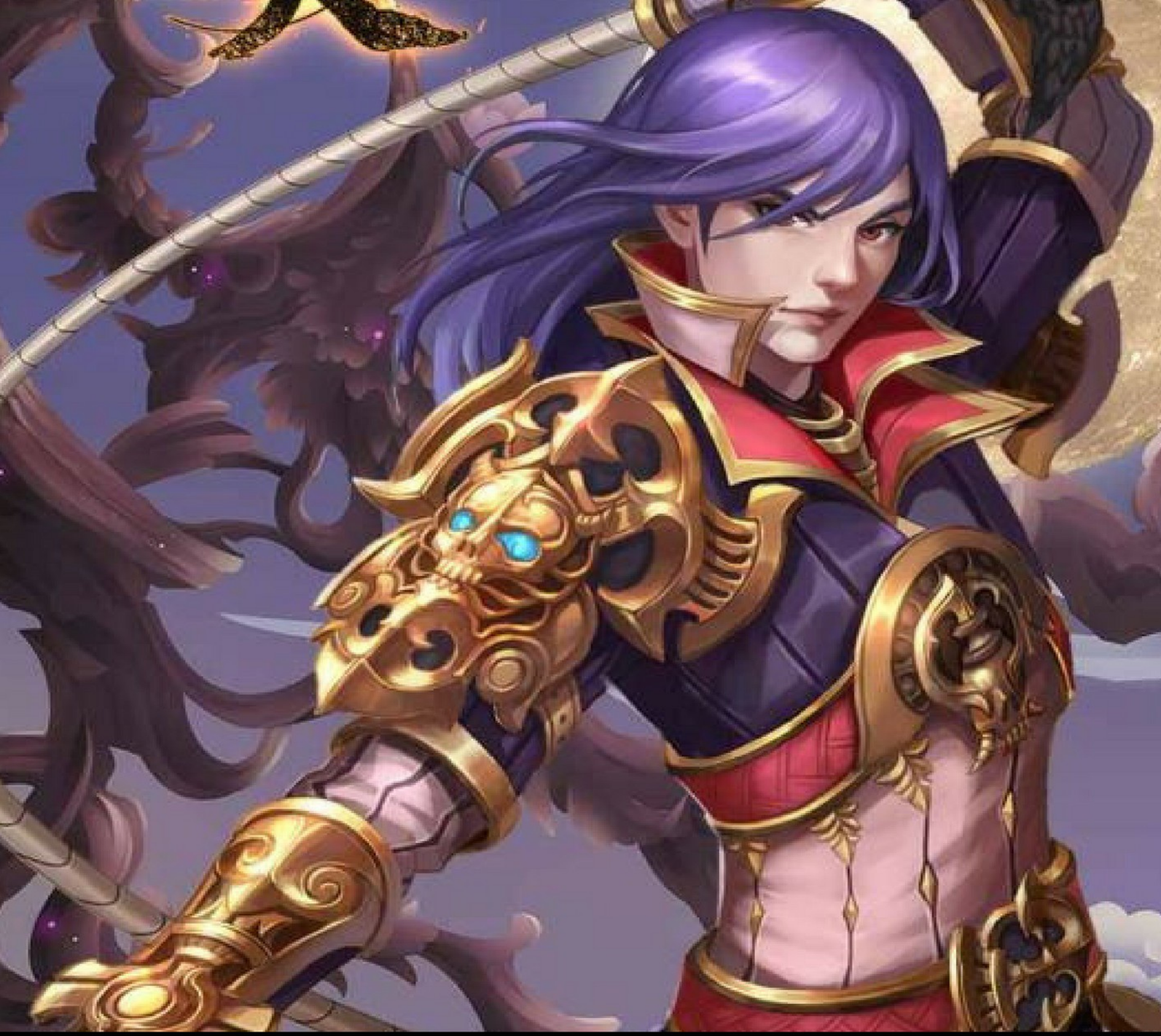

THE AVALON OF 5 ELEMENTS

BOOK 03

Fang Xiang

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The Avalon of Five Elements

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by

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Synopsis

The tens of thousands of universes have merged. The disintegration of spiritual force led to the momentous collapse of the great Cultivation World, a mighty era that had endured through millions of years of history. In the wake of the large-scale invasion of the Wilderness, the Avalon of Five Elements has become the practitioners' last stand.

After a thousand years, a lowly youth, who hailed from the Old Territory, toiled as a laborer for three years in the depths of the Wilderness. He then became an exception and obtained the opportunity to enter the Avalon Of Five Elements for further studies.

Bearing beast-like fighting capabilities and driven by the desire to take control of his life, the youth strived for greater strength and power. Little did he know that he would set off a majestic upheaval.

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Chapter 201: Dragonspine Inferno's Change

"Lou Lan, any findings?" Ai Hui asked in anticipation.

The reason he was so adamant about bringing the blood crystal back was because he had the capable Lou Lan. Perhaps Lou Lan would find something.

