

Scavengers 651

Chapter 651: What a Trap

Upon hearing the danger from Teacher Mu, Ji You hurried back to the light screen, seriously selecting her Mecha.

Firstly, she immediately ruled out the Heavy Armor type like 'Po Jun', which required great Physical Strength and at least B-level spiritual power to pilot. This was definitely not an option for Ji You.

Secondly, Mechas that required extremely complex operations, needing thousands or even tens of thousands of Spiritual Silks for simultaneous control, like the reconnaissance type 'Chasing Sun', were not for Ji You either. It couldn't be helped; her disadvantage was having only six Spiritual Silks.

...

After ruling out options one by one, Ji You could only choose Mechas like the special edition Small Mecha, which were simple to operate and didn't have high physical requirements. But the choices were way too limited.

So limited that after Ji You scanned over a hundred Mechas, she found not a single suitable one.

Ji You's face darkened.

Frustrating.

How frustrating could it get?

...

The students around started to get noisy, as those who had chosen their Mechas received them quickly from the robots. Seeing the real Mechas, many students couldn't help but let out gasps of amazement:

"Wow!"

"This is so cool."

"Awesome!"

...

Ji You blinked and leaned over to look for a few seconds, understanding why the students were amazed. The Mechas for the examination were a bit different from the ones used for routine training—they were more massive, more majestic, more dazzling, and more...

In short, there were too many adjectives to express the students' excitement.

This is—

Ji You's eyes sharpened: "This is—"

Before she could finish, Shen Changqing continued, "This is a real Mecha."

"Damn!" Yue Qiguang was already jumping up excitedly. His eyes were glued to his chosen Po Jun, which was about thirty meters tall, with a gleaming black body exuding an aura that was both understated and domineering.

"Dad's Po Jun! Cool!"

After circling the Po Jun, Yue Qiguang's excitement couldn't fade. He raised his hand excitedly to touch the Mecha's body and exclaimed, "Dad, I can't wait anymore!"

With that, Yue Qiguang immediately activated the login system and requested to enter the pilot's cockpit.

"Wait!" Shen Changqing promptly called out, but—Yue Qiguang had no patience to listen and swiftly stepped into the cockpit.

Shen Changqing closed his mouth.

Next to them.

Sheng Qingyan covered her mouth, chuckling, "Let's wait and watch the drama."

Chu Jiaojiao's eyes twinkled, her excitement and anticipation not less than Yue Qiguang's. She was too impatient to watch the commotion and busied herself with selecting her Mecha, waiting for it to be delivered by a robot.

Ji You, on the other hand, lifted her head, staring intently at Yue Qiguang.

Then—

Just as he logged into the cockpit and established a spiritual connection with Po Jun, anticipating showing off his skills in piloting it, something happened—

Thud—

With a loud noise, the thirty-meter colossus, in front of all the teachers and students, fell flat on its face!

Everyone: "..."

Yue Qiyuan raised his hand to his forehead: "Fool, I don't know him."

Chu Jiaojiao quickly followed: "I don't know this person either."

Sheng Qingyan covered the corner of her mouth: "I don't know him either."

Shen Changqing remained silent.

Ji You frowned, touching her chin: "Something's not right!"

As soon as her words landed, other students like Yue Qiguang, unable to contain their excitement and having logged into the cockpit prematurely, also experienced the same moment, falling face first.

One.

Two.

Three.

...

The students fell flat on their faces as if they were dumping dumplings, looking utterly abnormal.

At this moment—

Teacher Mu Jianling's cool voice rang out: "Ugh—your falling postures are still as ridiculous as ever."

The students: "..."

Teacher Mu Jianling continued: "I forgot to tell you, these mechas are all wartime mechas, compared to the castrated versions you normally train with, the difficulty of piloting them is at least five times higher."

The students: "..."

Once she said this, the surroundings became silent as chickens, the students' faces turned as black as the bottom of a pot, despair emanating from them, and the air in the examination room seemed to be filled with a deathly stillness.

A few seconds later.

Teacher Mu Jianling lifted her foot and kicked the butt of the mecha closest to her, cursing, "Why are you lying there like a dead fish? Get up!"

By coincidence, this mecha happened to be the Po Jun driven by Yue Qiguang.

Inside Po Jun, Yue Qiguang's voice carried a clear hint of grievance: "I... I can't get up."

Wah—

Dad wants to cry!

Inside the cockpit, Yue Qiguang was sprawled out in disarray, unable even to maintain a basic sitting posture. He covered his face, hiding the despair:

Done for!

If Dad can't get up, he'll be utterly humiliated, but what's terrifying is that he fears he really might fail the assessment.

Dammit!

The more Yue Qiguang thought about it, the sadder he became.

...

"Oh—" Teacher Mu Jianling said with a pair of falcon-like eyes, staring at the Po Jun sprawled on the ground, and sneered lightly, "It's number 2222, Yue Qiguang— turns out you're not only skilled at drilling through walls, but your belly crawl posture is also pretty standardized, huh."

Yue Qiguang: "..."

I want to die!

Dammit!

This darn old hag, one day, I'll beat her until she's covered in lumps!

Normally, Teacher Mu Jianling's mockery of Yue Qiguang would make the students burst into laughter, but what about now? Watching their classmates fall down one by one, almost unable to get up, those who did manage to stand couldn't even keep their balance...

Everyone's heart felt incredibly heavy: Such simple operations, so many students couldn't do it, what about themselves?

Who dares to guarantee they would be able to manage?

[Retake!]

In an instant, the word 'retake' loomed over the students' minds and heads like a plague, including Ji You...

Especially thinking about the hefty retake fee—

My life!

One by one, the students felt their scalps go numb, their hearts filled with despair.

Misery loves company, no one ridiculed Yue Qiguang, no one took the initiative to speak up at this time.

Dead silence all around.

Teacher Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow and said, "I'm extending the time by half an hour for you to familiarize yourselves with the mechas."

"Half an hour, is that enough?"

"Uh—somehow it feels like you're giving us half an hour to walk to the guillotine."

"The difference between dying sooner and dying later."

...

"What are you dragging your feet for?" Teacher Mu Jianling said coldly, "Those who haven't chosen a mecha within 5 minutes, the system will automatically select for you!"

The students couldn't help but have doubts in their hearts, while Yue Qiguang and other students who had fallen were struggling to get up, the rest who hadn't chosen a mecha dared not delay any longer and began to seriously select one.

Now that they knew the assessment mechas were wartime models, which differed from the training ones, no one dared to mess around. What to choose then?

Thinking it over, most people still chose the same model as the castrated version. Even if it was a castrated version, familiarity was key.

At this moment, choosing an unfamiliar mecha would be the real foolishness.

Everyone else had made their selections, only Ji You staring bitterly at the light screen: which one to choose?

Just then, out of the corner of her eye, she suddenly caught a glimpse of a mecha interface that was exceedingly familiar, Ji You's eyes suddenly lit up—

Chapter 652: Seriously Poisoned

Ji You blinked, finding it hard to believe her own eyes – is this—

Really an antique mech?

In the examination room, there's actually an antique mech?

Ji You's withered heart suddenly reignited with hope, as she quickly clicked on the page of the antique mech. After carefully reviewing it, she confirmed it was indeed an antique mech! Ji You reached out her hand, ready to choose it.

At the moment of making a choice, Ji You suddenly caught sight of a note in fine print under the description of the antique mech: [Commemorative mech, limited functions, limited energy, might not be able to complete the examination tasks, please choose carefully.]

Uh—

Ji You's hand halted in mid-air.

What the heck?

Ji You squinted her eyes, skeptical in her heart: Was this antique mech placed here just to make up numbers?

Choose it?

Or not?

Ji You was torn as she stared at the light screen, indecisive.

At this moment—

Teacher Mu Jianling said, "Three minutes left."

With only three minutes to select a mech, Ji You felt a little anxious. She glanced at the others around her; Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, and the rest had already made their choices and were observing their newly acquired mechs.

Ji You frowned in thought: since entering the Combat Department, she had only come into contact with three types of mechs – one was a special edition Small Mecha, the other was an antique mech, and then there was 'Blade'!

