Every. Ring. Counts. That is the number one rule of the TPA (Tipping Point Agency). My name is Luna, and I am a Third Class at the TPA. The TPA building resembles the High Branch Mobile goal used in Tipping Point competition. Before I get into the whole gist of what we do at the TPA, I will explain the hierarchy system here. There are three classes at the TPA. First Class is the highest class, and their training quarters are located at the High Branch, which is the highest point in the TPA building. To become a first class, you must be a trusted member of the TPA, and you must be very skilled in Tipping Point competition. It also helps if you have a close connection with The Headmistress, who oversees everything that happens at the TPA. Second Class are individuals who have proved their competence in competition, but they have not yet made it to First Class. Their training quarters are in the middle branch, which, by the name, you can guess is in the middle part of the building. Second Class trains the hardest out of all the classes, because they are incredibly determined to become first class individuals. Third class are the newbies of the TPA. They are brand new recruits, training to be selected to go to a competition.

As previously stated, I am a third class, along with my best friends Noah and Reimi, and my sister, Noel. Me and Noah are the drivers for our team. Me and Reimi build the robot, Noah programs the robot, and Noel keeps our team notebook.

So, you may be asking- “What exactly do you do at the TPA?” Well, the TPA is home to the highest ranked Vex V5 teams in the world, and we vigorously train every day to keep that title. Me and my squad have only been in the agency for exactly 3 weeks and 5 days, but we are training hard to become a first-class team. Usually this would take years of work, but we might be able to trim that time down because of a recent threat to the TPA. Team Ace.

Team Ace is a brand-new team to the playing field, but they have proven themselves quite worthy of recognition. Tomorrow they have a match against our first-class teams, so we will have to see how the match turns out.

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“Ladies and Gentleman, the match you have all been waiting for: TPA vs. Team Ace!” The announcer’s voice boomed over the speaker.

The match started. Both teams had an excellent line of code for the autonomous period, securing a mobile goal each. The teams had a short fight in the middle for the high branch mobile goal, which the TPA was able to win. Good. TPA had two mobile goals while Team Ace only had one. The teams both started working on loading rings onto the goals. Time to switch drivers. TPA was clearly in the lead until an unforeseen threat fell upon their side. One of Team Ace’s robots had come to steal the high branch mobile goal! 12 seconds left. If the TPA could load their remaining goals onto their robots and balance on the balance beam, they would secure the win even though Team Ace had more goals. They did just that. They picked up their goals and began the journey to the balance beam. 5 seconds left. 4 seconds left. 3 seconds left. 2 seconds left. 1 second left. Yes! TPA did it! A gasp came from the crowd. The beam had too much weight on one side!

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Team Ace had defeated the TPA.” The announcer announced in a sullen tone.

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“I can’t believe Team Ace was able to make a comeback like that!” I exclaimed to the group the next day at practice.

“Uh, guys, I think you should come see this.” Noah replied worriedly

He had the global ranking pulled up on his computer. Team Ace had taken the number one spot!

“We need to do something about this.” Reimi said

“I agree, and I think I know how we can. I say, we go up to the Headmistress and ask her if we can compete against Team Ace. We’ll have to produce a compelling argument though, as she probably won’t trust a third-class team to defeat the number one team in the world.”

“Let’s do it.” everyone replied in unison.

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The Headmistress's office was a lot higher up than we had imagined. When we arrived at her office, she had tissues scattered around her desk, and she appeared to be watching Hallmark movies on her computer.

“Uh... miss?” I said.

She jumped and almost fell out of her chair.

“Oh, hi. I uh... did not see you there. Why have you come up to my office?

“We want to compete against Team Ace.”

The Headmistress had a shocked look on her face and then she started bursting out laughing.

“Oh my goodness, I really needed that chuckle! You aren’t really serious, are you?”

“We are serious.” Noah spoke up.

“Why would I expect a team wearing third-class badges to beat the number one team around the globe?”

“Trust us, we have come up with a strategy that we are confident will result in our victory. All we must do is build the robot and write the code.”

