

Scavengers 631

Chapter 631: Reckless and Shameless

"When it comes to treating, she treats. Ji You quickly paid off the bill, clutching her food tray. She lingered, not wanting to leave, hoping to chat with Senior Shi Ya for a bit. Yet seeing Senior Shi Ya continuously busy, averaging 10 seconds to serve each meal and with a still impressively long queue...

Ji You thought it over and decided not to disturb her. Instead, she just watched Senior Shi Ya and said with a smile, 'Senior, I will go and eat now, and we can catch up after class in the afternoon.'

Upon hearing this, Shi Ya looked up—

Ji You, observing her indifferent expression, initially thought she would surely be rejected, but unexpectedly, she heard a soft reply: 'Hmm.'

Just one word, and had Ji You not been all ears, she might have thought she misheard it.

Instinctively, Ji You's eyes brightened. She stared at Senior Shi Ya with a smile tugging at the edges of her eyes and corners of her eyebrows, saying, 'Then it's settled! I'm off to eat.'

Shi Ya remained silent.

Ji You, pleased with herself, held her tray looking for a spot to sit.

'Ji You, over here!' Chu Jiaojiao spotted Ji You coming their way, immediately waved her hand, and called out, 'Come over, I saved you a spot.'

As Ji You walked over and set down her tray, she looked around at the table full of food lovers, and with a hint of pride, she asked, 'Do you know why you ended up with two extra pieces of meat?'

No one responded.

No one acknowledged her.

And—

With Shen Changqing, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, and others leading, upon hearing Ji You say this, their previously leisurely pace of eating suddenly sped up. In the blink of an eye, they'd wolfed down two or three pieces of ribs.

Seeing no one interacting with her, Ji You wasn't embarrassed and said directly, 'Because you all basked in my glory.'

Still, no one responded, their heads lowered, scrambling just to focus on their food.

Ji You: '...'

Taking a deep breath, she asked, 'Am I that scary? I'm not about to blackmail each of you for a piece of meat.'

At this point—

Yue Qiguang finally looked up, still chewing on meat, and mumbled indistinctly, 'You are!'

Yue Qiyuan swallowed his food, looking at Ji You with disdain, and said, 'Exactly, you are! We've seen right through you.'

Sheng Qingyan, the only one who wasn't worried about Ji You competing for meat, had, from the moment Ji You arrived, licked every piece of rib. Now leisurely chewing on the meat, he looked at Ji You with slight contempt and said, 'Poor dead, you might as well give up, the meat we earned through skill will definitely not be shared with you.'

At this moment, Chu Jiaojiao also put down her chopsticks, raised her head, and looked at Ji You with a hint of apology, saying, 'Ji You, you really do look nice, but I like eating meat more.'

Ji You's face darkened.

But!!!

That wasn't enough.

Shen Changqing, who had been silent throughout, finally opened his mouth. Before he could speak, his face was already flushed, then, suddenly casting down his eyes, he muttered, 'Ahem... I've licked my meat too.'

Ji You: '...'

Ji You stared at Shen Changqing, somewhat disbelieving, 'Shen Changqing, you really have changed.'

At this, Shen Changqing's face turned even redder.

Subsequently, Lou, Lance, Xuzhou, Zhang Ye, and others, also protected their trays as if to say, 'Touch my meat, only over my dead body.'

Ji You gave up entirely, scornfully looking at these people, she cursed, 'I genuinely had no intention of taking your meat; you can now eat in peace.' After speaking, she carefully moved her guarding elbow away and then swiftly hung her head and furiously licked the red-cooked ribs on her tray.

People: '...'

Having done her part, Ji You thoroughly relaxed, began to chew slowly, and declared, 'What comes around goes around, don't even think about targeting my meat.'

Everyone: "..."

Everyone decided not to talk to her anymore and started discussing the acting assessment in the afternoon. At this table, except for Sheng Qingyan and Ji You, everyone else was forced to participate by Teacher Mu Jianling. For a moment, everyone was looking at each other, feeling like crying but having no tears.

Because—

Teacher Mu Jianling said afterwards, students forced to participate, if the assessment is unqualified, would get 20 academic points deducted and the natural food supply for the next two weeks canceled.

That's right!

academic points.

weeks of natural food supply.

For other students who didn't pass the assessment, the punishment does not involve points deduction, just a one week cancellation of natural food supply.

In other words—

This red-braised pork rice at noon today might be their last meal of natural food for the next two weeks.

Ying~

Those who were called out are truly in a pitiful state...

Everyone was very nervous, even Chu Jiaojiao, who is usually fearless and likes to fight, was getting anxious as the afternoon assessment approached. She chewed a mouthful of rice and looked at everyone with a worried expression, asking: "What do you guess could be Teacher Mu's trick?"

Everyone shook their heads.

Chu Jiaojiao then set her last hopes on Ji You, earnestly asking, "Ji You, you always have many ideas, how about you provide some thoughts for everyone to consider?"

Ji You calmly lifted her head, glanced at Chu Jiaojiao, then hooked her lips in a smile.

Chu Jiaojiao felt a surge of joy: Seems like Ji You has some ideas.

Then—

Ji You said: "Chu Jiaojiao, your question is off the mark. I'm not interested, what I like the most now is eating meat."

Chu Jiaojiao: "..."

Yue Qiguang cursed: "You idiot with number 4444, keep this up and you'll lose all your friends."

Ji You unbotheredly continued eating, saying: "Plastic friends, who cares."

Yue Qiguang felt an itch in his hand.

Everyone else felt their hands itching unbearable; after all, knowing she's the Rag Queen, it was hard enough to suppress the urge to beat her up once, now her remarks undoubtedly reignited the fire...

Looking at everyone's murderous glances, Ji You's heart trembled slightly, but she still kept a straight face and feigned calmness: "What's the hurry? You definitely won't guess Teacher Mu's tricks. Just remember one principle for the assessment—if the teacher asks you to laugh, you cry; if the teacher asks you to cry, you laugh. Just do the opposite."

Everyone: "..."

Everyone at the table looked at each other.

Lou, with wide blue eyes, earnestly asked, "Really... is it really like that?"

Ji You swallowed a mouthful of rice: "I was just bluffing."

Everyone: "..."

Really want to strangle her!

Ji You, holding her spoon, mixed the braised pork sauce with the white rice and took another mouthful, facing everyone's homicidal gaze, she cheerfully said: "Actually, I think you all are too nervous. Acting isn't that hard, look at how calm I am right now, not afraid of being hit by you guys. But actually, I'm quite scared inside."

Everyone: "..."

Your nonchalant demeanor doesn't seem scared at all.

Chapter 632: Acting Grand Prix

At the dining table, Ji You didn't offer any substantial advice to her little buddies. It wasn't that she wanted to hoard knowledge or keep the good stuff from them; the truth was—

She couldn't fathom Teacher Mu Jianling's tactics either.

She really couldn't.

At Lanyue Star Military Academy, from the principal to the janitorial robots, none of the teachers and staff were easy to deal with. Even the admin robots in the rabbit shed would sometimes sabotage the students.

Really difficult to deal with.

In Ji You's view, Teacher Mu Jianling was one of the toughest nuts to crack among this tough crowd.

If Teacher Mu wanted to torment the students, where would there be an easy way out?

Even Ji You herself was a bit anxious about whether she could pass this acting assessment and get the extra 10 academic points.

...

After finishing their meal, the group didn't delay and hurried to the training room.

There were about ten minutes left until the assessment time, but without exception, all the students were already waiting inside the training room.

Many gathered together discussing the content of the assessment. Someone said, "Guess how many TV dramas I watched during mealtime?"

Pfft—

Too boring a question. Immediately, someone responded, "You think watching them will improve your acting?"

The student laughed and said, "Although I can't guarantee it will enhance my acting skills, the people acting in the dramas are professionals after all. Surely, we can pick up something from the pros."

At this comment, many students seemed to have an epiphany, slapping their heads and exclaiming, "Why didn't I think of that?"

Then—

In less than a second, all the students in the training room started turning on their Light Computers to watch TV dramas.

Among them, the recent hit starring the Alliance Flower Ye Lu, which Teacher Mu Jianling was also highly addicted to, "Ex-wife's Temptation," was the first choice for the students—

Thus—

In just a few seconds, the entire training room was filled with the wickedly fascinating sounds of scumbags, the original partner, and the mistress.