Ji You quickly switched the light screen to 'Blade', briefly skimmed through the description of Blade, and noticed a small note: [This mech demands high spiritual power and operational skills, please choose carefully.]

Ji You hadn't handled a real 'Blade', but in the online competitions, her familiarity with this model was no less than with the antique mech, and she understood very well that the reminder was apt; operating Blade was truly complex.

The virtual Blade alone was enough to give Ji You a headache. In reality, the difficulty of piloting Blade could only increase, not decrease.

So—

Should she choose the antique mech?

Or Blade?

Ji You thought for a moment, then firmly clenched her teeth, deciding on her choice!

At this moment—

Mu Jianling's indifferent voice echoed in the students' ears: "Time to choose has ended."

"Ah?"

"I haven't finished choosing."

"Teacher, could you give me a few more minutes?"

"Teacher..."

There were evidently not a few students afflicted with choice paralysis like Ji You, some were even more undecided than Ji You when Mu Jianling's countdown ended, without having made their final selection.

Mu Jianling paid no heed to the students' wails and pleas, and said coldly: "Activate the system's automatic selection."

"10, 9, 8, 7..."

"Ding-dong—"

The system in the examination room completed the selection within ten seconds.

Suddenly—

The entire examination room was filled with wails—

"Mama Mia~ As a speed type warrior, I'm actually supposed to pilot Heavy Armor Breaking Army?"

"Mama Mia~ For someone who can't even distinguish directions, I'm actually assigned a reconnaissance mech?"

"Help!"

...

Mu Jianling's eyes were cold as she loudly decreed, "Silence."

In an instant, the students quieted down like chickens.

Mu Jianling looked at the students without a trace of sympathy, instead, a mocking smile appeared as she said, "As a Mechanical Warrior, if you can't even make up your mind about your own mecha, what use are you?"

The students: "..."

The reprimand was so reasonable that nobody dared to make a sound.

Mu Jianling continued to scold, "If I hear one more complaint, I'll directly disqualify you from the examination."

The students: "..."

Mu Jianling said, "Now, a half-hour countdown to familiarize yourselves with your mechas begins—"

As her voice fell, a dazzling light screen lit up above the examination room, displaying the exact time. As time ticked away second by second, no one dared to waste any more, all hurriedly logging into the cockpits to start familiarizing themselves with their mechas.

The space in the examination room was vast and boundless, it could accommodate several starships all at once. Each student selected a space to familiarize themselves with their mecha. In the blink of an eye, this space was divided into individual small areas, separated by transparent light screen fences, allowing the students to practice without interfering with each other, yet it didn't prevent them from observing and communicating with each other...

To Ji You's left was Chu Jiaojiao, and to her right, Shen Changqing.

Chu Jiaojiao's mecha was the offensive and defensive Heavy Armor 'Po Jun', massive and majestic, paired with its black color, it looked extremely cool and very much in line with Chu Jiaojiao's usual style.

Noticing Ji You's gaze, Chu Jiaojiao, who was about to enter the cockpit, turned her head and smiled at Ji You, asking curiously, "Ji You, what kind of mecha did you choose?"

Ji You pursed her lips, her tone calm, "Nothing much."

Chu Jiaojiao grew more curious, "Could it be Blade? I've never touched a real Blade, I'm very curious, after the examination, Ji You must let me have a feel of the Blade's Mechanical Shell."

Ji You's face showed a slight discomfort, "It's not."

Chu Jiaojiao tilted her head, "Not?"

The countdown above was pressing like a death sentence, how could Ji You dare to delay? At this moment, she couldn't care less about losing face, and she directly took out the Space Button given by the examination room's assistant robot to retrieve her mecha.

In a blink of an eye—

A small and quaint mech appeared before Chu Jiaojiao's eyes.

Chu Jiaojiao: "..."

Chu Jiaojiao stared, "You're using an antique mech?"

Ji You: "Mhm~"

Chu Jiaojiao dug her ear, a bit incredulous, "Ji You, do you have a lot of points? Could you lend me 100,000? Don't worry, I definitely won't delete you as a friend after borrowing the money."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You darkened her face, "No! I'm not lending it!"

Chu Jiaojiao's tone was filled with endless sympathy, "You shouldn't be so reckless, even if you have a lot of points." She paused slightly, seeming to want to persuade Ji You, "Really, rather than wasting points on a re-examination, you might as well help me out. After all, we're good sisters."

Separated by a light screen, Chu Jiaojiao leaned closer, batting her eyes and staring intently at Ji You,

Ji You's mouth twitched, "Go away! Who said we're good sisters."

Chu Jiaojiao scratched her head, "But haven't you said so many times before?"

Ji You straightened her face, denying, "Never happened."

Over here—

Chu Jiaojiao was bickering with Ji You when suddenly, both noticed Shen Changqing silently holding the Space Button containing his mecha. Ji You and Chu Jiaojiao both turned their heads, asking, "Shen Changqing, what mecha did you choose?"

Shen Changqing looked up at them, his tone very calm, "My mecha is—"

Having said that.

He directly threw his hand up, opening the Space Button and releasing his own mech.

—An antique mech!

As soon as the mech appeared, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao: "!!!"

Immediately after, the two exclaimed in unison, "Damn! Shen Changqing, you're seriously poisoned!"

Chapter 653: The Gap Between Ideal and Reality

Watching Shen Changqing beside the antique mech, Ji You's expression was incredibly complex, she opened her mouth, her lips quivered for a while, and after a long pause, it turned into a sentence: "Xiaoqing... I'm sorry for letting you down."

Chu Jiaojiao was clearly also thrown into some disarray by Shen Changqing's move, saying, "Shen Changqing, if you think you have too many points, give some to me, I don't mind having more."

Shen Changqing's expression was still relatively calm, only his face was a bit red. He lowered his head and said softly, "I've never driven a real antique mech before, I'm just a bit curious."

Ji You rolled her eyes and said teasingly, "Unexpectedly, our classmate Shen Changqing is still a curious baby."

Shen Changqing's face turned even redder.

Chu Jiaojiao also teased, "Curious baby, lend your sister 100 points, I'll pay you back tomorrow."

Ji You quickly added, "Curious baby, don't forget your sister Ji You too, your sister Ji You is still poor, can't even afford a meal."

Shen Changqing's handsome face was now fully flushed from their teasing, like a ripe red peach, he lowered his head and said softly, "No more chatting, I need to practice."

Both Ji You and Chu Jiaojiao grinned, chuckling:

Ji You said: "Curious baby, don't forget about our points."

Chu Jiaojiao: "Lend me the points, I'll treat you to braised pork ribs rice."

Shen Changqing didn't respond and in the blink of an eye, he had entered the antique mech's cabin.

Ji You looked at Chu Jiaojiao and said, "No time to hang out with you, I need to practice."

Chu Jiaojiao smiled at Ji You and said, "Ji You, I really remember you once said you are my good sister, a lifetime good sister indeed."

Ji You quickly turned her head and boarded the mech.

...

Once Ji You boarded the real antique mech, she internally cursed: Damn, this energy box is just level 1, lasting maybe at most 10 minutes.

How can this work?

Also, the real antique mech only has 10 control keys, primarily categorized into three types: weapons, power, energy. The simplicity of its functions frustrated Ji You, and even more frustrating was the fact that this mech had no automatic scouting system. This means if the mech driver wants to know the surroundings, like if there are enemies lurking around, any pits? Any obstacles... they must manually observe.

At this —

By the time Ji You had figured it out, she genuinely wanted to cry.

No wonder the assessment system advised to choose wisely, turns out this thing was literally for memorial purposes.

Ji You fiercely grabbed a handful of her hair.

Going bald!

But trapped in this situation, she had no choice but to bite the bullet and familiarize herself with the controls, then immediately connected to the mech's Spiritual Connector.

In an instant—

Ji You felt her limbs stiffen, her whole body as cumbersome as an ox!

After connecting with the mech spiritually, its body became equivalent to Ji You's, both limbs and torso extremely stiff because she was not yet fully accustomed to using this frame.

But—

Ji You's mood darkened even more.