"Sorry, there's none, Ai Hui." Lou Lan shook his head. "This type of crystal body is different from all that I have seen to date. It has lost its toxicity and transformed into a very strange type of force, perhaps the blood spiritual force you were talking about, but there are no records of such force in my sand core. Ai Hui, a completely new material requires a lot of time and research before we can understand its use."

Ai Hui was a little disappointed, but thinking about it, this was nothing strange. The mayor's people would have found something long ago if it was that easy.

"Don't be sorry, Lou Lan. You're already very capable. Everyone respects and likes you," Ai Hui said sincerely.

"Really?" Lou Lan opened his eyes wide, unable to believe Ai Hui's words.

"Of course!" Ai Hui shouted suddenly, "Tell me, everyone. Is Lou Lan good? Who likes Lou Lan?"

"Of course he’s good!"

"Lou Lan’s the best sand puppet!"

"I love you, Lou Lan!"

"Lou Lan, I want to bring you home!"

...

Lou Lan fell into a short daze before smiling widely, his eyes forming two crescent moons. He replied cheerily, "Lou Lan loves everybody too!"

Excited, Lou Lan turned into a sand wheel. "Lou Lan healthcare is here!"

Poof! The sand wheel dispersed, landing on and rolling around everyone’s back.

"Hahhaha, so ticklish!"

"Hahaha!"

...

Looking at everyone having fun, Ai Hui’s cold gaze softened

significantly. Ai Hui had never forgotten Lou Lan's words: "Who would remember a sand puppet?"

A lot of people will remember you, Lou Lan.

Ai Hui thought to himself.

Shi Xueman shook her head rather helplessly. The training plan she had formulated for everyone had been disrupted by Ai Hui, but she could not bear to disrupt the scene of jubilation before her eyes short.

The cruel nightly battles, witnessing her comrades' deaths, and constant life-threatening situations were like an icy cold sky enveloped by dark smog. There was no place to run. Everyone gritted their teeth and fought for survival.

The frolicking students served as a sudden reminder that they were still a bunch of kids.

She automatically looked toward Ai Hui and saw the coldness and bleakness in his eyes warm up, as if the sky was colored by sunlight.

She was startled. It was her first time seeing such warmth radiating from Ai Hui's body.

Detecting a watching gaze, Ai Hui turned his neck. Seeing that it was Iron Lady, he hesitated for a little while, muttering to himself,

"Should I say it?"

"What do you want to say," Shi Xueman blurted out. When she finished her sentence, she felt slightly embarassed.

"I'll say it then." Ai Hui walked directly toward Shi Xueman with a stern expression on his face, as if he had just made an important decision.

Inexplicably, Shi Xueman grew nervous. She tried hard to remain calm and undisturbed, but her heart rate started to increase.

Ai Hui walked to Shi Xueman's side before saying softly, "Uh... Iron... uh, goddess..."

In Shi Xueman's book, "goddess" was a most ordinary word. From a young age, she had lost track of the number of people who called her that. Even within the team, everyone called her that. She knew that this compliment was based more on her appearance and was neither disgusted with nor fond of it.

Yet, somehow, hearing Ai Hui address her as "goddess" made her heart beat even faster. Thud thud thud. The sound seemed to echo within her chest.

"I've saved your life a few times after all," Ai Hui said with a reserved look on his face. "As the saying goes, repay your life-saver with money. I'm not blackmailing you, but we've had our fatal encounters. It will be unreasonable for me to ask for much, so you

can just..."

Shi Xueman's face was as black as the bottom of a pot. She pointed her Cirrus directly at Ai Hui, frigidly goading him. "Let's have a match!"

"Let's talk things over!" Ai Hui laughed. "Where there's no business, there's compassion. Hahaha, forget it if it's not possible. Forget it, hahaha..."

Fighting with Iron Lady? Only if his brain was abnormal would he do something so silly, Ai Hui thought.

Under Shi Xueman's angry gaze, Ai Hui slipped into a room, dejected.

Sigh, his money-making dream was about to be shattered.

It was not easy to earn money!

Ai Hui's gaze fell on the crystal on the table. He could not help but lament the hardships of life. He had collected the blood crystal in hopes of making some money ,but it looked like that hope was shattered as well.

As Ai Hui played around with the blood crystal in his hand, he subconsciously placed his attention onto it.

A garnet luster had emerged from within the pure, translucent, and sparkling blood crystal. If examined closely, one would see a very fine crimson blood wisp. The blood crystal was solid and heavy. When knocked against the table, it made a sound similar to that of a stone.

What surprised Ai Hui the most was the fact that the blood crystal had no odor, while the blood poison had a distinct fragrance.

Lou Lan said the blood crystal was not toxic.

It was very difficult to imagine that this red gem was actually made from fresh blood. This series of unimaginable changes made Ai Hui fear the Blood of God even more.

The Blood of God was so subversive, and "genius" was no longer sufficient to describe the person who created all of this.

No wonder the old fellows were beaten so badly.