For instance:

Scumbag Mo Feifan, rejuvenated by a fiery rebirth, found himself attracted to his charismatic ex-wife and decided to break up with his mistress. Upon hearing this, the mistress was in disbelief, feeling ashamed, furious, and pained...

She was screaming hysterically, questioning the scumbag, "Mo Feifan, I love you so much. For you, I gave up my reputation, I gave up everything. Is this how you treat me?"

Mo Feifan, deeply portraying a perfect scumbag, looked at the mistress with a slight frown and an indifferent tone, "What have you become? Just look at yourself now, take a look in the mirror, and you'll know how ugly it is..."

The mistress was tottering, "Ugly? You actually call me ugly?"

And then—

He had once said the same thing to his ex-wife.

The mistress could never have imagined that one day, the same words would befall her. Clutching her chest, tears pouring, she cried, "You... you once said I was as beautiful as the stars in the sky and that your love for me would never fade... And now, you say I'm ugly?"

The scumbag was expressionless: "I don't love you anymore."

On hearing this, the mistress was trembling, "Mo Feifan! You—"

Scumbag: "Let go, why make yourself look so hideous!"

...

The entire training room was filled with students hastily catching up on the drama. The training room echoed with the scumbag Mo Feifan's classic lines; it was all too clear how despicable he was. Ji You felt a tingling in her scalp and was even tempted to break open her Light Computer, enter through the light beams, and punch Mo Feifan in the face.

Cough cough...

Ji You herself hadn't watched the TV drama, but her little buddies—Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan... even honest and simple guys like Shen Changqing and Xuzhou—had chosen to follow the crowd and watch "Ex-wife's Temptation."

Ji You shook her head and sighed, advising them, "You lot watching this melodramatic soap opera might get led astray."

But!!!

No one was willing to listen to her.

Ji You was slightly helpless and thus stopped trying to persuade anyone.

Then—

Ji You accidentally glanced at Liu Fufeng beside her and found that this guy was truly calm; he neither watched the TV dramas nor looked for acting skill books for a last-minute cram. He was just sitting there, daydreaming.

Daydreaming?

At a time like this, he still had the leisure to daydream?

Unable to hold back, Ji You asked, "Student Fufeng, don't you plan to participate in the acting assessment?"

Liu Fufeng made no response.

Ji You asked again, "Student Fufeng, don't you really want the extra academic points?"

Only then Liu Fufeng's body slightly moved as if he had just snapped back from his daydreaming. He turned around, lifted his head slightly, and looked at Ji You, a hint of confusion flashing in his eyes, "Ji You, were you speaking to me just now?"

Ji You: "..."

So Ji You had to repeat her question.

Hearing this, Liu Fufeng shook his head and said, "I don't think I can pass, so I'm not planning to take it."

Ji You: "Huh?"

Ji You hurriedly said, "Give it a try. How do you know you won't pass the assessment if you don't try?"

Liu Fufeng's fair face quickly blushed, and he cast his eyes downward, speaking softly, "Acting is not my strong suit, I can't do it."

"Cough cough..." When Ji You noticed Liu Fufeng's face turn red, she couldn't quite believe it. Was this—

Shyness?

Shame?

Or what?

Struck by the doubts lingering in her mind, Ji You directly asked, "Right, I wanted to ask you, is the Fufeng on Star Network you?"

Renowned for being low-profile but with decisive and efficient combat tactics, and outrageously wealthy to the point of inhumanely giving up on Teacher Mu Jianling's reward of five Candy Beans—Ji You thought it over and over and felt that among the students from the Combat Department, Liu Fufeng was the most suitable candidate.

But!!!

Liu Fufeng was so fragile, like he could be blown away by a breeze, was he really Fufeng?

Ji You began to doubt again.

Moreover—

Who doesn't use a pseudonym and instead competes using their real name online?

All this aside.

The main reason Ji You felt Liu Fufeng wasn't 'Fufeng' was that—Liu Fufeng used to be the crown prince of the Empire; he had never previously studied in the Alliance. The online competitions organized by the Alliance are for enrolled students within its territory!

Liu Fufeng had only just transferred; he obviously hadn't met the criteria before.

As soon as Ji You spoke out, Liu Fufeng's beautiful eyes flashed with surprise, and he asked, "What did you say?"

His fair face still flushed, his clear eyes filled with evident confusion and bafflement, he shook his head and said, "That's not me."

Looking at him like this, Ji You was momentarily unsure whether Liu Fufeng was telling the truth or lying.

Ji You thought about it and decided to bluff him, so she purposely said, "Fufeng, stop hiding it. I've recognized you already. You're unhappy because you lost to me, aren't you? Don't worry, as long as you keep striving, continuously improve your skills, you will definitely still not win against me in the future! Because—I'll keep progressing too! Hahaha..."

Liu Fufeng: "..."

Liu Fufeng still looked at Ji You with a pair of bewildered eyes.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You suddenly felt it was pointless.

Chapter 633: Cliffhanger Bastard!

Ji You suddenly asked Liu Fufeng this question on a whim; she wasn't intent on getting to the bottom of it. Although Liu Fufeng said he wasn't the 'Fufeng' from the Star Network, Ji You didn't completely believe him, yet she didn't harbor too much suspicion either.

Even though she had only faced 'Fufeng' once, Ji You was certain of his remarkable strength. As for his Physical Strength, the engagement was too brief for her to gauge, but his spiritual power was unquestionably strong.

Among the 131st Combat Department, the two students with the strongest spiritual power were Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan. Ji You often interacted with them, having fought numerous times on the Star Network, and was extremely familiar with both of their spiritual powers and strategies. Therefore, she was certain 'Fufeng' was neither of them, and—'Fufeng's spiritual power was even stronger than Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan's.

Who was this person?

Did the 131st Combat Department really have someone with such powerful spiritual power?

Now that the term was nearly over, from the freshman drills to daily training, Ji You felt she was either very familiar or at least had a rough understanding of the students in the entire 131st Combat Department. Unless someone, like herself, had Mutated Spiritual Power and had hidden this fact, she really couldn't figure out who 'Fufeng' could be.

Just because Ji You couldn't guess didn't mean Teacher Mu Jianling was in the dark. Since Teacher Mu didn't disclose the person's identity either, perhaps—there truly were some special circumstances that required keeping the information hidden for now.

...

With this thought, Ji You stopped dwelling on who 'Fufeng' really was.

But then again—

Didn't Dr. Luo say that Mutated Spiritual Power was one in a hundred million chance? Her own half-crippled type of Mutated Spiritual Power with only Six Spiritual Threads was an outlier among outliers, extremely rare...

Yet—

Our Combat Department actually had another person with Mutated Spiritual Power, this—

Wasn't this becoming too commonplace?

Was Mutated Spiritual Power so devalued that two appeared just within Lanyue Star's modest 131st batch of Freshmen?

Cough cough...

Unable to make sense of it, Ji You decided to stop thinking about the matter.

On this side, Ji You didn't press further, while Liu Fufeng continued to lift an oblivious face, his gaze unfocused, seemingly staring aimlessly in one direction, lost in thought...

At this moment—

There were about 5 more minutes before the official acting assessment, and the whole training room was still filled with the sound of a melodramatic TV series, making Ji You almost doubt if she were in a training room or at a tea table crowded with gossiping aunts.

"Mo Feifan..."

"You've gone too far..."

"Mo Feifan..."

...

Listening to the constant barrage of scumbags, mistresses, and scorned exes yelling, arguing, and confronting each other, Ji You's scalp tingled as finally, about 3 minutes before the assessment, Mu Jianling, hands behind her back, strolled into the training room leisurely.

However—

Hearing the melodramatic sounds echoing in the training room, the usually composed Mu Jianling suddenly paused her step, momentarily thinking she had walked into the wrong place. She discreetly glanced up, checking the layout and the faces of the students, and after confirming she hadn't made a mistake, she continued with measured steps and an unresponsive face to stand at the podium.

As Mu Jianling approached, the students who had been cramming last-minute preparations lifted their heads, watching Teacher Mu Jianling with trepidation.

Mu Jianling casually glanced at the hanging clock displayed on the Light Computer screen and said indifferently, "The assessment will start in 3 minutes. Continue."

The students: "..."

Ji You's face: "???"

Sure enough—

Deservedly Teacher Mu Jianling, she's seen the world indeed. Confronted with such a scene and yet she could stay so unruffled, even encouraging students to continue watching the TV series?

Ji You was full of admiration from the bottom of her heart.

