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They had to admit that the Lantern Festival was organized perfectly. There were all kinds of exquisite lanterns and gorgeous performances that attracted everyone's attention.

On such an occasion, there were many couples on the riverbank who began taking pictures. Some even got on their knees, proposing to their significant others. It was extremely lovely.

The position of the wooden building really was at the perfect angle. Fade and the others had the perfect view of the performance. It was a one-of-a-kind experience.

After all the fireworks, everything started to dim and the place gradually quieted down.

"Is the lantern festival coming to an end? So fast?" Just as Fade was wondering, flickering lights slowly approached on the river surface.

The crowd on both sides of the river bank were all excited to see this. One after another, they began to cheer, and the scene resumed bustling with activity once more.

As the lights approached, Fade saw that the shining lights on the river were boats finely decorated with exquisite lanterns.

The boats were ornamented into different shapes and themes, and they were gleaming and eye-catching on the river.

As each lamp boat approached, the crowd on both sides would cheer loudly.

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"What's going on?" Fade found it weird. Clara felt that Fade was having doubts. Pointing at the flags fluttering on the bow of the boat, she exclaimed, "Brother Chen, take a look at those flags!"

Fade fixed his eyes on the bow of each boat and noticed there was a flag on each of them. There were names printed on the flags such as "The Huang family of Zobery District", "The Cheston Group of Zobery District" and "The Chamber of Commerce of Zobery District".

"These... these lamp boats aren't officialized by the organizer?"

Clara nodded and explained, "The boats are not officialized by the organizer, but they are arranged separately by various well-known organizations in the Zobery District."

"As there are many organizations taking part in this Lantern Festival and there are limited slots for the boats, only powerful organizations could get their boats on the Wavey River."

"From a certain point of view, these boats can be regarded as a platform for them to advertise how powerful their organization is, and some might see it as a competition."

After hearing Clara's explanation, Fade nodded his head.

It turned out that the Lantern Festival was not just all fun and games. It was also a platform for them to compete for how powerful their organization is.

Upon thinking of this, Fade could not help glancing at Taufeeq and Cadmus. He asked Clara, "Did the Moo and Chai families also prepare lamp boats?"

Clara nodded and answered in a low voice, "My dad has made a lot of preparations for this festival. The same goes for the Chai

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family."

As soon she finished talking, a burst of enthusiastic cheers suddenly sounded from the field, instantly attracting all the eyes on the scene.

Fade looked up and saw two huge lantern boats gradually approaching them.

All the previous boats were fabulous and breathtaking, but compared to these two, they seemed like child's play.

First was the size. The two boats were thirty meters in length, the height and width were ten meters each. It was so tall that it was nearly the same height as the buildings on the riverbank.

In terms of the decoration, these two ships were obviously better adorned than all of the previous boats. All kinds of expensive materials and exquisite patterns were appropriately accessorized on the ship. Together with the blinding lights, the whole ship looked as if it was a huge moving palace, which was stunning.

Just by the decoration itself, it could be seen that they had spent tons of effort on these boats.

One of the boats was decorated like a dragon that was about to soar into the sky. Its grandness was extraordinary and astounding.

The other boat was embellished into a huge mountain and it gave out an oppressive feeling as if it could overcome everything.

"These two boats should belong to the Moo and Chai families!" Fade had this assumption in his mind and as he glanced at the flags on the bow, his assumption was correct.

The dragon-shaped boat belonged to the Moo family, and the mountain-shaped boat belonged to the Chai family.

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With the appearance of the two boats, the atmosphere at the scene was getting more and more high-spirited and energetic.

All the ordinary people were discussing how gorgeous the boats were, while some of them were analyzing the situation.

"The Chai family and the Moo family are indeed among the top families in the Zobery District. It could be seen how impressive they are by the decoration of their boats. It's marvelous."

"It's true that they are among the top families, but now it's hard to say who is the first and who is the second."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand? A few days ago, Zelson Chai, the leader of the Chai family and Horgan Chai, the young master of the Chai family were found dead. The Chai family has suffered a great deal because of that. The Moo family took this opportunity to overtake the Chai family."

"Look at the Moo family's lantern ship. That soaring dragon clearly indicates Taufeeq's ambitions!"

"If that's the case, the giant mountain on the Chai family's boat also shows their determination to suppress everything. It seems that the two families are going to have a head-on battle with each other."

"That's for sure. The two families have always competed with each other during the Lantern Festival but this year it is way more intense. Looks like it's going to be interesting."

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The clamoring could be heard by everyone on the third floor.

Everyone was well aware of these things, but no one had pointed it out. Instead, they all pretended just to not hear it and retained

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their smiles to maintain the harmonious atmosphere.

However, when the two boats drove to the two sides of the central island, their speed gradually slowed down and finally stopped in front of the two sides of the central island. The expressions of everyone on the third floor altered.

Taufeeq and Cadmus stared at each other. Their gazes were slightly stern, then they withdrew their stares and put on a straight face.

Among the big shots of Zobery District, an old man with white hair walked forward. After glancing at the two sides, he announced loudly, "It's almost time. The competition for the Lantern Festival can now begin."

Hearing his words, Taufeeq and Cadmus almost nodded simultaneously. They waved their hands and said, "Begin now."

Along with their words, Fade saw three silhouettes appear on each of the two lamp boats. They were all finely dressed, their muscles were bulging and they exuded positive energy from their bodies. One could tell at a glance that they were skillful martial artists.

"Is this a Martial Arts Contest?" Fade looked at Clara, slightly surprised.

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Clara nodded and answered, "Our Moo family and the Chai family will be competing in all aspects. During the Lantern Festival, we mainly compete in literature and martial arts. Now, we are going to have a Martial Arts Contest, and each family would have three representatives."

"Once all of the three representatives have lost the battle, the opponent is considered victorious. And thus, the loser will have a price to pay."

Upon hearing this, Fade understood what was going on. The two families would be carrying out their fights in public.

"Is Mr. Moo confident in winning?" Fade looked at Taufeeq then asked Clara.

Clara smirked and answered, "In terms of literature, our Moo family might not be on par with the Chai family, but in terms of martial arts, we are very confident. In the past ten years, our Moo family has always been victorious in terms of martial arts."

Hearing that, Fade couldn't help but nod and understand. Although the Chai family was better than the Moo family in the political and business industry, the Moo family had been a martial arts family for ages. Taufeeq prioritized martial arts over everything else and thus it was expected for the Moo family to win against the Chai family in this aspect.

Just as Fade was just asking, the martial artists on the two sides of the boat greeted each other, and the competition immediately commenced.

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The first to appear was a member of the Moo family. He was a burly warrior in his thirties. He had bulging muscles and he seemed skillful. He sprung his legs and immediately was projected ten meters into the air, landing on the Chai family boat. The impact was so huge that it shook the boat.

Seeing what had just happened, there was an outburst in the crowd.

After all, the Moo family had taken the initiative to jump over to the opponent's boat. This showed how confident they were.

"The battle is about to begin. The exciting part is just about to start."

"Quickly get the right angle and start filming."

"Who do you think will win this time?"

"It's definitely the Moo family! They have been winning martial arts battles for the past decade."

"That's right. The Moo family has always had the upper hand in martial arts whereas the Chai family has always had the advantage in terms of literature. It has always been this way for the past decade."