“Hmmm. I suppose we really have nothing to lose now. I will see if I can arrange a match with them. How long do you think you will need to be ready for the competition?

“I presume a month or so.”

“Alright, I will see it fit. Now, go get to work and get out of my office.”

“That was a lot easier than I thought it would be.” Noel said on the elevator ride back down to the ground floor.

“Yup.” We all replied in unison.

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The next day, me and Reimi got to work taking inventory of all our pieces, Noah watched YouTube videos on efficient lines of code, and Noel scribbled away furiously at the team notebook.

“Oh hey, an email from the Headmistress,” Noah said, “She says she wants to see us in her office.”

“What could that mean?” I replied.

“I guess we’ll have to find out.” Noah stated.

We went on the long trip upward to the headmistress’s office, and when we had finally arrived, she was waiting outside her office for us.

“So, I was able to get a match scheduled between you and Team Ace.”

“Nice!” we all exclaimed.

“But, they would only settle to have the match 2 weeks from now.”

“2 weeks?!”

“Yes, and you’re lucky I was even able to get you that much time. Look, I really like you guys. You all have a lot of passion, and I that is something I value. I know you can do it.”

The Headmistress’s pep talk had helped being the morale up a bit, but we were all still wondering how we would be ready for the match within 2 weeks. We decided to call it a day and head home. We would need a good night’s rest for the big days we had ahead of us.

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The next 1 week and 5 days seemed to fly by. Me and Reimi had finished the robot, complete with 2 hooks to pick up goals, and a vacuum system to suck up rings and place them on both goals automatically. All that was left was the coding, which Noah was furiously working on.

“I’m going to have to stay up all night if I want to finish this before tomorrow.” Noah said exasperatedly.

“Good. Whatever works.” I replied jokingly.

Noah fulfilled his statement, and the next day we had a completed robot. All we had left to do was to spend the entire day practicing with our alliance partners, one of the first-class teams. We constructed a plan where our alliance partners would ensure that Team Ace do not take any of the mobile goals, while still contributing to get points. By the end of the day, everything had worked out. I do not know how we did it, but after countless hours of building, coding, note booking, watching previous matches, and practicing, we were able to complete the robot before the match date.

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The day of the match was here. We arrived at the competition hall and we were amazed at the amount of people that had come to watch the match. We assumed our positions at the game field, and the announcer’s voice came over the speakers once again.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, are you ready to see if a third-class team can retake the title of number one in the world from Team Ace?”

The crowd roared. Everyone seemed to be in favor of us, except the small group of people in the back corner.

The match started. We began our code, and it worked flawlessly. Once again, both of our teams successfully grabbed one mobile goal. Noah made sure to set the robot to move forward after putting the mobile goal back in our zone, so we would have a head start on the high branch mobile goal. We grabbed the high branch goal with ease. Everything was going according to plan. Time to switch drivers. I handed the controller to Reimi, and she began stacking rings onto the mobile goals, while our partner’s robot patrolled to make sure we kept all our goals. Team Ace tried to make a move over to our zone, but we were able to deflect their attack. Once again, everything was going according to plan. 10 seconds left. We brought our two goals over to the balance beam with our partner’s robot following suit. 5 seconds. 4 seconds. 3 seconds. 2 seconds. 1 second. YES! We had done it! We successfully balanced 4 goals with rings to boot, and 2 robots on the balance beam. We had defeated Team Ace by a landslide.

As we were celebrating in the parking lot, the Headmistress walked up to us.

“I am so proud of you guys! You know, I never thought that a third-class team would be able to take down the number one team in the world. So, I think it is time for a promotion. Welcome to First-Class, Team Luna! And look!”

The Headmistress pulled out her phone and opened the global leaderboard. We were back at the top!

“We did it guys, the youngest people to ever become a first-class team!” I stated excitedly.

We had a pizza party that night at my house, and we celebrated with board games, video games, pillow fights, and much more.

“So, what do you think this entails, being a first-class team?” Noel asked.

“I think it entails lots of competition, but most importantly, lots of fun.” I replied.

**The End**