Then—

Originally, Ji You felt that watching such melodramatic dramas was unreliable, but all of a sudden, she dashed next to Chu Jiaojiao and fixated on the "Ex-wife's Temptation" on her Light Computer, hastily saying, "Jiaojiao, make some room, let me watch too."

Chu Jiaojiao moved aside slightly, letting Ji You squeeze in to watch together.

The main reason Ji You mooched off Chu Jiaojiao's Light Computer to watch this melodramatic drama was that she was poor and reluctant to spend credit points to buy it. The drama may be incredibly melodramatic, but the viewership on Star Network was significant, and it was pay-per-view, costing 5 credit points per episode.

Cough cough...

Even a mosquito is still meat; save a penny where you can. After today, Ji You wouldn't continue to follow the series, so she simply decided to mooch off Chu Jiaojiao's device.

Inside the Light Computer.

The male lead Mo Feifan, that major scumbag, continued to lower Ji You's expectations...

After the mistress was kicked out by the scumbag, she couldn't take it lying down and came to seek trouble with the ex-wife, but she was easily dealt with by the ex-wife. The mistress left with a threat, "You stole my man; you will get your karma. Little did she know, a man who could be stolen by you, will be stolen by another vixen, just you wait!"

The ex-wife's eyes grew sharp. How familiar these words sounded. Once, she had said the same to the mistress, but what did the mistress say? The mistress had said, "If you can't keep your man, it's because you're not capable."

Now, these words, she could finally return them to the mistress verbatim.

The ex-wife was inwardly pleased, and so curved her lips, saying: "If you can't keep your man, it's because you're not capable."

...

Seeing this, Chu Jiaojiao slapped her thigh hard, exclaiming, "Well done, ex-wife! This kind of mistress deserves to taste the own medicine! But!!! Even though the mistress is wrong, the scumbag is the worst offender. If I were the ex-wife, would I let the scumbag and mistress play their games? I'd have killed the scumbag straight away, and as for the mistress, with the scumbag dead, would she dare flaunt in front of me?"

As she spoke, Chu Jiaojiao was still not satisfied, mumbling and grumbling, "A problem that could be solved with a punch has to be dragged out in such a messy, sticky way, stretching out to so many episodes!"

"Cough cough..." Ji You coughed fiercely: "You're the greatest, why don't you just become a scriptwriter. If you were a scriptwriter, whoever dared to fund your drama would definitely lose everything, even their underwear."

Hearing Ji You's critique, Chu Jiaojiao grinned ear to ear, but her eyes were still glued to the Light Computer screen, not missing a single moment of the melodrama. Just then, it was playing the part where the ex-wife was about to punish the scumbag Mo Feifan...

Then—

Three large characters appeared:

[End of Episode]

Ji You was stunned: "Damn! Cliffhanger much?! How hateful!!! Jiaojiao, hurry, hurry, start the next episode."

Chu Jiaojiao also wanted to quickly watch the next episode, so her movements were swift, immediately paying and purchasing the rights to the next episode.

Only—

Just as she finished paying, suddenly, Teacher Mu Jianling at the podium said, "Time's up, everybody stop."

Ji You and Chu Jiaojiao were stunned: "Damn!!!"

They were just getting into it!

Chapter 634: Acting Assessment

minutes?

It arrived so fast?

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, along with many students in the training room, were engrossed in their drama, but when they heard Teacher Mu Jianling's voice, no one dared to go against Teacher Mu, so they put away their Light Computers and stopped watching.

The whole training room suddenly became as quiet as chickens.

Mu Jianling looked down at the students below and said flatly, "This additional assessment is voluntary. Those who wish to participate, go to the examination room. Those who do not want to participate, stay in the training room and train on your own."

After saying this, not a single student made a sound.

Mu Jianling continued, "Now, those who are to be assessed, immediately go to the examination room."

As soon as he finished speaking, Mu Jianling took the lead and strolled towards the examination room.

Following closely behind,

one by one the students stood up and followed in Mu Jianling's footsteps. Ji You took a quick look and realized that almost all the students chose to participate. It made sense, after all, this was a chance to gain 10 academic points. Even if the assessment failed, it would only mean the suspension of natural food supply for a week. A little hunger could be endured, but who would give up the chance to earn points?

Moreover—

The sudden acting assessment demanded by Teacher Mu Jianling was never without purpose. If it was really of no use to the students, she wouldn't waste their time for nothing.

It could be said that almost all of the students had clear heads, knowing the advantages and disadvantages, and could distinguish gains and losses clearly...

Except for—

Just as Ji You was about to step forward, she noticed that Liu Fufeng, who was sitting beside her, hadn't moved at all and was still sitting there, staring blankly in some direction. Ji You paused her step and couldn't help but ask, "Student Fufeng, aren't you going for the assessment?"

Liu Fufeng turned his head, a hint of embarrassment in his eyes, and said, "I... I'm not going."

Ji You asked in confusion, "Why not? It could add 10 academic points!"

Liu Fufeng pursed his lips and said softly, "I'm definitely going to fail this semester. Adding points doesn't seem to make any difference."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You felt somewhat apologetic, knowing she might have unintentionally touched upon a sore spot for the other person, so she quickly said, "Ah ha... sorry, sorry, I was just asking casually, don't mind me."

Ji You felt a bit awkward.

This—

Why did the apology sound so awkward?

And—

Ji You thought that Liu Fufeng's negative attitude was not appropriate. Knowing he would fail, so he just gave up trying? Giving up meant giving up every possibility.

That was not Ji You's style.

But everyone has their own approach to life, and of course, Ji You wasn't about to give Liu Fufeng a righteous lecture.

Before leaving, Ji You only said to Liu Fufeng, "Student Fufeng, I suggest you give it a try, just take it as experiencing a different course, it could be good too."

After saying that, Ji You quickly caught up with the main force.

The examination room was not far from the training room, roughly 100 meters away, there was a light screen wall. Once turned on, it revealed a vast space inside, and the equipment was all black technology, capable of switching scenery in a second. In addition, there were various other functions, such as anti-cheating, and so on...

At this moment—

The lights in the examination room were very bright. As Ji You stepped into the examination room, the first thing she saw was Teacher Mu Jianling sitting on a sofa, with an indifferent expression, hard to read.

Ji You was the last student to enter the examination room, just after Sheng Qingyan.

Seeing Sheng Qingyan, Ji You was slightly surprised and smirked, "Little Cutie, why are you here too? Don't you have no compulsory assessment?"

Sheng Qingyan rolled his eyes and said rudely, "Why wouldn't I want free academic points? Do you think I'm that dumb?"

Ji You glanced at him and continued to smirk, "You talk as if you're sure to pass the assessment. I think you're definitely going to fail."

Sheng Qingyan spat and cursed an obscenity, stamped his foot, turned his back, and decided to ignore Ji You.

Mu Jianling cleared her throat and said, "Now, everyone stand up and cry for me."

All students: "???"

Mu Jianling: "Cry!"

Now?

The students were puzzled but still complied—

Cry?

How do they cry?

These students, ask them to fight, and they could go on for three days and nights without rest, but ask them to cry? Sorry, they truly didn't know how, so when Teacher Mu Jian demanded everyone to cry, the examination room suddenly echoed with a chorus of roars.

Right.

Screeching.

More than 90% of the students just scream at the top of their lungs...

All these young guys, when they scream, it's like a demonic sound piercing the ears.

Ji You's eyelids twitched repeatedly, but she couldn't cry either, so she had to join in with a couple of dry sobs.

Then—

Mu Jianling's face turned pitch black as he shouted, "What are you screaming for? Stop it, all of you! I asked you to cry, don't you know what crying is?"

At his words, everyone fell silent like chickens.

Mu Jianling stood up, slowly paced around, walking leisurely in front of the students, and as he walked, he scolded, "Look at you, the thrill on your face, is that crying? Have you won billions in the lottery? Hand it over now, let your teacher get a slice of the good fortune too."

The student he pointed at, a tall and sturdy guy, instantly crumpled his face into a bitter melon: "Tea... Teacher... my mom said I cried a few times right after I was born, but I haven't cried since growing up..."

How could he cry just because he was told to cry? Where was he supposed to start?

Mu Jianling glanced at the male student and said, "Everyone gets three chances at the assessment, you—your first attempt has failed; you still have two chances left!"