"However, this year the tides might turn!"

"What do you mean?"

"With what has recently been happening to the Chai family, the Moo family seems to be advancing rapidly and they might even come out triumphant in terms of literature."

"That is possible. However, there is such a huge gap between them in terms of literature. I don't think the Moo family can overtake them so easily!"

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"It's not easy but I've heard that the Moo family had invited some big shots over to support them, so they might stand a chance in surpassing the Chai family."

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In the midst of the discussion, the burly man, Augustus, who was on the boat of the Chai family, had a confident smirk on his face as he said, "Which one of you is going to be the first to fight!"

The three martial artists of the Chai family looked at each other, and they seemed serious. Finally, a man in his forties stepped out and said, "I'll fight you."

"You! You seem to have improved by leaps and bounds and you have finally reached the peak of the Black Level, but you are still no match for me," Augustus said confidently.

Upon hearing his words, the middle-aged man from the Chai family instantly put on a stern face. Augustus could tell how powerful he was with just a glance, this showed how skillful he was.

The middle-aged man gnashed his teeth. With a shout, he sprung up and rushed out.

Seeing this, Augustus shook his head. He clenched his fist and charged forward. Immediately, the battle broke out and the two sides were engaged in a battle.

The jabbing sounds and the constant sound of both side's vital energy clashing with each other's could be heard. Under the illumination of the magnificent lights of the lamp boats, the battle between the two became intense and exciting, and it caused another uproar in the crowd.

After five minutes, Augustus shook his head and he smirked. "I've had enough of this. It's time I end this."

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Seeing that the opponent was just as puzzled, Augustus took a step forward and threw a powerful jab at him.

With a loud thud, his opponent was directly thrown into the air and his body flew straight out like a cannonball. He crashed into the railing of the boat and he was thrown overboard. He fell into the river with a splash, causing a surprised uproar from the crowd.

Although the Chai family members immediately went into the water to save him, and he was not in a life-threatening situation, but such an event was really shocking and all sorts of chatter started buzzing.

"Sure enough, the Chai family was defeated again. It was as expected!"

"I have already expected this to happen, but I didn't expect the Chai family to be this weak. Is there no one left in the Chai family that is capable?"

"After all, Zelson and Horgan are now dead. So it is not unusual for the Chai family to be defeated."

"Now it's mainly about how many of the Moo family members will be defeated!"

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The discussions were not pleasant. When the clamoring reached the top of the wooden building, Taufeeq and the Moo family had smirks on their faces and it was obvious that they were delighted.

On the other end, Cadmus and Hollad's expressions were the same as always. It seemed that they were untouched by the defeat.

Meanwhile, the competition continued on the Chai family's boat.

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Augustus continued the fight. This time, the Chai family sent out a tiny-sized woman who was very quick on her feet and used her speed to her advantage. From time to time, she would stealthily attack Augustus, leaving bruises on his body.

A moment later, Augustus was covered in blood and he didn't seem fine.

Just when the crowd thought that the Chai family might stand a chance, Augustus wiped the blood off the corner of his mouth and stared at the agile lady. He had a grin on his face as he uttered, "Have you played around enough? Now, it's my turn to be serious."

"You..." Upon hearing this, the woman was taken aback. She was slightly dumbfounded.

After a brief moment of being frozen on the spot, she immediately came back to her senses and continued to dodge his attacks. However, Augustus saw an opening and he immediately threw out a powerful punch. The majestic aura of his positive energy locked onto her and she had nowhere else to escape.

In the end, following her alarmed gaze, Augustus threw a mighty punch towards her abdomen and the force propelled her into the air. With a loud crash, the deck was smashed and she fell into the cabin of the boat, causing a riotous noise.

"I've won again!" Augustus smirked, with a proud look on his face. ³

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The crowd fell into complete silence for a moment before bursting into commotion again.

"He won again. The Moo family is too powerful!"

"I knew that the Chai family would lose, but I didn't expect the Chai family to lose so badly!"

"Exactly. It's so shameful to lose twice consecutively!"

"That's not a big deal. They might even get a three-lose streak. That would be even more embarrassing."

"It seems that this time, the Chai family can only regain their dignity in the field of literature."

"However, literature has always outweighed martial arts. The Chai family might still have a chance to win!"

"It's true that literature is more important but they should not be losing so badly in martial arts. That is just too shameful!"

"What's more, the Moo family has invited an honored guest. They may not lose in the literature battle."

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The discussion was still on. Taufeeq and others in the wooden building smiled even more brightly. On the other end, Cadmus' indifferent face finally changed slightly. He waved his hand, nodded to the butler, and ordered, "Ask him to go and fight!"

Following Cadmus' orders, the remaining martial artist on the Chai family's ship stepped down and a tall figure headed up the

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boat.

The man wore a black hood and his face couldn't be seen clearly.

But judging from the way his hands were in his pocket and from his swaying walking posture, it could be seen that he didn't take Augustus seriously and even seemed relaxed.

Seeing this, the crowd was dumbfounded once again and everyone started talking about it.

"Did the Chai family find a replacement? Can they do that?"

"You're a foreigner right? It is normal for them to find a replacement at the last minute. They only have one chance to replace them, this has been in the rules all along. Thus, it is very normal for the Chai family to do this."

"Who did the Chai family get? We can't see his face. Is he an expert?"

"He should be! Otherwise, they wouldn't have gotten him at such a critical moment!"

"So, it seems that there is still hope for the Chai Family to turn the tables?"

"What are you thinking! Turn the tables? How is that possible? If the Chai family wants to turn the tables, they have to win three rounds consecutively, and the Moo family is not an easy opponent. I think this replacement was just to not let them lose so terribly."

"I think so too. After all, the Chai family has always been at a disadvantage in terms of martial arts, and everyone is well aware of this."

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In the midst of the discussion, Augustus stared at the hooded man, Royce, who was on the opposite side and said in a low voice, "Take off your hood. I won't compete with those who hide their faces."

Royce on the opposite side chuckled and said with a mocking laugh, "You are not qualified to make me take off my hood!"

"You..." Augustus was furious in an instant. He stepped forward and launched an attack. "Well then, I'll knock you down, and I'll personally take your hood off."

This time, Augustus seemed to be really enraged. He stepped forward to attack fiercely, making the boat shake.

"Boom!" "Boom!"

Augustus' fist struck out violently.

Facing the powerful punch, Royce did not dodge at all. Instead, he sneered and directly reached out his hand to stop the jab.

"You're courting death for trying to fight with me!" Augustus bellowed.

Then, the fists of both parties collided with each other's. Then, something surprising happened.

After their fists collided, Royce stretched out his palm to grab Augustus' fist and then threw a powerful jab at Augustus.

Royce actually swung Augustus in the air like a stick, whirled him around, and finally threw him out like a cannonball. Augustus landed on the Moo family's boat, smashing all the decorations on it.

Immediately after, Royce tapped on his foot lightly, sprung up in the air, and landed on the Moo family's boat, stepping on Augustus while uttering, "You have lost."

Although Augustus was unwilling to acknowledge that and he struggled for a moment, he couldn't seem to be able to break free.

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Finally, he had to bow his head sadly and said, "I've lost."

