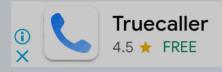
"I do understand the difficult position that Instructor Lu is in. But these five contestants are criminals. They have been stripped of their right to participate in the contest and banned from setting foot into the Jiangdong military camp. How could we allow them to appear in the same arena as other contestants from the Jiangdong military camp? That would be the greatest insult to the military! We cannot allow them to participate in this contest. I don't care if they're hardly a match for anyone in the contest. Fighting them is akin to dirtying our hands," said Lin Qing-He as he shook his head.

He was determined to have the Green Dragon Force disqualified. He wanted them to know that leaving the Jiangdong military camp was the worst decision that they had ever made. In deciding to do so, they had destroyed their futures.

They wouldn't even have the right to participate in a contest.

"Lu Tian-He's vouching for them though. It's going to be a challenge to disqualify them." The other instructors shook their heads and sighed.





Lin Qing-He might be able to persuade Han Ping of the Jiangbei military and Zhu Rong of the Xibei military, but there was no way he was going to persuade Lu Tian-He into disqualifying the Green Dragon Force from participating in the contest.

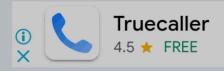
Lu Tian-He was adamant to have the Green Dragon Force represent the Yanjing military in the contest. There was nothing they could do about it.

An idea popped up in Instructor Zhu Rong's head then.

"Commander Lin, I have an idea," whispered Zhu Rong. "We might not be able to change Lu Tian-He's mind, but we could try to convince the panel of judges instead."

"What do you have in mind?" Lin Qing-He's curiosity was instantly piqued.

A malicious smile twisted Zhu Rong's lips. "Commander Lin, you mentioned that these five members have been marked as criminals by the Chinese military. We simply have to convince the judges that criminals are disqualified from participating in the contest. Lu Tian-He's application would be





invalidated and the Green Dragon Force disallowed from joining the contest. They won't be able to enter the arena then."

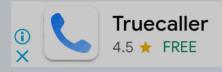
Lin Qing-He was elated when he heard what Zhu Rong had just proposed.

Lin Qing-He shook his head. "This isn't going to be easy. I might be able to pull a few strings in Jiangdong. After all, I have many friends in Jiangdong. But the judges are from the Jiangbei military. How do I convince them to help me?"

"Commander Lin, you're missing someone right under your nose. Amongst the four of us is someone who has many friends in Jiangbei," laughed Zhu Rong.

Lin Qing-He slapped his thigh when he realized whom Zhu Rong was talking about. He turned around and his eyes landed on Han Ping.

"That's right! How could I have forgotten Instructor Han? Instructor Han, you're the chief instructor of the Jiangbei military. The judges will surely help you out with this small favor. I'm counting on you. I'll host a grand feast after the contest as a show of





my gratitude!" said Lin Qing-He.

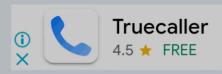
Han Ping waved his hand casually.

"It's no big deal. There's no need to thank me, Commander Lin. I've been dying to make Lu Tian-He pay for humiliating me. You've given me the opportunity to do just that. I'll speak to the judges right now. Don't worry, I know the team who's handling the registration and assessing the eligibility of the participants. I was the mentor for a few of them," said Han Ping with a confident smile before he left.

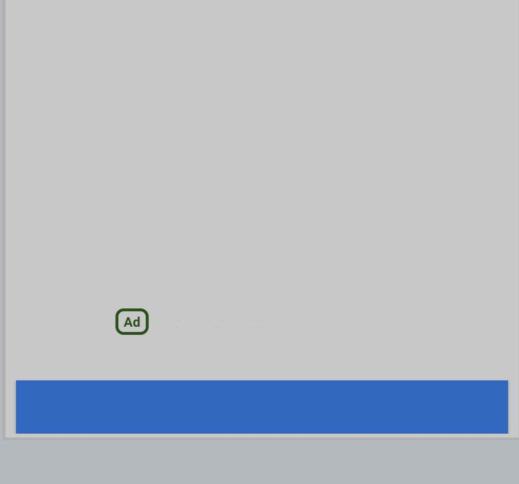
Ye Yu-Yan and her teammates had no idea what had just transpired amongst the other chief instructors.

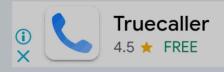
They were at the registration booth with Lu Tian-He.

"Alright, we're done with the registration. Yu-Yan, you'll represent the Green Dragon Force to draw lots later. That'll determine whom your opponents are." It didn't take long before Lu Tian-He stepped away from the registration booth and informed Ye Yu-Yan of the draw that would take place later.











Ye Yu-Yan nodded. "Got it, Teacher."

"Make sure you get the Eagles Force!"

"I'm going to give them a good thrashing and pummel them into the ground. I'm going to humiliate Lin Qing-He and his team!"

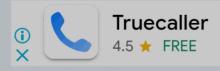
"We're going to let them know Instructor Chu isn't a good-for-nothing and that the Green Dragon Force aren't losers!"

As contest drew near, the Green Dragon Force began to grow increasingly excited. They couldn't seem to contain themselves.