Whine~

Waaah~

As these words were spoken, the male student felt a surge of sorrow and almost started to feel like crying, but—he held it in, and still couldn't hold on. His face turned a solid red, as if constipated for ten days without relief...

Mu Jianling raised his hand to his forehead, pointed at the male student, and ordered, "Laugh."

Huh?

Laugh?

The student: "..."

The male student forced out a smile uglier than crying: "Hee..."

Mu Jianling: "..."

Mu Jianling sighed and said: "Not qualified."

The student: "Woah—"

Truly, now he really felt like crying.

When Mu Jianling heard the rough wailing, his eyelid twitched, and he immediately lifted his foot and kicked the student's behind, cursing, "What are you crying for, don't you still have another chance?"

The student, covering his face:

Oh mama~

This acting assessment is too hard.

Really too hard.

Switching an expression in 1 second, there's just no way to pass.

Mu Jianling watched this scene without even looking up and continued saying, "I'll give you 5 seconds. If you can make me laugh within 5 seconds, you pass."

The student: "..."

The male student, in utter despair, yelled, "Teacher! Just kill me, please!"

Mu Jianling: "Pfft—"

The student: "!!!"

Everyone: "!!!"

The male student incredulously lifted his head, staring at Teacher Mu Jianling, "Teacher, did I pass?"

Mu Jianling glanced at him: "Wishful thinking. Not passed!~"

The student: "!!!"

Mu Jianling said, "Do you feel both joy and sorrow now?"

The student bit his lip:

Indeed—

That's actually true.

Mu Jianling said, "Remember this feeling, you'll know what to do for the next acting assessment. Okay, move aside, watch how others take their exams."

Chapter 635: Brutal Failure Rate

Three chances, gone.

The boy remained motionless: "Teacher, give me one more chance."

Mu Jianling didn't even lift her eyes, "Step aside! If you keep blabbering, I'll deduct 10 academic points."

The boy: "..."

Wuuwaa~

Now, there was no need to force it, he was genuinely on the verge of tears. But, unfortunately, opportunities are fleeting. Once wasted, they are truly gone. The boy could only walk to the side with a heart full of sorrow and sit down, watching others' assessments.

...

In the training room, this unlucky boy, who went first, had vividly demonstrated for everyone what an acting assessment entailed. By now, the other students had a better idea of what to expect.

Following that.

Mu Jianling said, "Everyone, continue crying."

Still crying?

Now, no one dared to randomly bawl out loud; they all tried crying, with some covering their faces with one hand sobbing, and some pinching their thighs hard enough to grimace in pain, but, sadly, still no tears came out...

Ji You was also planning to pinch her thigh hard to make herself howl, but when she pulled at it, she might have become more resistant to pain with the increase in her Physical Strength, so she felt no pain and internally muttered: oh no.

This—

How am I supposed to cry?

Ji You sneakily glanced at Sheng Qingyan, Shen Changqing, Chu Jiaojiao, and Yue Qiguang sitting next to her, and noted they were also simply following the crowd, forcibly squeezing out tears but to no avail, making their faces look distorted.

Especially Chu Jiaojiao with her short hair—born with a dashing and vigorous look, brimming with vitality, always appearing energetic—how do you ask such a person to suddenly cry?

Perhaps, she didn't even remember what crying felt like, right?

As a result, Chu Jiaojiao's spirited face looked incredibly twisted and comical—

Shen Changqing?

Shen Changqing's face wasn't that comical, he just had heavy eyes and a tight mouth, attempting to look heartbroken, but honestly? He looked more like someone owed him money and wouldn't pay back, hardly resembling someone crying.

The most hilarious was Yue Qiguang; this guy, with his red hair, bulging eyes, and agape mouth, pinching his thigh hard, wasn't able to squeeze out even a half-drop of tear, making his face look funnier than that of a great ape...

...

Ji You couldn't help but facepalm: it's over, none of her little friends were likely to pass the assessment.

As she thought this, Ji You happened to catch a glimpse of Sheng Qingyan and suddenly saw him slightly bow his head, one hand covering half of his face, his dark pupils showing a hint of red, with tears glistening...

Hmm?

Did he actually start to cry?

Impressive!

Ji You was shocked beyond words!

How did he do it?

At that moment, Teacher Mu happened to walk over and paused when she saw Sheng Qingyan's expression.

Sheng Qingyan immediately sensed Teacher Mu's approach but kept on sobbing lightly, without moving.

Teacher Mu suddenly raised her hand toward Sheng Qingyan's face.

Sheng Qingyan hurriedly raised his hand to block—

Mu Jianling hummed lightly and said, "I was wondering why you're crying so sadly, turns out it was onion you rubbed on."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

At this moment, Ji You was speechless: How dare you try such tricks right in front of Teacher Mu, truly—

Utterly reckless!

Sheng Qingyan's complexion fell; caught red-handed by Teacher Mu for cheating with onion, even though he was lazily indifferent to his grades, he still felt nervous.

Little did he know—

Mu Jianling suddenly changed her tone, "Knowing to make good use of tools is not dumb."

Sheng Qingyan's heart leaped with joy.

Mu Jianling declared, "But! If you're using tools to cheat, you should clean up your tracks properly. Failing to cover your traces and daring to cheat openly, you're not stupid, you're dumb! Two chances deducted directly!"

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan opened his mouth: "Please don't, teacher. I won't dare to do it again, I'll cry properly."

Mu Jianling cursed: "Make another peep, and I'll deduct 10 academic points."

Sheng Qingyan didn't dare to make another sound.

Next.

Mu Jianling said: "Show me an expression of pleasant surprise."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Right now, his feelings were clearly a mix of sadness and rage.

Mu Jianling: "5, 4, 3, 2..."

Sheng Qingyan watched, eyes wide open, as Teacher Mu Jianling counted down to '1', and then she said: "Three chances are up, go sit quietly to the side."

Sheng Qingyan covered his face with his hand, desperately sad: "I don't wanna, no, no, no..."

Mu Jianling lifted her foot and kicked him to the side.

Seeing this scene, all the students shrunk their necks and hunched their shoulders, not daring to make a sound.

Scary.

Really scary.

...

Some students, harboring little schemes, who wanted to find ways to cheat, immediately gave up their thoughts because—to cheat, they must be able to deceive Teacher Mu Jianling's discerning eyes.

How profound is Teacher Mu Jianling's spiritual power? It's unfathomable, and it's impossible to fool her.

Ji You followed the crowd, hunched his shoulders, and didn't dare to draw the teacher's attention.

When Mu Jianling passed by Ji You, she didn't even let her gaze linger on him. She directly called out: "Yue Qiguang, come out."

Yue Qiguang was pinching his thigh hard when he suddenly heard his name and hastily turned his head.

Mu Jianling frowned and said: "Are you a monkey from the zoo? Look at that face, grinning so savagely, I asked you to cry, not to perform a monkey show."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Mu Jianling: "Smile."

Yue Qiguang flashed eight teeth: "Hehe... hehe..."

Mu Jianling: "Cry!"

Yue Qiguang: "Wah, wah..."

Mu Jianling waved her hand and said: "Enough, not passed, go to the side."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

With this, three people were all deemed unqualified, and the hearts of the students in the Combat Department began to thump; they couldn't understand what it would take for Teacher Mu to show mercy and pass them.

And—

All the students also realized that this test was not only taken collectively but also required passing Teacher Mu's personal scrutiny.

Faced with such a fearsome person as Teacher Mu, many students truly couldn't manage to control their emotions at will.

Next.

Teacher Mu Jianling then called over a dozen students in succession, and without exception, all of them failed.

In an instant, the pressure in the students' hearts grew even heavier.

Clouds of gloom hovered over the students' heads and weighed upon their hearts...

Mu Jianling was completely indifferent to the pressure she was creating; she just walked slowly around the examination room with her hands behind her back, occasionally asking students to cry, then to laugh, then to get angry, then to...

During this time, whoever she pointed at had to perform a solo act.

Basically, no student could pass.

Then—

Finally, Mu Jianling stopped in front of Ji You, Shen Changqing, Chu Jiaojiao, and others, opened her mouth, and spoke—

Chapter 636: Methods of Disguise

Mu Jianling stood with his hands clasped behind his back, and with sharp eyes, he slowly said in front of Ji You, Shen Changqing, Chu Jiaojiao, and others: "Shen Changqing, come out."

Hearing his own name, Shen Changqing was momentarily stunned, but still reflexively stepped forward: "Teacher..."

Mu Jianling nodded faintly: "Mm."