Royce immediately kicked Augustus away and glared at the remaining two Moo family fighters and sneered, "Now, it's your turn."

Such a scene was really beyond everyone's expectations. They may have thought that the replacement might be able to turn the tables, but they didn't expect that he would be able to knock out Augustus with just one punch.

Augustus Moo was a peak Black Level martial artist and he was considered a Moo family fighter to be feared in the Zobery District. Since Royce could defeat Augustus with such ease, he might have reached Earth Level of martial arts.

This was beyond everyone's expectations. All of a sudden, a heated discussion broke out on the spot.

On the top floor of the wooden building, Cadmus who was initially calm and composed, now had a smirk on his face as he glanced at Taufeeq then withdrew his gaze.

Taufeeq, who had a confident smile on his face all this while, saw such a situation and his face turned slightly grave.

He paused for a moment and instructed the butler next to him, "Ask Laxton to be the next one to fight him. He must win this. This is an order, do you understand!"

The butler nodded and turned to leave.

When the people around heard these words, their expressions changed slightly, and they had different thoughts going on in their heads.

Everyone that was familiar with the Moo family knew that Laxton Moo was considered Taufeeq's right-hand man. He had already reached Earth Level and he was the only person in the entire family besides Taufeeq to reach Earth Level of martial arts.

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Initially, under normal circumstances, Laxton would be arranged to fight in the third fight.

But now, the replacement seemed to also be an Earth Level martial artist, so Taufeeq had no other choice but to disrupt the plan by arranging Laxton in fighting him.

Although he was a little worried, Taufeeq was still confident in Laxton.

Although Laxton was only at the early-stage of the Earth Level, he had already reached this stage for five years. For the past five years, he had constantly improved and enhanced his abilities and was now not far away from being a middle-stage Earth Level Martial Artist.

He might even be able to win against some of the middle-staged Earth Level martial artists.

Taufeeq's orders were conveyed to the Moo family's ship. Laxton stepped out and met the hooded man. He uttered coldly, "I'll be the next one to fight you."

As Laxton appeared, the audience on the spot became enthusiastic. The atmosphere instantly soared.

"Laxton has appeared. The Moo family seems a little anxious."

"I don't think so. It's just that Taufeeq wants to be on the safe side!"

"With Laxton here, this means that it would be a battle between two Earth Level martial artists."

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In the midst of the heated debate, Laxton seemed serious with his positive energy surging out. He was full of confidence.

When Royce on the opposite side saw this, the corners of his mouth broke into a sneer, and he mocked, "Are you so confident?"

Laxton stared at Royce and said in a low voice, "In a moment, you will know whether I am confident."

"Is that so?" There was a trace of doubt in Royce's tone. Instead, he persuaded Laxton, "I can tell that you have put in a lot of effort in practicing and improving your skills so that you can reach such level, and I don't wish to make you a disabled person. If you forfeit now, you might still have a chance."

As soon as the words came out, the crowd burst into an uproar, and there was a loud clamor coming from the crowd.

"That substitute from the Chai family is being too arrogant! It's a joke for Laxton to forfeit!"

"He can be arrogant because he is capable."

"But Laxton is an Earth Level martial artist. He is not someone to trifle with."

"But the man from the Chai family is also an Earth Level martial artist! It's hard to say who might be victorious!"

"You're all mistaken. The man from the Chai family is just playing a psychological trick. The reason he said that is to pressure Laxton. And if Laxton really is terrified of him and forfeits the battle, then it would be a win for that man. But if Laxton is determined to continue the fight, then the man would also not lose anything."

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Hearing this, it finally dawned onto all of them, and they sighed with realization. There were many details to ponder on in an Earth Level battle.

Now, the fight has not even started yet but the battle has already begun. This was really unexpected to all the ordinary people and they were all surprised. Meanwhile, this aroused everyone's interest as they were even keen to know who would be victorious in this fight.

However, just as everyone was looking forward to the fight.

Royce smirked and instantly laughed out loud, "You guys really think too much. However, I'm a very straightforward person."

"My idea is very simple, and my words are very straightforward. What I said was exactly what I meant. If Laxton doesn't want to admit defeat now, then he wouldn't stand a chance against me."

Hearing Royce's words, all the people present were taken aback at once, and then more controversy broke out.

"Oh my God, this guy is really bold!"

"So, it's not some psychological trick. I'm so embarrassed to have said that just now."

"If it's not a psychological trick, then he is just too arrogant!"

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There was an eruption of arguments. Royce grinned and uttered indifferently, "Arrogant? Hmph, I'll show you what arrogance truly is."

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As soon as he finished talking, Royce jumped, leaving a silhouette behind, and he charged at Laxton in an instant.

Laxton snorted coldly, then he also moved and met his attack.

Their movements were incredibly fast. In the blink of an eye, they had exchanged more than ten blows. The sound of collisions and the sound of the positive energy exploding mixed together, causing it to be unbearable to the ears. However, the audience still couldn't keep up with their battle.

"Whoosh!"

In the end, after a fierce battle, the two swiftly flashing figures finally separated and landed on the deck. Their faces were austere as they stared at each other. It was as though the intense battle earlier did not even exist.

However, some skillful martial artists still found something abnormal at this moment.

The two who seemed calm were somewhat in different situations.

Royce's body was slightly relaxed, and he stood in the same place as before, as if he had not just fought in a battle. Laxton on the other hand still seemed to have put on a straight face, but his entire body was stiff.

With further inspection, it could be seen that every muscle in his body was rigid and contracted. Moreover, his arms were trembling.

When they noticed this, the Moo family members' faces sank and they seemed worried. They looked at Taufeeq and said, "Master Taufeeq, Laxton, he..."

Before they could finish, Taufeeq glanced at them and said in a low voice, "I know! But I believe in Laxton!"

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When they heard these words, the Moo family members couldn't help but tremble all over as they shut their mouths and backed away. If even they could notice Laxton's abnormal behavior, Taufeeq who was more skillful than them definitely could tell the difference.

However, now that things had come to this, Taufeeq had no other choice. The only thing he could do now was to put his trust in Laxton. He believed in him, or perhaps he was looking forward to him defeating the man and help the Moo family win the fight.

Although Taufeeq said it confidently, his fingers were gripping the railing tightly and due to the impact, his knuckles were bruised.

"Could it be that Master Taufeeq is not confident in Laxton?" This thought emerged in the minds of the Moo family members, and they couldn't help but reveal worried expressions on their faces.

Meanwhile, on the deck of the Moo family's ship, Royce spoke again, "You really are quite skillful and you have the potential. It's really a pity if I make you a disabled man."

"But, I've already given you the chance to forfeit and you didn't back down, so don't blame me for what is going to happen next. Accept your tragic future!"

Hearing this, Laxton looked serious. He gritted his teeth and said, "Don't be arrogant. You haven't won yet!"

The moment the words sounded, the two of them sprung up and collided in the air.

However, this collision was not the same as before, and it could be seen who was superior in terms of fighting abilities.

Within three moves, a desperate cry suddenly rang out among the two fighters who were fighting fiercely in mid-air. Then, a figure fell from the sky and slammed heavily onto the deck of the Moo family's ship, directly smashing a big hole in the deck as

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his body landed on the cabin.