"Look at all of you! Don't worry, you'll have the chance to prove yourselves. I'm looking forward to seeing the progress you've made after the months of training that Instructor Chu has put you through."

Lu Tian-He seemed to be filled with anticipation as well.

He had waited so long for this day. After all, the Yanjing military had come in last for the past three National Special Troops Contests. He was ready to blow the minds of the rest away.





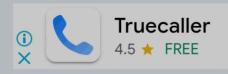
The Yanjing military was the military that stood guard over the capital city. Their repeated failures were humiliating.

That had been why Lu Tian-He had decided to make a trip to Yunzhou to beg for Ye Fan's forgiveness and request that Ye Fan place the Green Dragon Force under his care. He had hoped that Ye Fan's team would erase the dishonor and disgrace that the Yanjing military had suffered for the past ten years. He wanted the men who had mocked the Yanjing military to eat their words.

"It's time to draw lots," said Tai Shan nervously.

The Green Dragon Force turned their eyes towards the raised platform. An old man dressed in military uniform was standing on the platform and ready to speak.

"I apologize for keeping everyone waiting. Let's not waste any more time. I formally declare the commencement of the National Special Troops Contest. I'll be reading out the names of each team's team leader. When your name is read, please come on stage and draw your lot. That will determine your opponent for the first round of the





contest."

"Lei Nuo, the team leader of the Red Phoenixes from the Xibei military."

"Here!"

"Lin Fan, the team leader of the Eagles Force from the Jiangdong military."

"Here!"

"...the team leader of the Qiongqi from the Jiangbei military."

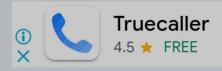
"...the team leader of the Black Tigers from the Xinan military."

Everyone made their way on stage when their names were called.

"You're next! Are your hands clean? You have to pick the Eagles Force! I'm dying to give Lin Fan a good beating!" laughed Li Zi-Yang out loud.

Ye Yu-Yan smiled softly and nodded her head in excitement.

The Green Dragon Force watched with





excitement as the old man onstage kept the list in his hands and surveyed the team leaders standing before him. "Alright, the four of you are to step forward and draw your lot."

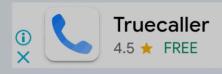
What?

"What's going on?"

Ye Yu-Yan and her teammates froze in shock.

They didn't think much of it at first and felt that they had been left out by mistake. Li Zi-Yang hollered, "Hey, what about us? What about the Green Dragon Force?"

"The Green Dragon Force?" The man onstage shook his head and smiled mirthlessly. "That's right. I almost forgot. Someone's filed a report against the Green Dragon Force. The judges have assessed the matter and noted that the members of the Green Dragon Force have been blacklisted by the military. The contest today is meant to be a series of honorable fights between honorable men and women. The judges have discussed and concluded that as criminals blacklisted by the military, the





Green Dragon Force are to be disqualified from participating in the contest and expelled from the Jiangbei military camp."

The announcement struck the Green Dragon Force like a bolt of lightning.

Ye Yu-Yan, Li Zi-Yang and Tai Shan were dumbstruck.

Their fellow teammates were equally shocked.

Blood drained from their faces instantly.



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They couldn't have foreseen this. All those months of hard work for nothing.

They didn't fear failure or pain. They simply didn't expect to not be given a chance to prove themselves at all.

When they heard that they had been disqualified from the contest, Ye Yu-Yan and her teammates had been overcome by the sudden urge to burst into tears.

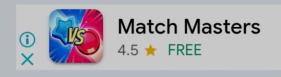
They had worked so hard and for what? All they had wanted was to prove their worth.

They now stood in the arena. Yet, what they had encountered yet again had been injustice and an unfair treatment.

Anguish, frustration and rage rose like a tsunami inside them all and threatened to pull them under.

The loss and fury that they felt now was the equal of the hopes that they had felt at first.

All the hard work that they had poured into their training had been for nothing if they couldn't participate in the contest.





They had worked so hard for this day.

An unimaginable fury swelled inside their hearts when they heard that they had been disqualified.

"Why?"

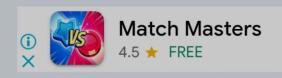
"Give me a reason!"

"We passed the assessment. You told us to draw a lot. Why have you changed your mind?"

"Besides, we've already left Jiangdong. The Green Dragon Force has nothing to do with the Jiangdong military. Why have you banned us from participating in the contest? Why have we been disqualified?"

Tai Shan and his teammates howled in protest and fury. Li Zi-Yang's eyes had turned red with anger as he roared at the man in the arena.

"You want a reason? It's because of your insubordination and your utter lack of honor. It's because you're criminals in the eyes of the Jiangdong military. You're just a bunch of ragtag hooligans. You don't deserve to





share the stage with the prodigies of our great military. We don't want to dirty our hands fighting you! Get your asses out of here!" Han Ping stepped forward and thundered at the Green Dragon Force.

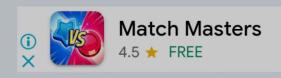
Lin Qing-He had stepped forward as well. The glint of malice in his eyes shone brightly as he eyed the Green Dragon Force.