Shen Changqing's heart hung in suspense, not knowing what challenge he was about to face.

Suddenly, Mu Jianling said: "First, smile twice."

Upon hearing this, Shen Changqing tried his best to squeeze out a smile.

Mu Jianling brought his hand to his forehead and sighed, "Your smile looks uglier than a cry. With such acting skills, who could you possibly deceive?"

Deceive?

Shen Changqing was taken aback and boldly asked, "Teacher... why do we need to learn how to deceive?"

As a warrior, isn't one's duty to strive to enhance one's strength to secure victory in every battle? Deceive? If victory can be achieved through deception, then wouldn't all those Best Actors and Actresses in the film industry be mighty warriors?

In Shen Changqing's heart, the strength of a warrior ultimately comes down to true might.

Teacher Mu is actually asking them to learn how to deceive?

Shen Changqing was puzzled.

When Shen Changqing asked this question, the surrounding students all thought it would surely bring about a round of mocking from Teacher Mu Jianling. Unexpectedly, Mu Jianling did not resort to sarcasm but seriously said: "As Commander of the Legion, General Shen Chi possesses strong combat skills, but even stronger is his command ability. A qualified, excellent general needs to have comprehensive capabilities; strong martial power is only a part of it."

Saying this, Mu Jianling looked at Shen Changqing and asked, "Do you only wish to be a foolish martial artist like Yue Qiguang?"

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Yue Qiguang, sitting aside dejected after his assessment failure, felt even more dispirited when he was dragged out for a bout of 'insult'.

Shen Changqing, upon hearing this, remained silent.

Mu Jianling went on to say: "Humans have the Seven Emotions and Six Desires—happiness, anger, sorrow, joy, fear... Everyone expresses their emotions in different ways, but the most direct and simplest expressions are crying, laughing, being angry... In this year's online competition, why is it that

number 4444, Ji You, despite not having outstanding physical strength and being unable to fight prolonged battles, is able to deceive to gain a chance to catch her breath?"

Indeed, at this point, none of the students present were foolish or stupid. Even someone like Yue Qiguang who didn't enjoy thinking had understood Teacher Mu Jianling's intentions...

The students reflected on this thoughtfully.

Mu Jianling raised his eyebrow and looked around, saying: "Instead of calling it deception, it would be better to describe it as camouflage. On the battlefield, not only do we camouflage ourselves, but so do our enemies; some high-level Star Beasts also camouflage..."

"And—camouflaging emotions is just the most basic, most fundamental form of camouflage."

"What you must do is not only learn how to camouflage yourselves but also to be able to identify the enemies' camouflage."

...

With just a few words, the students benefitted greatly, and as a consequence, they felt that the seemingly pointless and bizarre acting assessments proposed by Teacher Mu Jianling were very necessary.

Therefore, in the entire training room, the students' resistance towards the acting assessment disappeared without a trace.

Many students began to seriously think about how to make their crying appear natural and their laughter hearty...

Over here.

Shen Changqing tried hard to recall a joyful memory, flashing a smile at Mu Jianling.

Mu Jianling glanced over and shook his head, saying, "It still seems fake."

Shen Changqing's expression turned slightly forlorn.

Mu Jianling said, "Cry first."

Suddenly, Shen Changqing lowered his eyes, and inexplicably, his eyes reddened, and tears streamed down.

Huh?

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, and the others were all wide-eyed: [Holy shit! Is he really crying?]

Impressive!

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow, smiled, and asked, "Thought of something sad?"

Shen Changqing, a bit embarrassed, gently wiped his eyes with his hand and whispered softly, "I thought of my grandma."

Shen Changqing's parents died early, and his grandparents were stationed at the frontier for years. He was mostly taken care of by the nanny robot at home during his childhood. Later, after his grandmother was injured and retreated from the front lines, Shen Changqing finally had family companionship.

However, his grandmother could not rid her body of the Star Beast virus that remained after an attack, and she passed away in less than two years.

Shen Changqing would never forget how his grandmother looked before she passed away. The two sat in the garden, holding his little hand, her lips curved into a smile, her eyes filled with affection, and she said calmly, "Changqing, grandma loves you, but grandma has to leave now. From now on, you have to take care of yourself."

Her tone was too calm, and the young Shen Changqing did not realize that his grandmother was in her last moment of consciousness.

It was only when she no longer spoke that he understood she had passed away.

To leave—

Is for the person you love to never meet you again, to never talk to you, to never embrace you, to never smile at you, to never gaze at you tenderly, to never...

Shen Changqing understood.

From a very young age, he had been taught what 'leaving' meant.

It's just—

Even with clear knowledge, when the moment really arrived, Shen Changqing was still devastated and at a loss... He was holding his grandmother, with his eyes open, sitting alone in the garden for two days and one night, until his grandfather returned.

...

The young Shen Changqing did not cry at the time. Now, looking back, that grief did not fade with time. Instead, it took root deep in Shen Changqing's heart, usually hidden very well and rarely shown, but when it surfaced, it was like a breach in a dam, difficult to control again...

On Shen Changqing's clear yet sorrowful face, tears continued to flow, with a slight redness in his eyes, yet he still looked remarkably composed, with a profoundly restrained sorrow lingering around him.

This scene left Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, and others deeply moved.

Everyone found it unbelievable, the usually quiet, subdued, and steady Shen Changqing, now showing his emotions, unexpectedly stirring a sense of compassion...

Suddenly, Teacher Mu Jianling made another request directly: "Smile!"

Shen Changqing wiped away his tears with his hand. He looked up at Teacher Mu Jianling, his eyes still red and wet, blinked, and suddenly, his tears turned into laughter...

This laughter wasn't abrupt in the least. Had they not known the context, outsiders might have mistaken Shen Changqing's tears as those of joy followed by laughter.

Mu Jianling, witnessing this scene, felt a bit reassured, nodded, and said, "Leveraging past events and memories to regulate one's emotions is a very simple and effective method, which everyone can take note of."

After saying this, Mu Jianling announced, "Shen Changqing passes."

Chapter 637: Just Passing By

Mu Jianling's words immediately invigorated the students in the training room.

This—

Shen Changqing's success clearly showed the devastated students a clear direction: it turned out that passing the acting assessment wasn't hard as long as one managed their emotions properly.

Especially for Chu Jiaojiao, Ji You, Yue Qiyuan... These people, thinking that even the honest Shen Changqing could pass, why couldn't they?

Thus, everyone began to think of either sad or joyful past experiences...

This was the first time adding an acting assessment, and Mu Jianling didn't increase the difficulty. She only asked the students to perform simple emotional changes, such as crying, laughing, sadness, anger, joy... and the like.

Afterwards.

One after another, approximately dozens of students passed the assessment.

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, and a few others, of course, passed the assessment. However, Mu Jianling might have had higher expectations for Ji You; the questions for Ji You were several times more difficult than for the other students, but fortunately, Ji You succeeded in the assessment thanks to her exquisite acting skills.

Throughout the afternoon, out of 998 students in the Combat Department, only 312 passed the acting assessment, and the rest failed. This included Xuzhou, Zhang Ye, Lou, Lance, Yue Qiguang, and a few others who were mandated to participate in the acting assessment.

Mu Jianling looked at the pile of students who failed the assessment, curved her lips slightly, and said, "Those who didn't pass the assessment will have their natural food supply cut off for a week. For Xuzhou, Zhang Ye, Yue Qiguang, and other mandatory participants, no supply for two weeks and corresponding academic points deducted."

Upon hearing this, the students who failed instantly wailed in despair.

Cruel.

Truly too cruel.

Then.

Mu Jianling continued, "Furthermore, the students who failed the assessment will have an additional performing arts class for 30 minutes every day after school for the next two weeks. I'll invite a senior performing arts expert from the Alliance to teach you."

Whoa~

The students stared wide-eyed: [We still have to take acting classes?]

Mu Jianling observed their expressions and snorted coldly, "What, unwilling?"

The students shook their heads together: "No!"

Mu Jianling stated, "That's good. You must know that inviting this performing arts expert isn't free. After the class, those who still haven't passed the acting assessment will have 30 academic points deducted."

Students: "!!!"

Wouldn't these deductions lead to failing the course?

Mu Jianling glanced at the time, speaking indifferently: "Class dismissed."

Usually, every time a class ended, the students would enthusiastically rush towards the cafeteria, but today their mood wasn't very high, mostly because of what Teacher Mu said.

Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, and Shen Changqing weren't affected much. They went to the cafeteria for a meal and then hurried to the horse stables to clean. Ji You was even more miserable; she had to clean an extra rabbit shed.

The group rushed out of the training room and Ji You caught up to Sheng Qingyan, planning to mooch a ride from this free chauffeur, but the free chauffeur had a very bad expression today, seemingly in a terrible mood.

Ji You asked puzzledly, "Little Cutie, what's wrong with you? Don't tell me you are going to cry because you didn't pass the assessment?"

Cry?

Sheng Qingyan raised his head and glared at Ji You, grumbling, "Cry? Impossible."

Ji You covered her mouth and snickered, teasing, "What were you thinking? Cheating in front of Teacher Mu, you're lucky not to have been beaten to death."

Sheng Qingyan frowned, "Don't laugh."

Ji You tilted her head, saying, "Actually, at the beginning, I also thought about using onions, scallions, chili water, Wind Oil Essence for cheating, but fortunately, I was wise enough not to actually do it."

Chili water?

Wind Oil Essence?

Listening to Ji You listing these items, everyone was a bit speechless. This was admittedly audacious.

Sheng Qingyan, looking very upset, decided to strike: "I'm not going to the cafeteria. You, poor dead, figure out your own way."

Ji You glowered, "Then I won't vouch for you tomorrow."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Annoyed, Sheng Qingyan said, "I can't even eat natural food, okay? Going over there I'd just be gnawing on nutrient solution and staring as you devour ribs. I'm not going there."

With that, he turned and walked away.

This guy was always slack and nonchalant, but when really pushed to do something, it was no easy task, Ji You thought, and decided not to stop him.

Meanwhile, Sheng Qingyan, who would always choose lying down over sitting, and sitting over standing, oddly didn't directly opt for an automated floating car. Instead, he walked on foot...

His tall figure became more distant with each step, but he never looked back.

Ji You didn't think too much about it. Yue Qiyuan had already summoned an automated float car. As everyone got in and was ready to head to the cafeteria, suddenly, the always quiet Shen Changqing said, "I'm not going to eat today, you all go ahead."

Yue Qiyuan was surprised, "Huh? You're not eating?"

All this guy had in his brain was Mecha and combat, plus a fixation on food.

Not eating?

Weird.

Shen Changqing lifted his gaze slightly, glanced towards Sheng Qingyan who was a few hundred meters away, and softly said, "Yeah, I'm not eating."

After saying that, Shen Changqing lightly hopped off the floating car.

Then, Shen Changqing strode toward Sheng Qingyan.

Ji You blinked, "What's the deal? This is strange."

Yue Qiyuan shook his head, "I'm not sure either."

Ji You looked at Chu Jiaojiao, who frowned slightly, as if she thought of something, but it was fleeting. She quickly grinned and said, "It's nothing. Shen Changqing probably cried too much today and can't eat."

Ji You: "..."

...

On this end.

Sheng Qingyan walked briskly, his hands in his pockets. One step, two steps, three steps—his direction didn't seem to be headed towards the dorms, but rather he looked aimlessly wandering around the campus.

Not needing to look back when he heard footsteps behind him and simply listening to the frequency of the voice, he already knew who it was. Frowning, he said, "Aqing, why are you following me?"

Shen Changqing said, "I'm just passing by."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Annoyed, Sheng Qingyan decided to ignore him and thus changed direction, continuing his leisurely wandering.

However.

Shen Changqing also changed his direction.

Annoyed, Sheng Qingyan said, "What exactly do you want by following me?"

Shen Changqing pursed his lips, his expression and tone very serious, "I'm just genuinely passing by."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Extending his slender hand, Sheng Qingyan pointed at him and grumbled, "Aqing, what's wrong with you? How come you're picking up the persistence of that poor dead soul 4444? It's not okay..."

"Cough..."

Shen Changqing coughed lightly, his face reddening a bit. Though he wanted to emulate Ji You's thick skin, he couldn't quite learn it.

Thus, Shen Changqing thought for a moment, then spoke softly, "Ayan, I saw you crying secretly today."

Sheng Qingyan was so startled he jumped, "What nonsense are you talking? I didn't cry! How could someone as universally unparalleled and cute as me cry?"

Shen Changqing looked at him, lips pursed, clearly stating, "In the training room, you were indeed crying at first, and then you purposefully smeared on onion water later."

Chapter 638: Greasy, Eh

Shen Changqing firmly declared: "You really cried."

As soon as these words came out, Sheng Qingyan immediately got agitated: "Nonsense! How could I possibly! Aquing, don't take advantage of our familiarity to slander me..."

Shen Changqing pursed his lips, his clear eyes quietly gazing at Sheng Qingyan.

Sheng Qingyan stiffened his neck, adamantly denying: "Listen here, Aquing, if you keep this up, I'm not playing with you anymore."

A few seconds of silence.

Shen Changqing suddenly said: "Ayan."

After calling Sheng Qingyan's name, he fell silent again.

It was very quiet all around.

Sheng Qingyan, who had been swearing, also suddenly stopped speaking. His eyebrows were still lightly furrowed, and his exceptionally handsome—and even more lovely—face was filled with discontent.

The two of them were staring at each other, one on the left and one on the right.

After a while.

Shen Changqing spoke softly: "It must be hard, missing someone who's already gone, isn't it?"

Sheng Qingyan pursed his lips, remaining silent.

Silence.

The atmosphere around both of them was shrouded in a heavy air.

A few seconds later.

Sheng Qingyan was still silent.

Shen Changqing said in a low voice: "Me too."

Sheng Qingyan's body shook slightly, but it was just a moment, immediately after, his tall figure grew even more rigid.

Shen Changqing stretched out his foot, moving a few steps closer to Sheng Qingyan, raising his hand, intending to pat Sheng Qingyan's shoulder.

But!!!

Sheng Qingyan with a startled look on his face, quickly stepped forward, covering his chest with his hands, and said in disgust: "Don't come closer, what kind of man are you, acting all clingy and mushy."

Shen Changqing: "..."

Sheng Qingyan: "Greasy..."

Shen Changqing: "..."

Shen Changqing's hand that was hanging mid-air awkwardly withdrew, and he braced himself for Ayan's continued mockery...

But!!!

Sheng Qingyan suddenly turned his back.

Shen Changqing was stunned.

With his back to Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan spoke in an extremely calm tone: "Aqing, you go eat, I'm fine."

Shen Changqing was silent for a moment, then said: "I'll keep you company."

Sheng Qingyan, with his back straight, said: "No need."

Shen Changqing opened his mouth: "Ayan..."

In the direction that Shen Changqing couldn't see, Sheng Qingyan gently lifted his hand, rubbed his cheek, and then said, with an unusually clear and cold voice: "I haven't cried, the tears that have dried up won't come again."

Leaving the words behind.

Sheng Qingyan didn't say anything more and walked briskly ahead.

Shen Changqing almost didn't hesitate and followed him.

The two, one in front and one behind, silently walked forward. If Sheng Qingyan sped up, Shen Changqing did too. If Sheng Qingyan stopped, Shen Changqing stopped as well... neither yielding to the other, neither speaking again.

The air around them was filled with the molecules of silence.

...

After a long pause.

Sheng Qingyan turned around with a hint of helplessness, "I admit I cried, okay?"

Shen Changqing: "..."

Sheng Qingyan took a deep breath, again with helplessness, "Ancestor, could you please stop following me? See how people around us are looking at us?"

Shen Changqing: "..."

Previously not paying attention, Shen Changqing now reflexively looked around and noticed indeed quite a few passing students were casting glances at them, especially some girls with seemingly inquisitive eyes, which was extremely uncomfortable.

Sheng Qingyan said with disdain, "I don't like this, you know."

Shen Changqing's mouth twitched, "I don't like this either."

Sheng Qingyan sighed with relief and finally, a slight smile appeared on his face, "Then you better go quickly, don't stand so close to me."

Shen Changqing: "..."

Without needing another prod from Sheng Qingyan, Shen Changqing also felt the urge to leave, and he stepped back a few paces before suddenly approaching with a serious expression, "Ayan, remember to clean the horse stable at six-thirty."

After dropping the words.

Shen Changqing turned around and left, his departing steps slightly flustered.

Sheng Qingyan watched Shen Changqing's retreating figure, his snow-white cheeks taut, his rosy lips clenched tight—

A warm sensation seemed to stealthily reach the corner of his mouth.