At this moment, everyone looked carefully at the man suspended in the air and it could be seen that it was Royce.

Suddenly, the atmosphere fell into silence. Everyone was taken aback for almost a moment before they came to their senses and then burst into an uproar.

"Is, is this really happening? Laxton lost, and he lost so badly!"

"Who on earth is this man? How could he be so powerful? From where did the Chai family invite him?"

"This time, the Moo family is in trouble. The strongest fighter, Laxton has been knocked out within seconds. Now there is only one person left. And he is definitely no match for him!"

"That is to say, the last member of the Chai Family is really going to defeat all three of them. He is really going to turn the tides, and the Chai family is going to be victorious in this martial arts competition."

"The Chai Family is actually better than the Moo family in fighting. This is the first time in more than a decade!"

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Amidst all the commotion, on the Chai family's side, Cadmus had a proud smirk on his face as he glanced at Taufeeq.

Taufeeq's expression was gloomy, his brows furrowed, and he seemed a little tense.

He had never expected this to happen. After Laxton was defeated, the Moo family had no one else to fight against Royce, although he still had a chance to find another substitute to replace the last contestant.

However, the only one stronger than Laxton in the entire Moo family was Taufeeq himself.

However, if Taufeeq were to participate in the tournament himself then it would greatly affect their Moo family's reputation. Unless he was forced to the corner, he would never have thought of fighting by himself.

However, seeing what was going on, the Moo family was really going to lose this fight if he doesn't participate in the competition himself.

Taufeeq's expression turned grave as he tried to figure out the best course of action.

Without a doubt, the best course of action now was to find someone else stronger to replace the third contestant of the Moo family in facing Royce.

If that really were to happen, then Taufeeq has to participate in the fight, but this was going to affect the Moo family's reputation before the fight itself even began.

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The worst option was to admit defeat, meaning the Moo family would lose to the Chai family in terms of their strongest aspect, martial arts, and this was definitely not something Taufeeq wanted to see.

While Taufeeq was still hesitating, Cadmus, who was on the other side, took the initiative to say, "Master Taufeeq, this match is over. Have you decided who would be the third contestant of the Moo family?"

"I..." Taufeeq was at a loss for words for a moment.

Cadmus said mockingly, "If there's no one else in the Moo family, then just admit defeat. It's better to avoid having another injured person."

Upon hearing this, Taufeeq's face darkened and his body erupted with rage.

However, his anger then turned into helplessness. He had no idea what to do right now.

The best choice was to find someone else more skillful as a replacement. His gaze fell on Fade and he couldn't take his eyes off him.

He didn't doubt Fade's strength at all. He was a Heaven Level martial artist and he had once defeated the Chiang family masters. It would not be a problem for him to defeat Royce.

But now, the biggest problem was how he could get Fade to agree to fight on behalf of the Moo family.

He quickly thought of various ways, such as begging, offering him benefits and temptations, and he might even start getting emotional by saying that he has a close relationship with his daughter.

However, Taufeeq quickly dispelled all those ideas in his mind. He knew that all his tricks were meaningless to Fade.

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In the end, he still chose the most direct and frank method. He stared at Fade and requested, "Mr. Chen, our Moo family is in a tight situation. I would like to ask you to represent our Moo family in the fight."

After that, Taufeeq bowed to Fade with a sincere pleading expression on his face.

Hearing this, Fade was silent for a moment and he didn't speak. He vaguely squinted his eyes and stared at Taufeeq for a few seconds.

If it was just a fight, Fade had no problem helping them.

But now, this battle was between the Moo and the Chai families. This was a crucial moment in Long City, even in the entire Zobery District, and Fade wasn't interested to be part of this.

Moreover, Fade was also somewhat dissatisfied with Taufeeq's indifferent manner regarding how he handled Clara and Keith's engagement.

After a brief hesitation, Fade decided that he wanted none of this. After all, he wanted to take a break with Moore and Joey by visiting the Lantern Festival and enjoy themselves. He did not intend to join a fight.

Once he had made up his mind, Fade was about to open his mouth to speak.

Taufeeq seemed to have sensed Fade's intention in rejecting his request. Without waiting for Fade to speak, he once again pleaded, "Mr. Chen, please help our Moo family once more for the sake of Clara and I. The Moo family will definitely be very grateful to you."

A disapproving expression appeared on Keith's face when he saw this. He said disdainfully in a low voice, "Mr. Moo, you don't have to do this! If others saw the way you beg such a young lad, you would definitely be a laughing stock."

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Clara defended, "Keith, don't talk nonsense if you don't know anything. Brother Chen is really skillful. He is a real master of martial arts. Do you think my father would be a laughing stock if he personally requested Brother Chen to fight on behalf of us?"

"A real master of martial arts? Him? I don't believe it." Keith had an unbelieving look on his face.

Upon hearing this, Clara was both furious and dissatisfied. She wanted to speak up for Fade.

But at this moment, there was a sudden burst of exclamation at the scene, next up an outburst of discussion followed. It was as if a drop of water had dripped into a pot of boiling hot oil, suddenly bursting outwards violently.

The conversation on the Moo family's side was immediately interrupted. Everyone turned to look at the boats.

Immediately, they realized the reason for everyone's exclamation. The hooded man had his hood blown off by the night breeze. It slipped down, revealing his face.

He seemed like a young man. His cheeks were thin, his jaw was angular, and there was an evil grin on the corners of his mouth, which gave him an inexplicable sense of self-confidence.

"It's him! It's actually him!" Taufeeq couldn't help but be astounded when he saw the man. His expression instantly turned unpleasant, and his face seemed more gloomy compared to when Laxton was defeated. "No wonder Laxton was defeated. I didn't expect it to be him!"

"How much did the Chai family pay to invite this master to help them?"

"No wonder. Now I understand. Everything is clear now."

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The surrounding commotion caused Fade's face to be filled with bewilderment. He looked at Clara in confusion.

Clara's beautiful face also looked a little uncomfortable at this moment. She explained to Fade in a low voice, "Brother Chen, the man in the hood is Royce Ma."

"Royce Ma? Is he famous?" Fade frowned as if he had never heard of him.

Before Clara could explain, Keith said mockingly, "You're still putting on an act. Are you even a martial artist? You don't even know Royce Ma!"

"Let me explain. Royce Ma is from Paradox Mountain and he is the son of the semi-master, Windley Ma. He is also the actual apprentice of his very own biological father. Now, you know!"

"Windley Ma?" Fade still felt a little estranged.

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Clara explained to him, "Brother Chen, someone who has reached the Heaven Level in the martial arts realm would be called a martial arts master. You know that, right? Since Master Windley of the Paradox Mountain has trained for more than a decade in the Earth Level, his skills would be so outstanding that he's merely a step away from being in the Heaven Level."

"There was even a warrior who claimed that Master Windley's strength was beyond the Heaven Level's juniors. However, Master Windley has yet to cultivate and break through the Heaven Level. Hence, people call Master Windley a semi-master to acknowledge his potential and status in the martial arts realm."

"Royce is Master Windley's son. He was famous since young for being talented in martial arts. He was even stronger than his father. By his thirties, he was already at the middle stage of Earth Level and he will be trying to complete the Earth Level's last training soon."