Because the disparity between piloting an antique mech on the Star Network and this was like heaven and earth!

Teacher Mu said real mechs, compared to the edited versions, the difficulty of driving is 5 times higher! But Ji You felt that it was definitely more than 5 times, maybe at least 10?

Once connected with the mech spiritually, a strong force of gravity slammed down on Ji You, making her feel breathless, with a burgeoning headache... How to describe this feeling? It's like an ant carrying an elephant on its back, both physically and spiritually feeling overwhelmingly burdened.

Exhausting.

Especially exhausting.

Sweat began to form on Ji You's forehead.

She gritted her teeth, having seen too many students fall in an unsightly manner, unable to get up for a long time, so Ji You cautiously extended a finger.

It was successful.

But just extending a finger drained a significant amount of her spiritual power threshold.

Next.

Ji You continued carefully, bending the finger.

second.

seconds.

seconds.

...

Failure.

Ji You continued.

Failure.

Continue again.

...

After several attempts, she finally succeeded. But there was not a hint of joy on Ji You's face, instead, her expression was as grim as if someone owed her half a billion: "Damn it! How am I supposed to pass this?"

Thinking about the huge, huge amount of points needed for the retake, Ji You felt a tingling scalp and couldn't bear to think about it.

She had no choice but to grit her teeth and continue practicing little by little.

One finger bent.

Two fingers.

Three fingers.

...

Five fingers.

Just like grinding work, she couldn't be impatient or rash, only step by step, little by little accumulation, finally, Ji You could bend all five fingers and clench them into a fist.

At this moment, her forehead, cheeks, and neck were covered with large beads of sweat...

Ji You raised her hand and fiercely wiped off the sweat, then continued to practice.

After mastering one hand, Ji You tried to control the entire mechanical arm, which was very demanding on spiritual power and physical strength. Just 10 minutes later, Ji You was already gasping for breath.

It's over!

There were less than 20 minutes left before the time given by Teacher Mu Jianling to get familiar with the mech was up.

Ji You gritted her teeth and continued.

Fortunately, although her method was slow, the effect was good. Gradually, Ji You mastered both arms and one thigh, and was just about to move on to the other thigh when suddenly—

System: "Time's up."

Ji You: "Damn it!"

In an instant, the entire training room was filled with students screaming just like Ji You: "Damn! There's no way to pass! The teacher must be doing this on purpose!"

Absolutely!

Standing at the control console, Mu Jianling, faced with the students' complaints and resentment, showed no expression and still spoke calmly: "Time's up, please all go to the assessment chambers in groups of ten according to your student ID numbers."

"Those whose names are called, step forward!" Mu Jianling shouted.

Immediately, ten students stepped forward.

Mu Jianling raised his hand and pointed to the assessment chamber, saying, "Go in. The movements and steps you need to complete, I believe everyone already knows, so I won't go into too much detail here."

The assessment standards were very transparent, having been announced before the students entered. The students needed to complete 5 sets of motions: start—jump—pass through obstacles—shoot—withdraw.

These 5 sets of motions had to cover a set distance and be completed within 5 minutes. Over time or not meeting the standards would result in a fail.

The ten students grimaced, stepping in as if going to their doom.

The rest of the students, silent, watched nervously as the first group went for the assessment. As soon as these ten students entered, they logged onto the mech and began preparing—

Whoosh—

The countdown ended.

The ten students took their stance, controlling the mechs to take a step—

Then—

Plop—

All fell at the starting line.

Students: "..."

Deadly!

Chapter 654: Not Much, Just 5,000

The first group of 10 students participating in the assessment all knelt down at the starting line.

The cold electronic voice of the assessment system rang out: "Assessment failed, next group."

Such a high failure rate was like a bucket of cold water dousing the students' fiery spirits.

This is bad!

This is definitely going to be terrible.

After the system spoke, Mu Jianling, with her arms crossed, casually remarked as if watching a drama:
"Very good, the first group's kneeling posture is quite neat, let the next group continue to strive."

Students: "..."

The second batch of students lined up in turn.

After logging into the Mecha, all 10 stood at the starting line, listening to the horn sounding, but the nervousness and trepidation in their hearts were still clearly visible on each student's face.

System: "Begin——"

The second batch of students were very cautious, not as reckless as the first batch, and all chose to carefully test the waters, taking the first step forward.

However——

The students, who had just connected with the Mecha, had a very low compatibility with them. Their Physical Strength and spiritual power couldn't withstand the strong synergy brought by the Mecha, and no matter how cautious they were, they still bit the dust.

Boom! Boom! Boom!——

After the first loud bang, students began falling to the ground one after another.

Mu Jianling's lips curved into a slight smile as she said: "Very good! Not bad at all, although the fall was not as neat as the first group, you've managed to create a wave-like pattern. All I can say is that you young people are truly creative! Third group, continue, I hope you can be more creative than the second group."

Students: "..."

Ji You quietly asked Chu Jiaojiao beside her: "Is she—a devil?"

Chu Jiaojiao sneaked a glance at Mu Jianling on the control platform, then covered her mouth and whispered: "Scarier than a devil~"

Ji You nodded vigorously: "Yes~Yes~"

Suddenly, Mu Jianling glanced over this way, and in a flash, the two students gossiping instantly shut their mouths.

Mu Jianling hummed lightly: "Third group, begin!"

The third round of 10 students, now all with a warrior's resolve, entered the examination room.

Then——

Unsurprisingly, they bit the dust.

people! 30 failures!

And——all kneeling at the starting line.

At this point, the students' mindset had completely changed; their goal shifted from passing the assessment to seeing how many meters they could cover.

But!!!

The fourth group.

The fifth group.

The sixth group.

...

Almost all students ended up kneeling at the starting line. They went from initial fear to looking disheveled, shoulders hunched, with no one daring to speak up at this time because Teacher Mu Jianling stopped even the sarcasm and just observed with arms crossed, eyes askew, and cold lips.

Apart from the voice of the system and the sound of Mechas falling and kneeling in the assessment area, there was complete silence.

Then.

Batch after batch of students continued to repeat the same outcome: failure.

Failure.

And failure again.

Until—

A jet-black Mecha, at the moment when the other 9 Mechas fell, cut through the air resistance and leaped out, like a lotus bloom emerging from the mud, unusually fresh and striking—

Mu Jianling's drooping eyelids suddenly twitched: "Eh?"

The students also instantly had a shock run through their bodies: "Who's that?"

They saw the jet-black Mecha sprinting from the starting line, its speed so fast it was like a horse racing ahead, instantly dashing several meters—

meters!

meters!

The students stared with wide eyes: "Wow, holy cow! Who is this hero?"

As soon as the words were spoken—

The pitch-black mecha, trembling all over for a moment, came crashing down with a thud.

In the end, the stalwart hero couldn't escape the fate of biting the dust.

But! The thousand meters he successfully ran were like a shot in the arm for the students who had lost all hope: If he can do it, we all surely can!

At this time, Mu Jianling stopped folding her arms. As the group of 10 students came out of the examination room with soot-covered faces, Mu Jianling's lips revealed a rare smile and said, "Nine piles of cow dung and one golden flower. Not bad, not bad."

Nine people: "..."

Students: "..."

Mu Jianling, who sprays nonsense without uttering a single human word, had no realization of being annoying. She had a smile on her lips and a kind look on her face as she looked at the master of the pitch-black mecha 'Chasing Sun'—Xuzhou. She reached out and gently rubbed Xuzhou's big head, saying with a smile, "Good kid."

Xuzhou: "..."

Xuzhou felt no excitement from being praised.

Because—

The next sentence from Mu Jianling instantly turned Xuzhou's face red.

Mu Jianling said: "You're just a bit weak. Work hard, and then you can become a true golden flower."

Xuzhou: "..."

Xuzhou, with a straight face, said: "Teacher, I'm a guy."

Mu Jianling raised her eyebrows, laughing: "Oh—so it's a male golden flower."

Xuzhou: "..."

Xuzhou's rough face turned crimson, both angry and embarrassed.

He saluted Mu Jianling with respect, then immediately turned around and went back to his spot.