He burst into a laughter that brimmed with arrogance.

"I told you, didn't I? There's no future for traitors who betrayed the Jiangdong military. You're just a bunch of good-for-nothings. Do you truly believe that you can get away with what you've done just because you have Lu Tian-He backing you? Dream on! Good-for-nothings are good-for-nothings no matter where they are. I drove you out of Jiangdong and I can do the same to you in Jiangbei!"

"It must be you! You've done something, haven't you?"

"You bastard, how could you resort to such underhanded means? That's hardly honorable at all!"





"I dare you to have the Eagles Force fight us like real soldiers!"

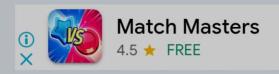
Ye Yu-Yan and her teammates realized what had happened instantly.

They knew why the organizing party had disqualified them and why the chief instructors of the other military camps were driving them out of Jiangbei.

Lin Qing-He had been the mastermind behind everything.

"You're not fit to fight the Eagles Force that I've personally trained! I'll be honest with you. I don't want you in this contest. I want all your efforts to go to waste. I want you burning with rage. You only have yourselves to blame. You picked the wrong master. I want you and that young punk to know the consequences of incurring my wrath and the wrath of the Jiangdong military. Run back and tell your Instructor Chu that if he wants you in this contest, he'll have to get on his knees and beg me," snarled Lin Qing-He. The thought of Ye Fan filled him with a burning rage.

Ye Fan had wrecked his plans with his arrival







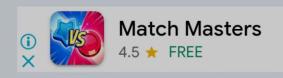


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at the Jiangdong military.

The young man had maimed one of his friends and killed the other.

Because of Ye Fan, he had suffered Wang Dong-Sheng's beating.

He blamed Ye Fan for the thrashing that he had endured under the hands of Wang Dong-Sheng.

He hated Ye Fan with every fiber of his being and he wasn't going to let any chances to make things hard for Ye Fan slip through his fingers.

"You're a bastard!"

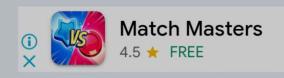
"You despicable asshole!"

"I'm going to kill you!"

The Green Dragon Force burned with rage.

They didn't care that they were in a military camp. They swung their fists and got ready to throw themselves at Lin Qing-He.

"Stop!" A thunderous voice boomed and





stopped them in their tracks. Lu Tian-He had appeared and began reprimanding the Green Dragon Force. "What do you think you're doing? This is a military camp. How dare you cause a scene!"

"General Lu, they started it. They've gone too far!" cried Li Zi-Yang as he brimmed with resentment and fury.

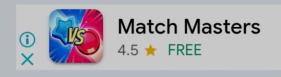
"Didn't you hear me? I told you to step aside!" thundered Lu Tian-He.

"Why should we? They're the bullies! Why should we back down? The Green Dragon Force never backs down from a fight. Instructor Chu wouldn't let us if he were here!"

Resentment had been boiling inside Tai Shan and his teammates for a very long time. They had suffered such abuse when they had been in the Jiangdong military.

That had been what had kept them going for the past few months of tireless training. They had trained so hard so that they could avenge themselves at this contest.

They had not expected to suffer similar





abuse and injustice in Jiangbei.

There was no way they could take this lying down.

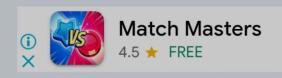
"Don't forget what Instructor Chu told you before you left. You're to obey my orders while you're in Jiangbei. You may disrespect me, but are you going to disrespect Instructor Chu and defy his orders? I'm going to say it again. Leave!" thundered Lu Tian-He.

"But Teacher..." Anger burned in Ye Yu-Yan while tears welled up in her eyes.

"Leave and return to Yunzhou. Return to Instructor Chu," said Lu Tian-He sternly as he stopped Ye Yu-Yan from speaking further.

Wang Dong-Sheng, who had tagged along for the trip, stepped forward then.

"Yu-Yan, listen to General Lu. Let's leave and return to Yunzhou and Instructor Chu. Instructor Chu's a pillar of the nation and The Unrivalled. His authority and influence know no bounds. He'll make sure you have your justice. If you remain and cause a scene, you're just going to get yourselves





into further trouble!" pleaded Wang Dong-Sheng.

The Green Dragon Force left with fury and resentment in their hearts and tears in their eyes.

Lu Tian-He stayed behind.

His eyes turned away from the horizon and landed on Lin Qing-He.

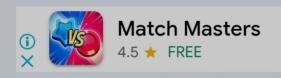
The look on his face was devoid of emotion as he stared at the other man.

"Commander Lin, do you not feel shame or remorse for bullying a group of children in this manner? Do you know how hard they've worked for this day? Do you know how much effort they have invested in this contest?" Lu Tian-He approached Lin Qing-He as he spoke.

The look on his face darkened a shade with every step he took.

The temperature around him began to drop.

"They trained day and night. Li Zi-Yang lives but a kilometer from where they trained but





he hasn't gone home in months. Da-Zhuang didn't attend his grandfather's wake and instead wept as he trained. Do you know how much they'd looked forward to taking part in this contest? How about you?"



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