"People speculated that Royce's achievements in martial arts should surpass Master Windley's, and he will become a martial arts master in the future."

"The father-son duo, Master Windley and Royce, are well-known and respected martial artists. Many visitors had come from afar to the Paradox Mountain to meet them and requested for their help. However, they rejected every request."

"It was rather unexpected that the Chai family would be able to invite Royce over for a fight. That's why everyone was shocked."

After hearing Clara's explanation, Fade seemed to understand the whole situation. He nodded and exclaimed, "So that was what

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happened!"

At this moment, Taufeeq cast a worried glance at Fade. He said anxiously, "Mr. Chen, I-"

Although he knew what was going on and he knew that the Moo family was on the possible verge of losing in martial arts skills, Fade insisted on his decision. He didn't plan to help them. After all, that was the battle rules and it was up to the Chai family who chose to fight for themselves. He had no say in it.

So, Fade replied Taufeeq, "Mr. Moo, I'm sorry!"

Without further explanation, Taufeeq immediately understood what Fade meant. A look of disappointment filled his face, his mouth twitched as if he wanted to further beg, but he didn't say anything in the end.

He went forward and whispered something to the butler. After a moment, the judges announced after receiving the news. The Moo family forfeited the match and they voluntarily quit.

The conclusion of this battle was that the Chai family who depended on Royce to turn the tables had won the battle.

Taufeeq's decision was also the final result of his careful consideration. His best-case scenario was to persuade Fade to step into the battlefield, but it didn't work out.

Therefore, he had no choice but to give up. He could have tried to put up a fight if the martial artist was anonymous. However, this anonymous man's identity was revealed, and it turned out to be Royce, a well-known martial artist.

This situation worried Taufeeq. Although his skills were towards the advanced stage of the Earth Level, which was higher than Royce, Master Windley's reputation was too great. The martial arts realm in the South also knew Royce's strength. Taufeeq had to consider these facts. If he had to put up the fight embarrassingly and ended up losing, it would then be a tragedy.

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As a result of these facts, Taufeeq made the call to forfeit the match. Only through this method, could he maintain the Moo family's image by not losing the battle.

On the other hand, Taufeeq had his expectations for the civil battle. Even if he lost the martial arts battle, he could regain his reputation from the civil battle. After all, he had put in plenty of effort in inviting his old friend, Salman, to pair up with him. Then, they could defeat the Chai family without a doubt.

Thinking of this, Taufeeq glanced at Salman and said, "Salman, we are depending on you now."

Salman narrowed his eyes slightly and nodded to Taufeeq. "Don't worry, Taufeeq. I won't let you down."

"Thank you, Salman!" Taufeeq thanked Salman gratefully with a smile.

Keith smiled proudly and somewhat raised his head after he had observed the situation aside. He seemed excited and purposely glanced at Fade before saying to Clara, "Clara, didn't you say that there was someone else who was stronger? What happened? Did the person choose to back out after knowing that it was a martial artist like Royce? What a joke!"

"Keith, don't talk nonsense. Brother Chen, he—" Clara stuttered to defend Fade.

However, Fade did not care about him at all. He gripped Clara and said, "Clara, there's no need to waste your breath on someone unnecessary. There's no point in doing this."

"You—" Keith's temper rose and he glared at Fade. His face flustered angrily when he saw how close Fade was to Clara. He had the urge to punch someone at this moment.

Suddenly, a burst of drumrolls blared, and the whole place became lively.

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Someone shouted, "The next round of sending festive lanterns is beginning!"

Before his voice died away, there was a burst of enthusiastic cheers on the scene. The whole place was boiling in action.

The Chai family and the Moo family stood at the wooden building and they exchanged glances. Then, they each beamed a confident look on their faces.

Fade noticed this and felt curious. He asked, "It's just sending a festive lantern. What's with the excitement?"

Clara explained, "Brother Chen, sending a festive lantern isn't as simple as you think. This is actually the remaining of the contest."

"Sending out festive lanterns is part of the contest?" Fade exclaimed in surprise.

Clara explained to Fade in detail, "Brother Chen, it's not about the festive lanterns. It's about the person who is sending the festive lantern."

"In this part, the organizations behind each boat will gather their families and friends. The capable leaders from all walks of life will come to deliver the festive lanterns. In the end, the one with the highest number of festive lanterns shall be determined to have the highest position in power. This also means that his family has a great number of supporters and shall be crowned winner of this civil battle."

After listening to her explanation, Fade came to a realization.

It turned out that the so-called civil battle was not as simple as he thought. Instead, it was a competition of high-ranking officials who were supporting each particular organization. To conclude, it was to compete about who had the best backing behind them.

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No wonder Taufeeq had a great amount of respect for the father-son, Salman and Keith. After all, Salman's profile as the head of the council and an employee of the Industrial and Commercial Bureau would be useful in such a situation like this.

When Fade came to his senses and looked at the Wavey River again, the competition scene was even more hyped up.

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Festive lanterns of various shapes and sizes were sent up to each boat. Along with that, there would be a designated person to read out the sender's name and position at the same time.

At this moment, different voices arose from the Wavey River and created an energetic scene by the river shore.

Among them, the loudest voice was that of the general manager of a company or the director of a department.

Most of the time, these people would definitely be identified as public figures and had the power to affect anyone's future. However, in such a situation, even senior CEOs of certain companies or heads of departments seemed to not have any influence or impact at all.

After a great battle, dazzling lanterns filled each boat and attracted many people's attention.

Indeed, the number of gifters and their identities in each boat drew a heated debate among everyone. Some said that the senior CEO was wealthier, but some argued that the head of the department had a higher social status. For a moment, the scene was bustling.

However, when the two drums sounded, the disputes quieted down. Everyone's eyes all focused on the two huge boats in front of them. It was the Moo family and Chai family, respectively.

Everyone knew that when the drumbeats sounded, the real agenda of the competition had begun, which was the rivalry between

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the Chai family and the Moo family.

Although the battles of discussions were fervent just now, it was still not the highlight of the very event that day. In almost the past few decades, the most important aspect of the civil battle had always been the opposition between the Moo family and the Chai family.

Now that the highlight of this year drew everyone's attention, they started to discuss the battle between the two families.

"The civil battle is coming again. This year, it's still between the Moo family and the Chai family!"

"Then, the result is definite. The Chai family is very likely to win!"

"That's not for sure. Before this, we thought that the Moo family would definitely win the martial arts competition, but it was the Chai family who had defeated all three of them. Now, in the civil battle, the Moo family might give us a surprise."

"I think it's quite impossible. A martial arts battle is all about competing against each other with martial arts. As long as you have enough connections or money, it's not hard to invite an expert to support you."

"However, the civil battle is about status and power. This matter can't be solved with money in a short period of time. I'm afraid it would be difficult for the Moo family to be as unexpected as the Chai family."

"If what you said is true, then the Chai family would definitely win. Coupled with the martial arts victory, the Chai family would be the overall champion for the lantern festival this year."

"This is my predicted result. Although the martial arts and lantern competition are equal, the lantern competition is still more important than the martial arts fight. After all, it is much more difficult to find a person to support you than it is to find a martial artist."

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"Precisely because of this, the Moo family had always won fights in the past decades, and the Chai family won civil battles. However, the first family that everyone has always acknowledged is the Chai family, not the Moo family."