As Xuzhou settled back into his seat, Ji You, Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Zhang Ye, and others immediately crowded around him! Not just them, other students also stared at Xuzhou with incredulous expressions.

Among the 998 students in the Combat Department, Xuzhou wasn't particularly outstanding in either Physical Strength or spiritual power, yet this seemingly mediocre student, against all odds, became the first one to run over a thousand meters. Who wouldn't be shocked?

Ji You hopped over, patting Xuzhou on the shoulder proudly and said with a laugh, "Little Zhouzhou, I'm very satisfied and relieved by your performance today."

This fatherly tone made Xuzhou uncomfortable, and he kept a straight face, saying, "I only ran 1100 meters."

Only 1100 meters?

How would the other 'face-planted' students who were eavesdropping feel?

For a moment, the failed students spoke all at once, trying to cover their embarrassment with various excuses.

"Cough, cough..."

"Children say the darndest things."

"Cough, cough..."

"Children say the darndest things."

...

Seizing the chance while everyone was discussing, Ji You leaned in and whispered, "Little Zhouzhou, do you have some secret? Tell me, don't let my affection for you go to waste."

Xuzhou: "..."

Xuzhou shook his head: "No secret."

Ji You didn't believe him: "Really?"

Xuzhou, with a stern face, said, "Really."

At 2.1 meters tall, Xuzhou had a rough appearance with wide nose, thick lips, bushy eyebrows, and big eyes—the kind that looked incredibly honest and sturdy at first glance. Moreover, his actions always matched his straightforward demeanor. After pondering for a moment, Ji You believed him.

Suddenly, Shen Changqing asked, "Xuzhou, roughly how many Spiritual Silks did you use to control the mecha?"

At this question, everyone perked up their ears.

Hearing this, Xuzhou didn't hide anything and directly replied, "Not many, just about 5000."

Ji You: "..."

Chapter 655: To Be Human or to Be a Pig?

Not many, just about 5000.

As soon as Ji You heard this, her heart felt blocked.

Xuzhou continued: "I gave up other complex controls, only retaining limb movement and road condition monitoring, so the Spiritual Silks needed are not many, which allows me to concentrate more, focusing solely on these two aspects."

Shen Changqing nodded and said, "Yes, I have the same plan. Discard other functions and focus on certain ones."

Upon hearing this, Xuzhou said solemnly: "Classmate Shen Changqing, your spiritual power is higher and more fluent than mine, I believe you can get through the obstacle zone."

Shen Changqing said: "I'll try my best."

Hmm?

S-level mental power Shen Changqing is also unsure about passing the assessment?

The students, hearing this, all frowned: the situation does not seem optimistic.

And then.

Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Chu Jiaojiao, and a few others asked Xuzhou questions, then pondered on their own.

Seeing everyone dispersing, with no one focusing attention on him, Xuzhou could not help but let out a sigh of relief. He lowered his head, about to turn around, but suddenly saw Ji You still standing by his side.

Ji You was tiptoeing, trying to pat Xuzhou's shoulder. Helplessly short, definitely no chance for a comfortable head pat, Ji You on her toes could just about manage a shoulder pat.

Xuzhou's mouth twitched slightly, straightened his back, and thus, Ji You's outstretched hand missed.

Ji You stepped down, cleared her throat, and said: "Little Zhouzhou, tell me honestly, what is your Spiritual Silk Cleaning Rate?"

Hearing her serious question, Xuzhou replied: "9%."

Upon hearing this, Ji You laughed: "Not bad!"

Although not as extraordinary as S-level mental power possessors like Shen Changqing and Yue Qiyuan, Xuzhou's progress was evidently good. Ji You briefly understood why Xuzhou could run thousands of meters—it's rough look yet meticulous attention made him excellent material for an investigator, and Xuzhou also planned his future career this way.

And then.

Ji You asked another question: "How many Spiritual Silks can you now use?"

Upon hearing this, Xuzhou did not immediately answer but bowed his head, felt it carefully, then replied: "Nearly a million are cleaned, but I can only freely control 200,000 of them."

Ji You: "!!!"

After hearing this, Ji You didn't laugh; her mouth stiffened, somewhat breathless, she asked: "You...you can control 200,000 at the same time?"

Xuzhou nodded: "Yes."

Ji You's figure teetered—

She was about to shut down.

No!

She just shut down.

After a moment.

Ji You waved her hand and said, "You can go, I have nothing more to ask you."

Xuzhou looked at Ji You, feeling her reaction was a bit strange, as if she had been greatly impacted:

200,000, is just a very ordinary number.

Far ones, like in the Main Star's First Military Academy, many students are stronger than him.

Closer ones, at Lanyue Star, many students control more, like Shen Changqing, like Chu Jiaojiao, like Yue Qiyuan...

Xuzhou truly felt he was very mediocre among them, of course, this was for now. Xuzhou was confident in himself, believing that step by step, with scheduled training, he could definitely become an outstanding investigator in the future.

The assessment still continued.

Xuzhou gave a good start, since then, students one after another crossed the starting line, running a short distance.

Some a few meters, some dozens of meters, and some a few hundred meters. But none surpassed Xuzhou's thousand meters.

Only one person performed close to Xuzhou, that was his good friend Zhang Ye, Zhang Ye threw 900 meters, sadly still no surpassing Xuzhou.

Then—

Finally, it was the turn of one of Ji You's very familiar friends, Chu Jiaojiao.

Chu Jiaojiao walked towards the examination room door with strides, head held high and chest out.

Mu Jianling glanced at her: "Very energetic."

Chu Jiaojiao stood at attention, loudly said: "Report to the teacher, I will try my best to complete the assessment."

Mu Jianling smiled warmly and sent blessings: "That's the spirit, just don't charge out like a hero and come back like a bear."

Chu Jiaojiao: "..."

Mu Jianling: "Go ahead."

Chu Jiaojiao piloted Po Jun, standing out like a crane among chickens amidst the light armors, very noticeable.

The assessment begins——

Among the 10 mechas, half of the students knelt at the starting line, 4 managed to rush forward but only for a few meters before trembling and falling down, Chu Jiaojiao wasn't rash, she tested by lifting her leg, then suddenly accelerated——

Whoosh——

Like an arrow released from the bow, she charged towards the track.

Everyone had their eyes wide open, watching her.

Chu Jiaojiao's momentum was fierce and domineering, but— after running a meter, her large frame loudly hit the ground.

Mu Jianling: "Told you, a bear indeed."

Students: "..."

Chu Jiaojiao's failure hit the students hard, like a heavy punch to the chest.

She's supposed to be the true number one in combat abilities among the Combat Department.

Yet she also face-planted.

Will any student pass the assessment today?

Doubts filled everyone's minds.

Then.

Batch after batch of students followed.

It was finally the turn of Sheng Qingyan, a very familiar buddy of Ji You.

Sheng Qingyan walked out with a face exuding an indifferent, rascally aura.

Mu Jianling, originally with arms crossed, nonchalantly watched the students enter the examination room one by one, but upon seeing Sheng Qingyan's sloppy and indecent appearance, he suddenly raised his hand and fiercely knocked on Sheng Qingyan's head!

Sheng Qingyan pouted: "Teacher, why are you hitting me?"

Mu Jianling casually withdrew his hand: "Itchy hands."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

With a pout, Sheng Qingyan reluctantly stepped forward and continued through the examination room door.

Suddenly——

Mu Jianling said in a cool tone: "Pigs can be lazy, people cannot."

Hearing this voice above his head, Sheng Qingyan inexplicably felt a chill surge through him, he straightened his expression and immediately said: "Don't worry, Teacher, I'll try my hardest to be a pig."

Mu Jianling: "..."

Mu Jianling lifted his foot and fiercely kicked Sheng Qingyan's butt: "Take the assessment seriously, if you don't pass, I'm slaughtering a pig tonight!"

Sss~

All the students took a sharp breath collectively, even Ji You admired Sheng Qingyan with eyes befitting a hero.

Spicy Eye this guy, not to say anything else, his ability to seek death is truly unmatched.

Admiration!

Following that.

The assessment began, everyone, including Mu Jianling, became serious, just waiting to "slaughter the pig"!