Startled, Sheng Qingyan hurriedly raised his hand to wipe it away.

...

Unlike the left-behind child Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan was born into a harmonious family with a grandpa, grandma, father, mother, brother, sister, and himself.

He was the youngest child, the little treasure held dear in the family. Although everyone in the family was busy, he was never left behind alone at home, as someone would always stay to take care of him.

Even if—

If it was too busy, his school-going brother and sister would take him, the 'little oil bottle', to school with them. Or, if it was absolutely necessary, his parents would take him to the Mecha research lab at Starship, holding him in turn while they worked. As for the elderly Grandpa Sheng and Grandma Sheng, whenever they were home, they would certainly take Sheng Qingyan to the Main Star square to dance...

Therefore, Sheng Qingyan always felt sympathy for the unfortunate boy next door, Shen Changqing, thinking it was so pitiful for his family members to not be around every day.

Basking in the glow of his family's love, Sheng Qingyan even once suggested lending his brother, sister, parents, and grandparents to the pitiable Shen Changqing for a while, but Shen Changqing refused.

That's right.

Shen Changqing refused.

What was the situation back then?

Sheng Qingyan remembered that it was spring that year, the Main Star blooming with flowers, the grass grew and birds sang... The pitiable Shen Changqing hadn't emerged with his tattered Mecha parts for

several days, and just then, Sheng Qingyan received a Mecha model from his brother as a gift. Delighted and with a bit of a show-off attitude, he ran to Shen Changqing's house.

The Shen Family's home was still cold as ever, but that day, as Sheng Qingyan walked in, he felt an even colder chill than usual. His small frame couldn't stop shivering as he looked through Shen Changqing's bedroom, toy room, training room, living room...

No one was found.

In the end, he found Shen Changqing in the Shen Family garden; at that time, Shen Changqing's face was pale, no longer holding his broken Mecha parts, but tightly embracing Granny Shen.

Granny Shen's eyes were closed, her face pale and tinged with blue...

Sheng Qingyan thought it was strange, but still mustered the courage to call out, "Granny Shen."

There was no response.

In little Sheng Qingyan's heart, Granny Shen, who was always kind and hiding sweets in her pocket, would always have a smile for him. Whenever she saw him, she would gently raise her hand to pat his head, give him a candy, and say with a smile, "Ayan is here, go play with Aqing."

But Granny Shen wasn't speaking now.

Sheng Qingyan tried to call out again, "Granny Shen..."

Still no response.

By this time, Sheng Qingyan was a bit panicked. He anxiously stepped forward, attempting to tug on Granny Shen's hand when suddenly, Shen Changqing beside him stopped him. Sheng Qingyan, face pale, asked, "Aqing, is Granny Shen sick?"

Shen Changqing's face was somber as he shook his head, "No, she's dead."

Chapter 639: No More Tears

After finishing this sentence, Shen Changqing, with a stern little face, lowered his gaze, still tightly hugging his grandma's arms.

Even the most naive and simple-minded Sheng Qingyan realized what 'death' meant. His eyes turned red as he swiftly approached and said, "Aqing, my house has a treatment cabin, bought by dad. Last time I got a scratch on my finger, and it healed in less than a second! Grandma Shen must be sick, I'll go home and bring over the treatment cabin, and she will definitely recover."

Sheng Qingyan turned to rush back home.

But behind him—

Suddenly came Shen Changqing's tearful voice: "My grandma has left, the treatment cabin can't save her, I've tried."

The tears had already burst forth.

Sheng Qingyan panicked—

In his eyes, in his heart, the pitiable Shen Changqing from next door, who's usually quiet, gloomy, introverted, and has a really good temper, so easily bullied, would still get into fights with him from time to time. The key point was that he could never win against Sheng Qingyan, so to protect his pride, Sheng Qingyan had to pretend to lose...

He wouldn't do such a thing if he didn't pity him.

But whether they argued or fought, win or lose... Shen Changqing never cried, whereas Sheng Qingyan, whenever he didn't get his way, would inevitably pretend to cry and run back to his family for support.

Afterward—

Afterward, Sheng Qingyan stopped running back to seek support with fake tears, because he realized it was not that Shen Changqing didn't seek his family's support, but there was nobody at home in his family, no one to stand up for him.

Really...

Really pitiable.

After Sheng Qingyan found that out, every time there was a conflict with Shen Changqing, he became extremely generous.

In his memory, the pitiable Shen Changqing had never cried.

Now, he cried...

Cried so heartbrokenly.

While crying, he said, "I don't have a grandma anymore."

Sheng Qingyan's heart clenched, feeling troubled...

Then—

Finally having thought it through, Sheng Qingyan looked at Shen Changqing and generously offered, "Shen Changqing, I'll lend you my grandma." After saying this, he still felt uncertain and stretched out his hand, gesturing a little, whispering, "Just temporarily."

But who knew—

The weeping Shen Changqing suddenly turned his head away and shouted, "I don't want it! I have a grandma, my grandma is right here."

Sheng Qingyan was a bit angry, thinking: I struggled so much to decide to lend you my grandma temporarily and you reject it? Then forget it!

Sheng Qingyan angrily said, "Then I won't lend her to you."

After saying that, he turned and walked away.

Having moved only a few steps, and hearing nothing from behind him, Sheng Qingyan couldn't help but turn back, only to see the pitiful Shen Changqing convulsing his shoulders, with silent tears rolling down his face...

Ahem!

Sheng Qingyan stopped in his tracks, looked at Shen Changqing, and said, "Then, I'll lend my grandma to you for a bit longer, is that okay?"

Shen Changqing didn't make a sound.

Sheng Qingyan said, "Don't you want a brother or sister? I'll lend you my brother and sister too, how's that?"

Shen Changqing pursed his lips.

Gritting his teeth, Sheng Qingyan decided to be decisive and said, "I'll lend you my dad, mom, grandpa, and grandma too."

Shen Changqing, with his mouth closed tight, suddenly glared at Sheng Qingyan and stubbornly said, "I don't want them!"—because, he had parents, it's just that they left him.

...

That day, in Sheng Qingyan's eyes and heart, Shen Changqing, who was always so easygoing and easily bullied, for the first time so stubbornly refused his kindness...

A few days later, when Sheng Qingyan saw the pitiable Shen Changqing again, he was still holding those broken mecha parts, but his face was clean and free of tears. Sheng Qingyan couldn't help but ask, "You're not crying anymore?"

Shen Changqing, with his little face stern, looking even more reticent than usual, just when Sheng Qingyan thought he might not get a response, suddenly, Shen Changqing said, "I don't want to cry anymore."

Sheng Qingyan purposely made a face, taunting, "That's right, you shouldn't cry. Only little kids whine and cry. Look at me, I never cry."

Shen Changqing raised his eyes and glanced at Sheng Qingyan:

Not cry?

Who's the one that runs back to their family and cries every time there's a quarrel?

Not cry?

Every time...

Forget it.

Shen Changqing decided to keep his mouth shut.

At the same time, little Sheng Qingyan also decided to always give in to Shen Changqing, this poor little guy, from now on. After all, his grandmother had left him, and now he had only his grandfather. She, on the other hand, not only had a grandmother but also a grandfather, dad, mom, a brother, and a sister.

Right!

She should be more generous.

Three months later.

While playing at the Shen Family with Shen Changqing, they got into an argument about who was more formidable, the Mechanical Warrior or the Mechanical Manufacturing Master.

The young Sheng Qingyan's greatest dream was to become a great Mechanical Warrior, to annihilate the Star Beasts and protect the Alliance! Naturally, he was in favor of the Mechanical Warriors being the most formidable.

But!!!

Shen Changqing dreamt of becoming a Mechanical Manufacturing Master. He believed that without Artifact Makers, Mechanical Warriors wouldn't have Mechas to fight with; obviously, the Mechanical Manufacturing Masters were more formidable...

Each stuck to their argument, the debate heated and on the verge of escalating into a fight—

Suddenly, Sheng Qingyan's grandfather came in, picked up Sheng Qingyan, and said softly, "Ayan, let's go see your grandmother, your dad and mom, and your brother and sister."

Sheng Qingyan exclaimed with joy, "They're back?"

Grandma, dad, mom, brother, and sister had been away for so long and hadn't returned, Sheng Qingyan had counted all of his fingers and even his toes, nearly forgetting how many days it had been. Now, hearing they were finally back, what presents would they bring for her?