"If that's the case, then the Chai family's position as the number one family will definitely be secured this time."

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In the midst of the discussion, Taufeeq and Cadmus exchanged glances at each other and waved their hands almost at the same time to announce the commencement of the civil battle.

Exquisitely decorated lanterns began to be sent to the lamp boats of the two families.

"Mr. Merleon Li, president of the Red Light Mall Group. Congratulations to the Moo family for its long history. Here is a festive lantern."

"Mr. Xu, Laddox Xu, the chairman of the Mines Group of Zobery District, wishing for the Chai family's continuous progress and advancement. I hereby present a Huang Mount Pine Lantern."

"Mr. Xie, or Mark Xie from the Zobery Cultural Committee. Here's a cultural style lantern, hoping for the Moo Family to always to continue to develop and promote the ethnic traditions of martial arts."

"Mr. Olive, team leader of the Zobery Merchant Team. Congratulations to the Chai family for continuing to be well-established and wealthy. Here's a festive lantern that symbolizes great wealth."

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As the lanterns went onto the boat, the announcements of the two families were heard one after another.

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There were all kinds of presidents, bosses, heads of departments and heads of councils. Each of them were announced as the gasps of amusement arose from the crowd.

"Even Mr. Li is here. No wonder the Moo family is so powerful!"

"As far as I'm concerned, Mr. Xu that is representing the Chai family is the best. His assets are worth several billion yuan."

"Those who are operating businesses are more or less the same. To me, the mighty ones are still those officials. One word from them could have a great impact on your business, and that is true power."

"Really? Why do I only hear titles such as directors and team leaders? They don't sound excellent!"

"What do you know? These positions such as directors, section chiefs and group chiefs don't sound very impressive, but as the saying goes, a County Magistrate should be controlled on the spot. They can trap you by your neck, and then you will know how powerful they are."

"What's more, these people don't sound like officials, so you can't tell who's behind them."

"What do you mean? Do these directors and team leaders represent the secretaries, directors and other people behind them?"

"Is it really possible? You know that the current situation is very tight. How could the real officials, such as the secretary and the director, personally come to such events? Isn't that self-evident? So, they may send some of their men, including the minor section chief and director, to deliver the festive lantern, but it represents their own opinions."

"So that's how it is. I understand now."

"It's none of your business. I think the Moo's and the Chai's are more enthusiastic about the directors and the group leaders than

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the boss who is worth tens of billions of yuan just now."

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As the discussion continued, the lanterns were continuously sent over. Over 100 lanterns had been placed on the lamp boats of the two families, forming a dense line that gleamed in everyone's eyes. At the same time, it was a scene like no other.

After all, every lantern represented a big shot.

At this time, the number of lanterns sent to the two families obviously slowed down, and the position and social status of the people who delivered the lanterns later were also getting higher and higher.

The discussion among the crowd also became more nervous and excited.

"According to the previous standards, it seems that the Chai family has the upper hand!"

"Almost all the lanterns from the Chai family are from the Development Bureau, the Finance Bureau, the Personnel Bureau, and other departments with real power. While some from the Moo family are of small departments such as the Public Council, logistics officers, and the Equipment Administration. Their influence is terrible!"

"Isn't it a matter-of-fact result? What's there to be surprised about? The Chai family's advantage in the art of literature has lasted for more than ten years."

"That is to say, there is a high chance that the Moo family will lose both the civil battle and the martial arts battle at the same time."

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Chapter 1498

Anyone passing by could decipher the situation at a glance. Naturally, the Chai family and the Moo family understood everything clearly too.

The conundrum put Taufeeq in an awkward position, so he wasn't looking the best. However, when he turned his head to look at Salman, confidence swelled in his chest. A smile played out on his face.

Meanwhile, Cadmus on the other hand, retained a cheerful expression. Every so often, he would glance at Taufeeq with undisguised pride.

At present, the head of Zobery District's Merchant Bureau had just offered the Moo family a lantern, which attracted raucous cheering from the audience. After all, the Merchant Bureau was not any ordinary bureau. The aforementioned head was a popular figure among the directors. The lantern that he presented to the Moo family represented the directors' collective goodwill and support for the Moo family.

With that, the Moo family might just end up surprising everyone in the present year's altercation.

Cadmus seemed slightly taken aback at the lantern that was sent by the directors to the Moo family. The sparkle in his eyes flickered. However, he smiled again and clapped his hands together, saying, "Bring in Mr. Huang's lantern!"

The audience watched as a beautiful lantern depicting a flying white crane was brought in. The lantern itself was a thing of beauty, but what really caught everyone's attention was the name of the person who delivered it.

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The person's name was announced. It was a simple introduction with no fancy title attached to it. "Mr. Jaega Huang of Southzobe University!"

However, everyone there was shocked. Their surprised looks were replaced with loud chattering as they began to avidly discuss the matter among themselves.

"I can't believe it! Mr. Jaega Huang?! It can't be!"

"I didn't expect Mr. Huang to be here. The Chai family lives up to their reputation. They're amazing."

"Is this Jaega Huang person very powerful? Why haven't I heard of him?"

"Jaega Huang is the principal of Southzobe University's School of Economics. I can't believe you haven't heard of him."

"Well, I know that. But that being said, although Southzobe University is a famous and reputable university, and it's amazing that Jaega is a principal there, he's just an academician. He isn't in the same playing field as the directors that support the Moo family!"

"You're clueless! Although Mr. Huang is only an educator, he will soon be transferred to the Ministry of Commerce of Zobery District for an important role."

"What? He'll be working at the Ministry of Commerce? What a feat!"

"Hah, that isn't that big of a deal. Wait till you hear this! Mr. Huang is Pascha Xu's student!"

"Pascha Xu? Wasn't he- Wasn't he the deputy director who retired from the Ministry of Commerce? So, Mr. Huang is Pascha's student. This is too-"

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"Now you know who he is! How amazing is it that the Chai family got Mr. Huang to deliver a lantern!"

"That's incredible. The Chai family is unparalleled. They will definitely come out on top this time."

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As Jaega's identity became known to all, the chattering in the crowd became livelier. The Chai family members were smiling from ear to ear. It seemed that the Chai family would be claiming their victory soon, without a doubt!

Cadmus beamed at Taufeeq smugly. His eyes were filled with the arrogance of certain victory.

Taufeeq's face fell. He gazed at Jaega's lantern for a while and felt fear settle into his heart. But then he saw Salman next to him, and his smile returned. Taufeeq addressed Salman, "Salman, now it's your turn."

Taufeeq didn't just arrange for Salman's lantern to be delivered. He went the extra mile so that Salman would be the one to deliver it. Such an extraordinary act would definitely surprise the audience.

At that thought, Taufeeq was filled with excitement. He glanced at Cadmus, a hint of ecstasy flashing in his eyes.

Cadmus was still full of smiles, he seemed extremely pleased with himself.

Salman went down the wooden steps. After a while, a figure appeared, a small lantern in his hand. He walked along a passageway from the shore onto the lighted boat.

The staff members of each family were arranging the lanterns that had been previously delivered. They were placed underneath the boat before being drawn upwards for display.

At the present moment, a figure stepped onto the scene to deliver his lantern there right away. Such a scene naturally caught

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everyone's attention.