Sheng Qingyan piloted the mecha, after shooting out from the starting line, didn't fall, but his mecha's running posture wasn't very heroic, rather lazy and crooked, looking just like him, utterly informal.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

...

Just when everyone thought Sheng Qingyan was about to face-plant at any moment, he ended up running one thousand meters, two thousand meters, three thousand meters... Everyone suddenly focused, intently staring at that somewhat underwhelming mecha.

Chapter 656: The Worst Class Ever

Will Sheng Qingyan succeed?

All the students were staring intently, eyes glued on Sheng Qingyan...

second.

seconds.

seconds.

As Sheng Qingyan piloted the mecha, just as it was about to approach the obstacle area, suddenly—the mecha began to tremble slightly, shaking unstopably, and everyone's hearts lifted, quivering along with the shaking mech...

"It's about to cross over."

"You must hold on."

"Come on!"

...

As the students watched nervously, then—

Plop—

It kneeled.

The students: "..."

Silence.

Still silence.

In this silence, an utmost frustration ensued!

More than half of the students had taken the assessment, but none had passed yet; there were a total of 5 stages in the whole assessment, and so far, no student had reached the second stage, truly—

Miserable and distressing...

How could the students not feel dejected?

Including Sheng Qingyan, ten students hung their heads, each stepping out of the examination room, passing the doorway. When facing the derisive smile on the corner of Teacher Mu Jianling's lips, the students all shrank their necks, no one uttering a sound.

One by one, two, three... nine people left in succession, and the last one was Sheng Qingyan, with Mu Jianling folding her arms, her gaze cold.

Sheng Qingyan shrank his neck even more, lifting his foot—

Mu Jianling curved her lips slightly, saying airily: "Oh—looks like a pig is coming out—"

Sheng Qingyan shook all over and did something unexpected by everyone. Without saying a word, he suddenly bent his arms, hugged his own head, then dived forward—

The students: "???"

Escaping?

That's what Mu Jianling thought too.

Then—

Under everyone's watchful eyes, just as Sheng Qingyan had dived forward, he suddenly made a one hundred and eighty-degree sharp turn, wrapping himself around Mu Jianling's feet, then slowly, slowly... crouched down on the ground, hugging his head, and let out a pig-like howl: "Teacher, I was wrong, I won't be a pig anymore."

The students: "..."

What a wimp!

Truly wimping out!

Mu Jianling's whole body trembled, suddenly feeling the urge to scratch her hands, her feet... even feeling itchy dandruff...

After a long moment—

Mu Jianling lifted her foot and kicked towards Sheng Qingyan's butt.

Sheng Qingyan rolled on the spot: "Don't kill me, please don't kill me..."

Mu Jianling: "..."

The crowd around inhaled sharply, the atmosphere reaching peak awkwardness.

Mu Jianling took a deep breath and said, "Make one more noise, and your assessment qualification is canceled."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan immediately shut up.

Mu Jianling snorted coldly and cursed: "Everyone, take a look, this is what you call over-the-top acting!"

The students with their eyes wide open nodded in agreement.

Sheng Qingyan pouted, feeling slightly resentful—

Mu Jianling glanced at him sidelong, and Sheng Qingyan, feeling wronged, shut his mouth and dared not make another peep.

Still feeling itchy in her hands and feet, Mu Jianling intentionally raised her foot and kicked Sheng Qingyan again. After taking a kick to his rear, Sheng Qingyan deeply felt the looming crisis and, mustering his courage while holding his behind, scampered away in a hurry.

Mu Jianling continued to scold, "I want everyone to remember, if I find out anyone's not taking the examination seriously—"

Her tone was ominously deep, the threat left hanging... While she didn't spell it out, the students all felt a chill down their necks, sensing their heads might not be too secure.

The students instantly shrank their necks further.

Mu Jianling lifted her head and made a throat-slitting gesture—

The students drew their necks in even tighter.

Mu Jianling: "Next group."

With these words, the terrifying atmosphere in the examination hall began to dissipate gradually as this group of 10 students came out, and the mood slowly regained a bit of liveliness.

However—

This group still all knelt at the first obstacle.

The students fell silent.

Ji You quietly said to Chu Jiaojiao beside her, "Jiaojiao, have you ever felt like this examination is just a conspiracy? Like the teachers have plotted this to swindle our points?"

Chu Jiaojiao: "Cough... The naivety of youth!"

After coughing, Chu Jiaojiao lowered her voice and said, "I think so too."

A look of frustration crossed Ji You's face: She had only so many points in her pocket and had been counting on them for next year's food and clothing. But now, she felt her points were in peril.

Soon, Sheng Qingyan returned to the group.

Chu Jiaojiao scolded, "Were you not taking the test seriously just now?"

Sheng Qingyan, rubbing his butt, replied, "No way... I was more serious than ever."

Chu Jiaojiao didn't believe it.

Suddenly, Shen Changqing said, "Ayan was serious."

Sheng Qingyan jumped behind Shen Changqing, pursing his lips and with displeasure said, "Only Aqing really understands me." His posture and movements had been somewhat unseemly earlier, but that was just his strategy, a way he had devised to cross the first obstacle. How could it be considered not taking it seriously?

The reality was that real mechs were very difficult for novices to control, and full mastery was impossible. Thus, Sheng Qingyan had initially adopted Xuzhou's method: he gave up most of the mech's functions, retaining only the essentials. Still, even so, piloting a real war mech placed a heavy strain on spiritual power and Physical Strength, which is why his run had been so wobbly and trembly...

Ji You pursed her lips and said, "The struggle was real. That's why I suspect this Basic Mecha Driver's License examination is a ploy to scam points." Because—current students were complete novices and couldn't possibly pass.

Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, Sheng Qingyan suddenly: "Impossible!"

Ji You: "..."

At the control panel, Mu Jianling's eyes were fixed unblinkingly over here, making Ji You feel the chill at her neck growing colder. She silently cursed these cowards for not even reminding her.

Mu Jianling looked at the students below, especially at Ji You's group, and lightly threw out a question, "Does anyone have any objections to this exam?"

Silence.

Dead silence.

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow, "No one? I clearly see that some people have issues."

Ji You, stiffening her resolve, raised her hand and asked loudly, "Teacher, I have a question! Is there a deadline for the Basic Mecha Driver's License examination? What is the latest date?"

Eh?

With Ji You bringing this up, it dawned on the students: judging by the way things were going, few would pass today. If 99% of the students failed, it meant no one would be able to participate in the end-of-term exam.

Surely the school wouldn't do something so cruel and insane. Did that mean there would be more time for students to familiarize themselves with real Battle Mechas?

Is that so?

There was no need to rush to retake the exams, then?

In an instant, the students perked up, all eyes on Mu Jianling.

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow and looked down at the students, saying indifferently, "Three days."

"Wow!"

Suddenly, the students cheered.

Hearing the hopeful voices of the students below, Mu Jianling spoke in a tone that was neither salty nor light, "This batch I'm teaching is the worst yet. Happy to have three more days? What's there to be happy about? You all will fail in the end anyway."

The students: "..."

Chapter 657: The Reason for Elimination

Every word from Teacher Mu Jianling was harsh to the ear, but upon hearing them, students were still joyfully dancing with hands and feet: three days' time, just keep training hard, get more familiar with the real mechs, overcome the obstacles, and you can definitely pass.

Suddenly, everyone swept away the heaviness in their hearts and hope was rekindled.

And—

What do you mean everyone will fail the test?

Impossible!

The students of the Combat Department, not to mention anything else, their competitive spirit was the strongest of all departments! How could they tolerate such discouragement from their own teacher?

The students were all holding their breath, secretly swearing to severely slap Teacher Mu Jianling in the face when the time came!

Mu Jianling raised an eyebrow but didn't continue to demoralize the students.

Next.

Another batch of students took the test.

Failed.

The failure of this batch didn't disillusion the students.

Then, Mu Jianling said, "Next group: Shen Changqing, Zhang Wei, Li Ting..."

The ten students called out stepped forward one by one, Shen Changqing in the lead. As he moved through the crowd and stepped to the door of the examination room, the students all gathered their spirits, watching him intently.