Sheng Qingyan, excited and with an expectant heart, turned her head and said to Shen Changqing, who was fiddling with Mecha parts on the side, "Do you want to come to my house? I can share half of my presents with you."

Shen Changqing shook his head: "No need, my grandpa will bring me presents when he comes back."

Sheng Qingyan didn't bother with the pitiful Shen Changqing anymore; she urged her grandfather, "Grandpa, let's hurry back."

Then—

The impatient Sheng Qingyan reached home and saw her grandma, dad, mom, brother, and sister...

But—

They no longer spoke to her, no longer paid attention to her, and would no longer hug her or kiss her...

Seeing this scene, Sheng Qingyan pressed her lips together, not making a single sound.

Grandpa Sheng said, "Ayan, they've just left us, gone to a very far place."

Sheng Qingyan glared at her grandfather angrily: "You're lying! They're dead! They're dead! Just like Shen Changqing's grandma."

Grandpa Sheng remained silent.

That night, grandfather and granddaughter sat beside their family, sitting dry-eyed through a day and a night while Sheng Qingyan also cried through a day and a night.

Her tears dried up.

Her throat went hoarse.

...

The next day, Shen Changqing, holding his ragged Mecha parts, entered the Sheng Family house. He looked at Sheng Qingyan, wanted to say something, but didn't know what to say, so he just sat there next to her, holding the Mecha parts, looking dazed.

That sitting lasted another day and night.

Then—

Sheng Qingyan suddenly raised her hand, wiped away her tears, and said, "Aqing, I'm not going to cry anymore either."

Chapter 640: Spiritual Power Enhancement

Shen Changqing left, and Sheng Qingyan walked alone for a long, long time...

His thoughts were also chaotic, very chaotic.

The corners of his eyes felt warm, tears constantly falling...

Sheng Qingyan, with a stern face, lifted his head, wiped the corner of his eye, and looked at his open palm – it was filled with tears. He muttered somewhat displeased, "It's all because the onions were cut too much today."

"Go back to the dorm and wash my eyes."

Thinking of this, Sheng Qingyan stopped wandering around and directly took a Floating Car back to the dorm. Once there, he immediately brought out the treatment instrument and quickly repaired his swollen eyes so that no trace of crying could be seen.

Sheng Qingyan stared at himself in the mirror, seeing no trace of the swollen puffy eyes, he finally felt relieved.

Sheng Qingyan collapsed on the soft sofa, closed his eyes, and lazily pretended to nap, wondering whether he should skip today's stable cleaning punishment.

Skipping once means an additional week of punishment.

To skip?

Or not to skip?

Skipping, bearing an extra week of punishment, is too harsh.

Not skipping, but today Sheng Qingyan really had no interest in joining everyone; he didn't feel like moving at all...

Caught in this dilemma, his communicator suddenly started ringing like crazy—

Sheng Qingyan opened his eyes, somewhat unwillingly answered:

Chu Jiaojiao bellowed directly: "Hurry up and come clean, you have 5 minutes. If you don't, I'll beat you to death."

Sheng Qingyan pouted: "I don't want to go."

Chu Jiaojiao rolled her eyes and scolded: "So what if you cried a bit? What's there to be ashamed of? Who hasn't cried in their lifetime? Stop the nonsense, come over quick!"

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Annoyed, Sheng Qingyan retorted: "Who said I cried? Was it Aqing who betrayed me?"

Chu Jiaojiao responded irritably: "Do I need Shen Changqing to tell me? I was standing right beside you. When you cried, when you secretly wiped onions, I saw everything clearly."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan stamped his foot: "I didn't cry."

Seeing his truly embarrassed and about to jump in frustration, Jiaojiao raised her hand to her forehead, her tone softened, and said: "5 minutes, if you don't come, I'm reporting to Teacher Mu and I'll double your punishment."

Sheng Qingyan defiantly: "Punish if you like."

Chu Jiaojiao: "..."

Sometimes, Sheng Qingyan could be so stubborn, truly like ten bulls couldn't pull him back, he could argue with you until the seas dry and rocks crumble...

For instance—

Ever since vowing to become a great Mechanical Warrior as a child and then experiencing the death of a loved one, he began to detest war intensely, to the extent that he abandoned his dream and refused to study hard, merely dragging through each day, listening to no one's advice.

Grandpa Sheng was deeply distressed by this, but once Sheng Qingyan decided to give up his dream, he wouldn't change.

Grandpa Sheng had no choice but to use some harsh methods to force him...

Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, and Sheng Qingyan, the three families were neighbors in the same community, the adults were close, and the kids grew up familiar with each other, but Chu Jiaojiao, who grew up in the military camp and with high Combat Power, didn't like playing with the two weak chickens, Shen Changqing and Sheng Qingyan, during their childhood, because they couldn't withstand even one punch from her.

But you know?

Sheng Qingyan, this guy is clearly so weak yet his confidence is bursting at the seams, always trying to challenge Chu Jiaojiao's authority, but every time he ends up getting beaten up by her, still stubbornly antagonizing her...

Later on, Sheng Qingyan suddenly stopped seeking death, saying he no longer wanted to be a Mechanical Warrior, but rather a carefree scoundrel...

Chu Jiaojiao didn't believe it, but as it turned out, many, many years later, from their childhood to adulthood, Sheng Qingyan never challenged Chu Jiaojiao again. During this time, Chu Jiaojiao tried all kinds of ways to provoke him, but he was like a dead pig that wasn't afraid of boiling water...

Even now, Sheng Qingyan remains the same.

Speaking of being stubborn, Chu Jiaojiao only admits to Sheng Qingyan.

At this moment, seeing Sheng Qingyan showing such a lazy rogue manner again, Chu Jiaojiao took a deep breath and said, "I saved you a portion of braised pork ribs rice. If you don't come in 5 minutes, I'll give it to Shen Changqing."

Huh?

Sheng Qingyan jumped up in one second: "Really?"

Chu Jiaojiao sternly replied: "When have I ever lied to you?"

Sheng Qingyan already pulled open the door and rushed out: "Wait for me, I'll be there soon."

Chu Jiaojiao turned off the communication.

Beside—

Ji You looked at Chu Jiaojiao with a slanted eye and couldn't help but ask: "Pork ribs rice? When did you cook an extra portion?" The pork ribs rice was in limited supply, and although Ji You could call upon favors from Senior Shi Ya, exemptions were not possible, she could only scrounge some soup and a piece or two of meat; how could Chu Jiaojiao possibly have cooked an extra portion? Moreover, she clearly saw Chu Jiaojiao finishing the pork ribs rice during dinner.

Chu Jiaojiao waved her hand, seemingly indifferent: "I didn't, I lied to him."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You made a remark: "Having childhood friends like you really is lethal."

Chu Jiaojiao giggled and couldn't help saying: "Ah— Thinking back on how Ji You looked as a kid, I bet it was super cute. Of course, Ji You looks even cuter and prettier now."

Out of the blue, a wave of flattery hit.

Ji You turned and walked away.

...

Arriving at the equestrian field, Sheng Qingyan didn't find the braised pork ribs and indeed threw a fit, but still reluctantly began cleaning the equestrian field under Chu Jiaojiao's threatening gaze.

Lanyue Star Military Academy sprawled over a vast area, hence its buildings, facilities were all built very sturdy and spacious, and of course, the equestrian field was no exception, just walking around the field on foot takes at least five to six hours...

Of course, the students didn't have to clean on foot, as there were vehicles available.

Chu Jiaojiao, Ji You, Shen Changqing, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang... several unlucky ones each took responsibility...

As usual, they first cleaned the stables, removing dung and so on. Then, they had to cut a patch of grass for each stable.

After that...

Of course, cleaning the stables was not smooth sailing, with the almost free-roaming horses being very wild and easily kicking someone inattentively. Thus, everyone also had to be wary of getting kicked.

In addition, Ji You and the others had to also care for the pregnant mares and newly born foals, with any slight negligence immediately being recorded by the stable's managing robots.

Furthermore, these horses were quite combative, especially the males in the group would fight to nearly death each day, resulting in injuries all over. If not for human intervention, it's feared that the male horses in the stable would have been wiped out. Therefore, Ji You and the others also need to have some veterinary knowledge on hand, ready to run out to rescue an injured horse at a moment's notice...

...

After a long time, the students were all out of spirits.

But the gains weren't completely absent, at least, unbeknownst to everyone, their spiritual power had increased.