At first, no one could see the figure's face clearly. But as the figure approached closer and closer to the boat, his face became gradually illuminated by the lights, and became visible to the crowd.

When the audience from both sides of the strait saw that it was Salman, loud exclamations broke out everywhere. The place was filled with lively chatter again.

"Isn't that Mr. Salman Zheng?"

"The Moo family actually has Mr. Zheng on their side. Is, is this for real?"

"I thought the Chai family would definitely win, but judging from the current state of affairs, it seems like the outcome has been reversed!"

"I never foresaw this happening! It can't be! Taufeeq actually got Mr. Salman to support the Moo Family?"

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Many people were amazed, but there were still some people who did not know Salman, and they could not help but be doubtful.

"Is Salman powerful? Which department is he from? Is he a high-ranking official?"

"How could you live this long and not know who Mr. Salman is? Mr. Salman is the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of Southern District. He's also an executive member of Zobery District's Industrial and Commercial Committee. Now, do you get how powerful he is?"

"Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and an executive member of the committee. He, he is indeed something!"

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"I mean, even if he is reputable, he's still not up to par with Mr. Huang. After all, Mr. Huang will work in the Ministry of Commerce soon, and he's also Mr. Pascha's student. He's leagues above!"

"Leagues above Mr. Salman? You don't know anything!"

"Let me tell you, Mr. Huang is mighty, and he is indeed Pascha's student. But Mr. Zheng is even more powerful because he is Pascha's one and only son-in-law."

"What? Salman is Mr. Pascha's son-in-law? Is, is that true?"

"His only son-in-law. He's closer to him than a student would be!"

"So Mr. Zheng is really superior to Mr. Huang."

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"I didn't expect the Moo family to actually turn the tables."

"This year's Lantern Festival is fascinating! First, the Chai family triumphed in the martial arts competition. Then, the Moo family defeated the Chai family in this civil battle. What a surprise!"

"The two families exchanged blows. Each has one win and one loss. However, going by the competition guidelines, the Moo family won the civil battle to a certain degree. Thus, they're the champions. In the future, the Moo family will likely be the number one clan of Zobery District."

"This is beyond my expectations. Who would've thought that this would happen?"

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Chapter 1499

Heated discussion erupted out on the scene, noise filled the wooden building on the central island. Many of the notable people in attendance were thrown for a loop and began speculating avidly.

Taufeeq's uptight expression relaxed instantly. He smiled, looking towards Cadmus' direction and waved. "Mr. Chai, looks like we will win this year's civil battle."

Cadmus narrowed his eyes at Taufeeq and then shook his head. He snickered in reply, saying, "Mr. Moo, it won't necessarily be your victory this time, right? It's far too early for you to say that for sure!"

"Really?" Taufeeq shrugged it off. He thought that it was nothing more than an egoistic bluff by Cadmus, so he smiled and replied, "In that case, I'll wait for a few more minutes to convey my consolations to the Chai family."

"You consoling us? That's not for sure!" Cadmus scoffed.

Taufeeq shook his head with a broad smile. He did not intend to continue the bickering with Cadmus. After all, the results of the civil battle had been decided. He had managed to get the support of Salman Zheng, a bigshot and most definitely a powerful weapon. The Chai family would definitely lose. Cadmus was just stubborn and denying reality.

However, just as Taufeeq was reveling in his smugness, Clara suddenly tugged on her father's sleeve and pointed at the Moo family's boat. She said anxiously, "Dad, look. Over there, on our boat—"

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"What's wrong?" Taufeeq looked towards the boat in confusion. What he saw caused his heart to skip a beat. A sense of foreboding welled up inside him.

At that moment, Salman was already on the Moo family's boat. As per the original plan, he should have handed the lantern in his hand to the Moo family members on the boat. Then, he would give a few cursory words of congratulations and support to set the Moo family's victory in stone.

Salman had arrived on the boat, lantern in hand. As he faced the Moo family members who were supposed to accept the lantern from him, Salman did not hand it over. Instead, he looked in the direction of the wooden building and bellowed, "Taufeeq, I have a few words for you. Keith will convey it to you. As for the fate of this lantern, let's deal with that after you've heard what I have to say."

As soon as everyone heard that, chattering broke out again, after it had just began to calm down from the shock of Salman's presence.

Taufeeq's face fell in an instant.

At the present moment, a smiling Keith went to Taufeeq with a proud look on his face. He sniggered and said, "Mr. Moo, my father has a few words for me to pass to you."

"Go ahead, Keith!" Taufeeq tried his best to suppress the anxiety in his heart and forced a smile.

Keith replied, "Mr. Moo, according to my father, as long as you agree to what he said before, he will immediately pass the lantern to the Moo family, and then everything will go as planned."

"What?!" Taufeeq glowered when he heard that. He gritted his teeth and exclaimed, "That's impossible!"

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"Mr. Moo, if that is your reply, my father may not pass the lantern to the Moo family," Keith said in a threatening tone.

Taufeeq's expression darkened. He ground his teeth, glaring at Keith and Salman with resentment. Then, he asked, "How could Salman do this?"

Keith smiled and answered, "Mr. Moo, you're going about it all wrong. You and my father are both businessmen. Business is business, and it will be handled as such. If the Moo family joins our Chamber of Commerce, my father will lend his support to you in the lantern festival. Fair exchange of interests is a basic business principle."

"Fair? That condition is a total insult to justice." Taufeeq was furious.

Clara and the other members of the Moo family looked at him, puzzled. Clara asked, "Dad, what does he want?"

Taufeeq told her, "Salman wants the Moo family to join their Chamber of Commerce. For that, he wants me to hand over the Moo family's shares to inaugurate me as a member."

Upon hearing this, the Moo family began rioting.

"That's way too unfair!"

"How can this be considered joining them? The Zheng family obviously wants to annex us!"

"They're heartless, ruthless."

"Salman is a vicious man!"

"Taufeeq, I can't possibly agree to something like this!"

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The people of the Moo family were all filled with rage and dissatisfaction.

Taufeeq remained looking unhappy. He glared at Keith and finally spoke, "Your father is a mastermind. I won't agree to it no matter what."

"Mr. Moo, my father knew that you would refuse. Therefore, he's giving you another option," Keith said.

Taufeeq fell silent for a moment before asking, "What is it?"

Keith glanced at Clara with a greedy look in his eyes, then replied, "The other option is for Clara and I to get married. In that case, my father would also give his lantern to the Moo family."

"You want me to marry you? Never!" When Clara heard that, she immediately rejected him without leaving any room for debate.

Keith's face turned stony upon her rejection. But he broke out into a smile immediately after and said again, "Mr. Moo, this condition is much better than the initial one. Are you really going to reject it? If you do, I'm telling you, there will be no third choice."

"I—" Taufeeq seemed to be tempted.

During that brief moment of hesitation, Taufeeq saw his daughter's tearful look. He trembled, shook his head firmly and said, "I can't give Clara to someone like you! Even if the Moo family falls, I won't push Clara into a den of wolves."

"You —" Keith had not anticipated Taufeeq's resolute rejection. Infuriated, Keith asked icily, "Did you even consider the consequences of refusing the Zheng family?"