Shen Changqing looked calm, his handsome face did not betray any signs of nervousness.

Below, many whispered secretly:

"In this group, Shen Changqing is the most likely to pass the second stage, do you think he can make it?"

"I think it's doubtful."

"Quite difficult, right?"

"But, Shen Changqing is one of the only two S-level mental power Talents in our Combat Department. If he can't pass the second stage, who else could?"

"Still... it's really hard. It's not just about having high spiritual power; it also depends on the combination of Physical Strength and spiritual power..."

...

In short, most students didn't have high expectations for Shen Changqing, figuring he probably wouldn't make it through.

Shen Changqing heard his classmates' discussions, yet his expression remained unchanged. Just as he entered the examination room with proper gait, Mu Jianling suddenly asked, "Shen Changqing, are you nervous?"

Shen Changqing paused for a moment, then nodded a second later, "Nervous."

Mu Jianling smiled, "Being nervous is good."

Shen Changqing: "..."

Mu Jianling's tone softened unusually, "You're controlling your emotions well; that's commendable and worth learning from. Everyone should take note." After he said this, Mu Jianling waved his hand and said to Shen Changqing, "Go ahead... anyway, you'll be out in a minute or two; no need to be nervous."

Shen Changqing: "..."

The students: "..."

Just when it seemed Elder Mu was showing sudden favoritism towards Shen Changqing—

Teacher Mu was still that same Devil who couldn't say anything nice.

In an instant, the mindset of all students balanced out.

Shen Changqing, with a stern face, entered the examination room without saying a word.

Then—

Everyone brought out their mechs for the exam, and as they turned their attention towards Shen Changqing, he took out an antique mech!

Everyone: "!!!"

"Damn!"

"Oh my God!"

"Antique mech, what's this strategy?"

"We're done!"

...

Listening to the clamorous discussions of his classmates, Shen Changqing kept a straight face, but his slightly blushing ears betrayed a hint of embarrassment and shyness inside...

"10, 9, 8, 7..."

As the countdown ended—

The ten students immediately tensed up, tentatively stepping forward—

Shen Changqing's antique mech, among a group of majestic and imposing mechs, seemed particularly shabby; like a destitute man in tatters, forcibly mingling among the second-generation rich, it was particularly conspicuous and prominent...

As the others started moving, Shen Changqing did not follow suit, but instead observed the surroundings of the starting line. Afterward, he finally connected with the mech.

The moment he connected with the mech, an overwhelming pressure assaulted Shen Changqing's entire being—

This is the burden brought by the mecha.

Shen Changqing divided his Spiritual Silk into several units, each performing its duty, and then he ignited the thrusters—

Whoosh—

The antique mech shot out like an arrow from the string.

Among the 9 students ahead, 5 had already fallen and could not get up, while the other 4 were still stubbornly piloting their mechas, making sure not to let them crash. Shen Changqing, piloting the antique mech, quickly overtook these 9 students.

meters.

meters.

meters.

...

He was about to cross the second checkpoint.

Hmm?

The students suddenly perked up, watching Shen Changqing intently—

Could there be hope?

As Shen Changqing reached the second checkpoint, he decided to give it his all, leaping up suddenly. The antique mech performed a beautiful flip in mid-air, then gently descended, gliding freely for half a meter...

He smoothly arrived at the obstacle course.

The obstacle group was a simulated asteroid belt, filled with countless meteorites, debris... constantly flashing and flying past... A moment of inattention could lead to a disastrous collision that could destroy the mech and kill its pilot.

At this time, Shen Changqing was still very composed. He didn't rush to maneuver through the obstacles, instead, he unfolded the Spiritual Network fully, focusing his attention on monitoring his surroundings.

Besides the Spiritual Network, Shen Changqing divided his limited energy into several parts, with the main portion dedicated to the mech's scanning system. He expanded the mech's scanning range to the maximum, roughly 500 kilometers.

This consumed energy immensely, but it was necessary because the speed of the meteorites and debris was very fast, and an accident could happen if he wasn't careful—

...

Shen Changqing arranged everything methodically without panic.

The students were too engrossed in the examination room to engage in discussions.

meter.

meters.

meters.

...

Shen Changqing moved like he was feeling the stones to cross the river. His speed was slow but steady; every time he seemed about to hit an obstacle, he narrowly avoided it. The onlookers clenched their fists in tension on his behalf.

"Shen Changqing looks like he might just pass the second checkpoint."

"Amazing!"

"How long can he hold out?"

...

Whoosh—

Under the watchful eyes of all, a meteorite sped straight toward the antique mech. Everyone's hearts leaped to their throats, Shen Changqing also realized the urgency and pushed the thrusters to the max, ready to dodge—

However—

Energy was about to be depleted!

Sweat broke out on Shen Changqing's forehead.

Everyone saw a white light flash, followed by a loud boom. The small meteorite hit the antique mech accurately and without error.

Crack—

Bang bang—

The students touched their foreheads, sighing deeply:

"What a pity..."

"Just a little bit more."

"Such a shame."

"He had already avoided over 95% of the obstacles and still failed."

"That last moment, he could have dodged it, why didn't he?"

"Cough... It's because he ran out of energy. I saw it very clearly at that last moment. If it wasn't for the energy depletion, he could have dodged it."

"..."

"So—this shows that the antique mech is still no good! There was a reason it was eliminated."

Chapter 658: Not Optimistic

The biggest downside of the antique mech is that its functions are too simplistic. Shen Changqing had just smoothly progressed into the second level using the antique mech, making the students involuntarily consider it, regretting not choosing the antique mech.

But!!!

After the second level, the shortcomings of the antique mech became blatantly obvious—limited energy, insufficient defense, slow speed, poor flexibility...

All these are flaws of the antique mech. In an instant, everyone lost interest and began discussing:

"If Shen Changqing hadn't used the antique mech, he probably could have made it past the third level."

"I think so too."

"Shen Changqing has hit the pavement, now only Yue Qiyuan has the biggest hope, right?"

"Alas, we can only place our hopes on Yue Qiyuan now."

...

Yue Qiyuan, upon whom everyone had placed great expectations, wore an unhappy expression because his mech operation was extremely complicated. Even though his Spiritual Level was high and his advantage over other students was significant, but!

But!

This mech was not chosen by Yue Qiyuan himself!

That's right!

Yue Qiyuan was one of the unlucky ones selected by the system's random mech assignment!

He had only hesitated for a moment, not expecting the system to finalize the selection so quickly. His current mech, which he was completely unfamiliar with, was—

—Blade.

With a darkened face, Yue Qiyuan lowered his pride and asked Ji You, "Number 4444, are you familiar with the Blade? Do you have any tricks for driving it?"

Ji You gave him a you're-on-your-own look, "Poor kid, I'm actually more familiar with antique mechs, yet I still can't handle them. Let alone a high-end mech like the Blade?"

Yue Qiyuan: "..."

At hearing this, Yue Qiyuan's face darkened even more.

...

Round after round, students participated in the examination, failed, and then failed again. Even Yue Qiyuan, who had been held in high esteem by the students, fell at the starting line. The students became numb to this, but Mu Jianling, on the other hand, folded her arms and quite enjoyed the schadenfreude, not uttering a single humane word.

"Are you guys pigs?"

"Oh—I forgot you originally were pigs, I should have used a declarative sentence, not an interrogative one."

"Bad!"

"Terrible!"

"In all my years of teaching, I've never seen such idiots like you."

"Disgraceful!"

"Step out and don't say you're students of Mu Jianling."

...

Listening to various taunts from Mu Jianling, the students' heads hung lower and lower, almost buried at their feet, yet Mu Jianling didn't let this batch of students off the hook, continuing to berate them loudly.

"Failing an exam is one thing, but even the way you fall is so ugly, lacking any aesthetic value, what use are you?"

"You, you, and you three, in the past there was sworn brotherhood through thick and thin, now there's the trifecta of fools allying, can you be any dumber? Even when you fall, you stack up like acrobats?"

"Yue Qiguang, what are you pouting for? If you can't pass the exam in a day, just honestly hold it in and be humble!"

