes of Chu Jiaojiao and Yue Qiyuan quickly echoing it before Shen Changqing stamped the decision.

Silently, just as they came, they left...

Throughout the entire process, they hardly drew the attention of the two clashing teams.

Below the stage.

The audience, witnessing this scene, didn't know quite what to say.

Here, as the camera swiveled again, everyone saw the direction in which the Rag Queen and her team were retreating—happening upon a team sneaking over, led by Bai Jiu, the top contender of the North District.

The two teams were about to meet around 5000 meters apart.

meters.

meters.

...

Watching the distance close, the audience sat up straighter, lips curling into a look of anticipation: "Which of these two teams will come out on top?"

Suddenly—

Xuzhou said, "Something seems off ahead."

As they were in the dense forest, the view ahead was nearly obscured by the lush tree branches and leaves, and the thick miasma hampered visibility, creating quite a challenge for the investigator's scouting skills.

Shen Changqing asked, "Are you sure there's something ahead?"

Xuzhou, with pursed lips, responded, "Not certain, but my intuition tells me something's off."

Shen Changqing hardly hesitated before giving the order: "All hands—be on alert—"

Ji You, seeing that Shen Changqing hardly considered before trusting Xuzhou's 'intuition,' was a bit surprised and couldn't help but ask, "Xiaoqing, do you trust the investigator's words that much? What if he's wrong?"

Xuzhou, his dark eyes fixated ahead, didn't seem offended by the Rag Queen's skepticism.

Shen Changqing said, "There's no harm in being cautious. Moreover, I trust Xuzhou's scouting skills."

Xuzhou may not be the strongest among the thousand-odd students in the Combat Department, nor does he possess the top talent. Despite his burly appearance with thick brows and big eyes, he was genuinely bold yet meticulous. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been selected for the team competition by Shen Changqing and the others.

It was at this moment that a faint rustling sounded from up ahead...

Then—

A Mechanical Warrior with branches stuck in its helmet, crouching down, appeared before everyone's eyes.

Xuzhou, concealed from view, remained undetected, but Chu Jiaojiao had quietly approached, resting a massive Energy Sword against the Mecha warrior's neck.

The opponent: "..."

Ji You, witnessing this scene, was slightly taken aback. She truly had no idea that her eldest son's scouting skills were so advanced. As it turned out, someone really was there.

Chu Jiaojiao raised her hand, gesturing to inquire: "To kill? Or not to kill?"

Seeing the enemy's gesture, the pupils of the captured North District team member sharply constricted, yet for some reason, they suddenly shut their eyes, making no move to resist—

Huh?

A bit strange.

Ji You felt something was amiss but couldn't quite pinpoint what was wrong. With furrowed brows, she observed closely the surroundings and the captured Mecha warrior's every action.

In the meantime, after some thought, Shen Changqing gave an instruction over the team channel: "Kill!"

This person was clearly the opponent's investigator; taking out one of the enemy's investigators was without a doubt like clipping their wings, blinding their eyes... This was crucial for winning the battle.

Chu Jiaojiao was about to make her move—