"Let's quit all the chatter. No matter what the consequences are, the Moo family will bear it." Taufeeq held his daughter's hand

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and gave his definite answer.

At that, Keith scoffed loudly and then shouted in the direction of the boat, "Dad, they refused."

Salman, who was on the Moo family's boat, narrowed his eyes and let out a long sigh. Then, he threw the lantern in his hand into the air.

At that moment, a hooded, bulky man, Royce, jumped from the Chai family's boat into the air, grabbing the lantern. Then, he landed safely on the Chai family's boat again and placed the lantern among the rest.

Simultaneously, Cadmus clasped his hands together in front of his chest and bellowed, "I, Cadmus of the Chai family, thank you, Mr. Salman Zheng, for your support."

Salman chuckled. "Mr. Chai, you're too polite. The Chai family is the cream of the crop of Zobery district. The Zheng family will do its best to lend our support."

After that, Salman left the Moo family's boat and returned to the wooden building. Together with his son Keith, he stood right among the Chai family members. 9

Chapter 1500

Such a turn of events was beyond what anyone had imagined.

After all, just a few minutes ago, Salman was a distinguished guest of the Moo family. He was supposed to be the trump card to break the Chai family's ten year streak of winning the civil battle.

But now, things had been upended. Salman suddenly turned against the Moo family and chose to join the Chai family, supporting the latter instead.

The Moo family's higher ground vanished in a blink of an eye. The Chai family's chances of winning the civil battle became set in stone.

In addition to Jaega, they now had the support of such a renowned person, Salman. The Chai family's power in the civil battle had completely crushed the Moo family.

There was no longer any suspense in the civil battle. Everyone knew it was the Chai family's victory. Plus, they had scored an unexpected win in the martial arts competition too.

The Chai Family had completely dominated the key events of the lantern festival this year. The Moo family was utterly defeated. They were in an even more miserable position than before, when they had been ranked second for the past decade.

Suddenly, the crowd burst into an uproar. Nearly everyone was enthusiastically discussing the events that had taken place.

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"I can't believe that such a change took place. It had me on the edge of my seat."

"That's right! Who would have thought that such a thing would happen?"

"It's more exciting than any Hollywood blockbuster! The competition is too fierce."

"We were still lamenting just now, saying that the Moo family was about to turn the tables on the Chai family this time. In the end, we didn't foresee that they would not only lose, but irredeemably so at that!"

"Yes, our expectations were betrayed completely. We thought that the Moo family would overpower the Chai family because of Zelson and Horgan's deaths. We didn't see this coming at all."

"The Moo family has suffered a crushing defeat this time. They were totally beaten in both the civil and martial arts competitions."

"After tonight, the ranking of the provincial capital's families will be upheaved from tomorrow onwards! The Moo family might not even retain their place as second in the capital, what more to say that fleeting dream of becoming the first."

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Amidst the gossip, Taufeeq was seen looking disappointed. He was trembling, as if he had trouble accepting the reality of matters.

However, his daughter Clara remained strong as she stood beside him. She held her father's hand and comforted him, "Dad, it doesn't matter. No matter what happens, as long as our family stays together, we will still be none other than the Moo family."

"My dear daughter, don't worry. I'm still kicking." Taufeeq felt soothed upon hearing Clara comforting him. He smiled at her as he

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replied.

Clara nodded with a resolute look in her eyes.

Then, Taufeeq raised his head and waved his hand at the Chai family. He chirped, "Mr. Chai, you have planned far and wide. I have learned my lesson today. The Chai family wins this round. Congratulations, Mr. Chai."

Everyone was taken aback by Taufeeq's abrupt remark. They stared at him for a moment, at a loss for words.

With that, Taufeeq had already turned around and prepared to leave the wooden building, his daughter and the rest of the Moo family in tow.

Fade and the others were the Moo family's guests. Now that the Moo family was departing, they naturally turned around to leave the scene as well.

A cry suddenly came from the direction of the Chai family. "Mr. Moo, wait a minute."

Hearing the voice, Taufeeq stopped in his tracks and swiveled around. When he saw that it was Cadmus calling for him, he could not repress the somberness on his face as he asked, "Mr. Chai, do you have anything else to say to me?"

Cadmus' tone sounded unfriendly. He snorted, "There's something that has yet to be settled. You'd better not think of leaving, Mr. Moo."

"The Chai family has won, my family has lost. Mr. Chai, won't you even allow us to leave gracefully?" Taufeeq questioned, trying to suppress the boiling anger in him.

Cadmus answered, "What I'm referring to does not have much to do with you, Mr. Moo. It's just that there are some things that I

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have to inform you of in advance."

"What's the matter?" Taufeeq's expression darkened as he glared at Cadmus.

Cadmus' gaze swept towards Fade, as he said in a chilly tone, "This person here! From the investigation we conducted, the death of my brother Zelson and my nephew Horgan are connected to Mr. Chen here."

"This concerns the lives of our family members. Thus, we need Mr. Chen to remain here to assist with the investigation. Since he is your guest, I'm informing you as a matter of courtesy," Cadmus explained flatly. Then, he glanced at Taufeeq, awaiting his consent.

Taufeeq's heart raced when he heard Cadmus addressing Fade.

He himself witnessed Fade murder Zelson and Horgan. He knew crystal clear what had happened. He knew for a fact that the Chai family was looking to exact revenge on Fade. If Fade couldn't provide the compensation they wanted, the Chai family would never let him go.

As a matter of fact, Fade was an honored guest of the Moo family. Taufeeq, as head of the Moo family, was obliged to protect Fade. After all, if Fade were to be taken away by the Chai Family at that moment, the Moo family would lose all their dignity first and foremost.

But at present, the Moo family had just suffered a horrible defeat at the hands of the Chai family in both the martial arts and civil competition. They were at the bottom of the barrel. Plus, during the martial arts competition, Fade had refused Taufeeq's invitation to fight on behalf of the Moo family.

Logically speaking, it was undoubtedly the most rational choice for Taufeeq to hand Fade over and then leave with the Moo

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family. It was the most advantageous choice for the Moo family in their current situation.

If Taufeeq's mind had been set on competing for first place again after his defeat, he might've really come to that decision.

But the fiasco just now had made him come to his senses. He was no longer hell-bent on his initial goals.

Also, he still clearly remembered how Fade rescued him and his daughter from the clutches of the robbers in the forest, during their stint at the Dragon Mausoleum.

The murder of Zelson and Horgan later on was tangentially related to the rescue of himself and his daughter too. If Fade had not rescued them at that time, he wouldn't even have had the chance to compete with the top family of Long City. The Moo family might not even exist anymore if Fade hadn't rescued them.

With that thought in mind, Taufeeq quit putting his family's interests first. He glanced resolutely at Fade, then at Cadmus, before saying in a serious tone, "Mr. Chen is the Moo family's distinguished guest. If you want to take him away, do so over my dead body."

After that, Taufeeq pivoted around and stood in front of Fade, facing Cadmus. Clara also stood solidly in front of her father. She turned her head, saying to Fade, "Brother Chen, we will not let the Chai family bully you."

Upon seeing that, Fade felt warmth fill his heart. He smiled at Clara and nodded.

On the other hand, the Chai family members were stunned. Obviously, they did not foresee that Taufeeq would make such a choice.