Yue Qiguang: "..."

He had just quietly muttered about this wretched old woman, not expecting to be caught; Yue Qiguang felt infuriated, but upon locking eyes with the deep, sinister gaze of the wretched old woman, he still cowardly hung his head low.

Mu Jianling, eyebrows raised, scolded all the students thoroughly, feeling extremely refreshed in body and spirit, and finally concluded by saying, "Observing you lot today was a complete waste of effort; anyway, not a single person passed the examination."

Students: "..."

Dared to be angry but didn't dare to speak out.

And feeling inexplicably frustrated.

A Basic Mechanical Driving exam, unexpectedly stumped the whole Combat Department, which includes well-known geniuses from the Alliance, such as Chu Jiaojiao, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, and others.

If these geniuses couldn't pass the exam, what hope did other students with average spiritual power and physical strength have? Therefore, even though the students were unconvinced, they had no choice but to silently endure Teacher Mu Jianling's harsh words.

Finally—

It was Ji You's turn.

Ji You was a bit nervous; she had only been familiarizing herself with the mech for less than half an hour, and she couldn't guarantee that she would pass the exam. Ji You aimed to pass the second round.

As the system announced the names of the 10 students in Ji You's group, Ji You followed them out, not wasting words and proceeding directly towards the examination room.

As she neared the door, Ji You suddenly felt someone pat her shoulder; she looked up, about to ask who it was, and saw it was Teacher Mu Jianling, immediately squeezing out a smile: "Teacher, do you have something to tell me?"

Could the sharp-tongued Teacher Mu actually be about to say some words of encouragement?

Or perhaps, she had a high opinion of her?

A flicker of hope rose in Ji You's heart.

Other students also watched curiously.

Mu Jianling glanced at Ji You, suddenly raised her hand, pointed towards a certain spot inside the examination room, and said, "When you come out, please clean up the trash on the track as well, take it out with you." The "trash" referred to the small stones and debris scattered when students fell and the mechs collided with the ground...

Saying this, Mu Jianling cursed, "A bunch of smelly brats, not a bit of public spiritedness."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You's face stiffened completely.

Mu Jianling said, "What are you dazed for, not going for the assessment? You will be out in less than two minutes anyway, don't delay the cleaning time."

Ji You mustered up her courage and asked a question: "Teacher, may I ask, when you were a student taking the Mech Driver's License exam, did you pass on the first try?"

Ji You had been holding onto this question for a long time, always wanting to know.

At this comment, Mu Jianling suddenly stopped the smirk on her lips, looked at Ji You coldly: "You sure ask a lot of questions, don't you?"

Somehow, Ji You felt a great sense of danger bubbling inside her; she quickly shook her head and immediately put on a smile, saying, "Ah ha, I was just asking casually, didn't actually want to know the answer."

Mu Jianling's gaze became even more menacing.

Ji You quickly stated with a firm tone, loudly complimenting, "A wise and powerful person like Teacher, needless to ask, surely passed on the first attempt."

Mu Jianling: "Hmph—"

Saying this, she lifted her foot as if to kick Ji You's butt.

Ji You had been on guard; how could she really let herself get kicked? She dashed into the examination room in a flash.

Mu Jianling laughed and cursed, "Runs pretty fast."

students lined up in a row, entered their mech cabins, and connected the spiritual connectors, waiting for the horn to sound.

As Ji You showcased her antique mech under everyone's watchful eyes, it left the students speechless:

"Is there actually a brave soul using an antique mech? Can't help but admire that."

"Cough... you guys forgot, she's the Rag Queen."

"Cough... almost forgot that, so—what do you think, will Ji You hit the ground earlier than Shen Changqing?"

"I don't mean to look down on Ji You, but her spiritual power and physical strength are much weaker than Shen Changqing's."

"I guess, if her luck holds up, she might pass the first round?"

Chapter 659: Little Trickster

Examination room, separated by just a wall from the waiting room, stepping into the examination room, Ji You actually felt her heart that was once flitting about, truly settle down.

What's there to fear?

Indifferent to life or death, rebel if you won't accept.

It's just a retest, isn't it?

Cough cough...

Ji You, who initially didn't care much, upon thinking of the hefty retest fee, immediately stopped acting carefree, wore a serious expression, and sternly commanded herself: You are only allowed to retake this once!

At this moment, the system issued a reminder: "Countdown—10, 9, 8, 7..."

"Start—"

Ji You furrowed her brows, but didn't rush to move, nor did she, like other students, take a few probing steps. Instead, she stopped at the starting line, 1 second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds... Everyone saw her standing still, all a bit bewildered:

"Is No. 4444 giving up deliberately?"

"Forfeit?"

"Doesn't seem like her style."

...

After waiting for a few seconds, Ji You loudly said as all 9 students around her fell to the ground in unison, collectively crashing: "System, for the smooth progress of the examination, I request the runway be cleaned..."

After those students fell, the surface was left a bit pitted and uneven, plus there were a few students who couldn't control their mecha, along with their mecha, hadn't even crossed the starting line when they were tripped by their classmates—

Tripping also counted as failure.

The reason Ji You stood still earlier was firstly to avoid being dragged down by lousy teammates. Secondly, she also wanted to monopolize the runway.

However, as soon as Ji You made this request, it still rendered many students speechless; even Mu Jianling raised her head and glanced at her.

Ji You revealed a sly smile, "Teacher... Didn't you tell me to clean up the trash? Cleaning before the exam is the same as cleaning after it. I assure you, I will definitely not mess up the surface during the exam later."

Mu Jianling let out a cold snort and said, "Activate cleaning function."

As soon as this was said, the examination room's cleaning system immediately started working, and in less than 2 seconds, it filled up the pits created by the students' collisions, making it as smooth as ever, not a speck of dirt to be seen.

Ji You immediately smiled obsequiously, "Thank you, Teacher, thank you so much."

Mu Jianling glanced at the time, "If you waste another half second, your examination qualification will be canceled."

Ji You dared not delay any further and immediately activated her mecha.

Whoosh—

Everyone only heard a faint sound, and then, the antique mech driven by Ji You suddenly bent its body, its mechanical arms took out two segments resembling sticks, and with both feet on a skateboard, she glided forward—

Everyone: "..."

"Damn!"

"Can it be done like this?"

"Skiing?"

Antique mecha was basic in functions, and the weapon store was extremely modest, but it did have some basic weapons and tools, such as knives, swords, bows, sticks, shields, and so on. These basic cold weapons did not require energy to use.

Shen Changqing's energy exhaustion led to a tragic outcome, which Ji You witnessed with her own eyes. How could she not take it into account?

There were five stages in total. In Ji You's view, the first one was undoubtedly the easiest and most manageable—no obstacles throughout, just need to steadily drive the mecha to the end of the runway.

Not wanting to end up like Shen Changqing, Ji You only had one method: minimize energy consumption.

How to minimize?

This first task was undoubtedly the easiest to cut down on.

In Ji You's opinion, Shen Changqing spent about one third of the energy in the first round, which was way too extravagant! That really should not have been the case. Hence, in the first round, Ji You only intended to activate part of the mecha's control systems, not touching anything else.

How then could she make the mecha move?

A clever idea struck her, which led to the actions described above.

However, while it might look simple to outsiders, the actual implementation was extremely challenging. First and foremost, it was necessary to maintain the mecha's balance; the coordination of the limbs and torso movements came next. These were the key points, and a slight lapse of attention could lead to a nasty fall—

Ji You was completely focused, her gaze fixed on the monitor, her hands and feet deftly sliding—

At first, her movements were a bit rough, but after a brief period of adjustment and adaptation, she became faster and faster. The entire track seemed like her natural ice rink, as she moved with the agility of a monkey, leaping ever swifter, her speed not inferior to that obtained using energy propulsion. All the students, including Teacher Mu Jianling, perked up, craning their necks to closely follow Ji You's movements—

As the distance to the second round drew nearer, everyone's eyes widened more and more:

Would it work?

Wouldn't it work?

Just as this thought emerged, with a sudden whoosh, everyone saw Ji You forcefully retract her stick, and in that moment, her antique mech performed a beautiful aerial side flip due to the massive inertia—

Leaping out, she directly flipped over the finish line of the first round and entered the second!

Everyone: "!!!"

Mu Jianling curved his lips upwards, wanting to curse out of habit, but in the end, he restrained himself, muttering softly instead: "Sly fox!"

Having entered the second round, Ji You immediately became alert, her nerves tense. As she passed through, she activated all of the antique mech's functions—scanning, defense, weaponry...

Since the first round had not consumed much energy, the antique mech's energy reserve was still at 98%, more than enough for Ji You to sprint into the third round.

Her face stern, she prepared for battle.

This simulated asteroid belt was vast and boundless. Countless small meteors and asteroids zooming by could cause a collision if one was not careful, demanding her utmost attention.

Ji You's Six Spiritual Threads were on full guard in that moment.

Boss: [1,000 meters ahead.]

Second: [Another 500 meters.]

Third: [Attention, about to fly past—]

Fourth: [Coordinates above **, threat approaching within 10 seconds.]

Old Five: [On the left, 700 meters...]

Sixth: [On the right, 100 meters...]

Ji You required the Spiritual Threads to communicate concisely and seriously, not allowing any trickery at this time. Therefore, each Spiritual Thread gave clear and simple cues, and her task was to dodge these traps and then charge forward without stopping!

The second round had many obstacles, but the distance was not too long. With a full-throttle sprint, it was possible to clear it in at most one minute. At such a time, every second counted; reducing the time spent was naturally for the best, so Ji You did not skimp on energy, cranking the thrusters to the max—

All the students in the examination room stared wide-eyed:

"How did Ji You manage it?"

"She avoided every single obstacle each time."

"Incredible!"

"Holy cow, how did she make the antique mech charge like the 'Chasing Sun'?"

"Did we misjudge the antique mech?"

"Will she make it?"

...

At this very moment, all the discussions and doubts from the outside world were far from Ji You's mind. The only thing in her eyes and heart was a single goal: to push hard and break into the third round!

Chapter 660: Knows How to Make Ends Meet

Crossing the obstacle zone took 59 seconds, one second less than Ji You anticipated, but she didn't revel in the momentary victory. Instead, Ji You, with a stern face and focused eyes, paid even closer attention to the path ahead, not daring to be negligent—

The third stage.

The Mecha was about to enter, but the checkpoint of the third stage was set very high, at about 5000 meters, requiring the Mecha to take off into the air to enter. Moreover, unmanned bombers were additionally placed at the checkpoint, and the students must find a way to escape immediately after rushing into the third stage.

Ji You took a moment to glance at her energy reserves: 69%.

98% remained after the first stage, but by the second stage, it had already dropped to 69%. Clearly, the energy reserves of the antique mech were insufficient and it consumed too much, requiring careful and precise energy management.

Inside the examination room, apart from Ji You's own breathing and heartbeat, everything was silent. Outside the waiting room, the noise seemed like a different world to Ji You.

Suddenly, the silent Ji You gently flicked the control key—

Outside:

"Here she comes!"

"She's going to rush through it."

"Will she succeed?"

...

Students craned their necks, anxiously awaiting. Even the always nonchalant Mu Jianling raised his head, his eyes sharp like a falcon, intently watching Ji You inside the examination room.

After pressing the rush key, the slight hesitation and anxiety in Ji You's heart suddenly vanished in that moment; her eyes and heart held only two words: Charge!

Swoosh—

Everyone saw the antique Mecha slightly bend its knees and forcefully push back, performing a beautiful frog jump and soared into the air, instantly rushing into the third stage.

At that moment when Ji You entered, 10 unmanned bombers appeared behind her.

Boom—

Boom—

Boom—

Above, below, in front, behind, left, right—the unmanned bombers launched Particle Cannon bombings from all around the antique mech, leaving no blind spots in a 360-degree assault!

Before Ji You even landed, she utilized the remaining thrust from the jump and made a fierce leap onto a square tile.

The square tile was a temporarily safe place, but it only provided 5 seconds of safety. After that, it would disintegrate on its own, and then the bombing from the unmanned aircraft would follow suit...

The task of the third stage was to jump across 100 square tiles. Each tile had a 1000-meter gap, and with only 5 seconds allowed to pause, it was crucial to remain vigilant and keep jumping...

Moreover, these tiles were not fixed; they swayed left and right, up and down. A slight inattention, failing to land on a tile, meant a failed assessment.

Here, it greatly tested the Mecha Driver's operational skills.

Ji You frowned:

This stage, too, couldn't save energy, but after careful consideration, there was still a way. With this thought and principle in mind, Ji You thought it through; after each jump, it was possible to turn off some of the mech's functions to reduce energy consumption. As for how to accurately land on the tile? It could be done with some inertia and wind, but this required an even greater test of Ji You's balance control.

Let's try!

seconds, just as the tile was about to disintegrate, she clenched her teeth and leapt up without hesitation, and at that moment, she turned off 80% of the mech's functions—resulting pleasantly: right in the center of the second tile.

The watching students all gasped:

"I thought she was going to fall!"

"Holy shit! I saw the Mecha pause mid-air and thought it was done for."

"She just turned off more than half of the mech's functions!"

"666!"

"She's totally fearless! Just one millisecond off, and it would have been over for her!"

"I was wrong, number 4444 really is more than meets the eye. How could I have ever thought she was weak?"

...

Amidst the noise and amazement outside, Ji You remained as if deaf to it all, her eyes steady, she energetically started on the third tile.

The fourth tile.

The fifth tile.

...

With every thrilling leap she took, the students' hearts pounded along, eyes wide, mouths open. From enthusiastic discussions at the start, to utter silence now.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Around, not a single person spoke, only the clear beating of students' hearts could be heard.

blocks!

Halfway there!

By this point, Ji You's Mech's energy was still at 50%. The closer she got to victory, the colder Ji You became, without a hint of complacency or pride. She focused her gaze and leapt again!

Swoosh—

Landing!

Swoosh—

Landing!

The students blinked: "Huh?"

After the leap, the Mech no longer paused at all. What did this mean?

It meant Ji You had reactivated all functions of the Mech.

Was she no longer conserving energy?

...

In fact, the students guessed correctly. For the remaining 50 blocks, Ji You decided to complete them in one go! Turning off some of the Mech's functions consumed too much spiritual power and put too much strain on her. Being constantly tense was not beneficial for the upcoming fourth stage, so, she had to start nurturing her spiritual power from now.

After changing her strategy, Ji You's jumps got faster and faster, with the remaining 50 blocks taking barely 2 minutes at a pace of 2 seconds per block.

Next—

Was the fourth stage!

Shooting!

Upon bursting into the fourth stage, there was no need to hop or jump, nor worry about unexpected gunfire from behind. But, the shooting targets, a total of 10, were not stationary; they moved constantly, thus severely testing the Mecha Driver's shooting skills.

To hit at least 8 out of 10 targets was necessary to advance to the final stage.

Upon entering the fourth stage, Ji You stopped, completely motionless.

The 10 targets, within this illusory space, moved ceaselessly at speeds comparable to light, making it nearly impossible to distinguish each one with the naked eye.

Ji You didn't rush to act, instead, she furrowed her brow and focused on her energy box.

Energy reserve: 29%.

The consumption in the third round was too great. At this rate, there wouldn't be enough energy for the return trip.

Looks like, she had to endure tough times.

Ji You lifted her hand, pinched the bridge of her nose, and muttered, "I hate scrimping days!"

Really!

Enough was enough.

After speaking, Ji You controlled the Mech, knelt down simply, laid flat on the ground, set up the gun, and aimed at the moving targets all around.

The students: "..."

"Is she not planning to move?"

"Shooting from this position?"

"Look, she only kept the monitoring and shooting functions of the Mech active, all other energy-consuming features were turned off."

"Cough... Ji You is really good at managing daily life."

"Think about Shen Changqing, that wasteful spender who exhausted all his energy in the second stage. Could Ji You have maintained 29% of her energy till now if she wasn't good at managing?"

"Cough cough..." Shen Changqing, sharp-eared, suddenly choked.