Recalling the old man’s words, that the blood crystal contained blood spiritual force, jolted him. Perhaps he could try his Blood Bandage? He tried touching the blood crystal to the Blood Bandage and was disappointed by the Blood Bandage’s lack of reaction.

Could it be that it was still full from its previous meal?

After the blood refinement, the blood bandage seemed to have

lost interest in the blood poison. Ai Hui knew that there must have been some changes that occurred, but he did not know how to use the Blood Bandage. It merely served as a defensive tool for him at the moment. He had used its natural ability to resist sword injuries, saving himself from quite a few harmful incidents.

Blood spiritual force... spiritual force?

What else was associated with spiritual force? The sword embryo? Ai Hui did not dare to absorb the blood crystal because if something went wrong, even angels would not be able to save him.

What else could he do about it?

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. Dragonfire Inferno!

Seven artifact remnants were embedded in Dragonspine Inferno's sword body. What are artifact remnants? They were remnants of treasures and artifacts from the Cultivation Era. The remnants could not be corroded by the Silver Mist Sea. Since they were artifacts and treasures from Cultivation Era, they were related to spiritual force

Everyone either called them artifact remnants or ocean dregs, which reflected the two types of attitudes that people had regarding them. Ai Hui still preferred the name "artifact remnants" since they were able to survive thousands of years of corrosion. While they might not have much use, there was no doubt that these artifacts were of superb quality.

Ai Hui held Dragonspine Inferno up.

The seven red prismatic crystals were arranged in a row on its body.

The prismatic crystals on the sword and the blood crystals were all red, but they carried very different color and luster. The prismatic crystals' shapes were more orderly, whereas the blood crystals' shapes were not structured at all.

Due to the fact that the prismatic crystals were fished out from Silver Mist Sea, their origin was unknown and untraceable. Judging from their luster, however, they probably came from the same artifact.

Ai Hui tried placing the blood crystal near the first prismatic crystal near the sword hilt.

Bzzt!

A wisp of electric current zapped through the blood crystal, numbing Ai Hui's fingertips.

Ai Hui, however, could not care less about his tingling fingers. He stared at the sword body with his eyes wide open, fearing that he might miss some detail.

The garnet blood crystal started to melt into a pool of fresh blood before flowing and extending along the sword body. A small,

distinct motion captured Ai Hui’s attention.

Was this spiritual force?

The entire sword body was dipped in the red blood crystal liquid, which slowly seeped into the prismatic crystal.

Bzzt bzzt bzzt!

Tiny electric currents hovered around the sword body.

The prismatic crystal was like an insatiably hungry and thirsty wild beast, absorbing the blood crystal liquid nonstop.

When the last wisp of garnet liquid entered the prismatic crystal, a stronger electric current flickered quickly from the first to the last prismatic crystal with a "bzzt" sound.

When the electric current disappeared, Dragonspine Inferno became quiet once more.

Ai Hui stared blankly before him at Dragonspine Inferno The smile at the corner of his lips grew bigger. He could no longer control himself and laughed heartily with his head tilting up.

"Hahaha..."

Some time later, after Ai Hui recovered himself, he inspected his sword meticulously.

The once red prismatic crystal faded into a lighter color. If not for the fact that AI Hui was extremely familiar with his Dragonspine Inferno, this subtle change would not have been easy to detect. Moving closer, Ai Hui found a wisp of electric current. It was very fine and could only be seen after taking a closer look. It was present and frozen within each crystal, coincidentally forming a straight line.

Only after staring at it carefully for a long time did Ai Hui notice that this wisp of electric current flowed back and forth, through and within the seven prismatic crystals. Since its speed was too fast, it gave the impression that it connected all of the prismatic crystals.

Surprised, Ai Hui exclaimed inwardly, "How?"

The seven prismatic crystals were not connected from the first to the last, but instead, each crystal had a considerable distance between them and the sword body was between them. Yet, this hair-like wisp of electric current was able to flow back and forth, disregarding the gaps.

So this was an artifact from the Cultivation Era?

How magical! Ai Hui could not help but feel fascinated. When compared to the Cultivation Era’s glory, the Avalon of Five Elements today was merely a newborn.

He jumped up, grabbed his Dragonspine Inferno and waved it around.

No changes.

He tried executing the [Oblique Slash] and the sword body lit up. Concurrently, a wisp of electricity flashed once within the sword ray before disappearing.

It was effective indeed!

Ai Hui was beyond happy. If the sword move carried electricity, it would be like a tiger that had grown wings. His fingers had been slightly numbed from the previous shock. Although the paralysis was not severe, it still worked. In an intense battle, any small changes could break the equilibrium.

Possessing rich battle experience, Ai Hui had already thought of a few ways of using the electric current. Plus, from this transformation process, Ai Hui believed that if there were more blood crystals, the electric current could become more powerful.

He tried another move.

He wanted to observe how his Dragonspine Inferno would change if he operated his elemental energy to power his sword move.

Was there anything more suitable than the [Crescent Moon]?

He held onto Dragonspine Inferno and walked into the garden, where everyone had already resumed training.

Ai Hui said in a deep voice, "I’m going to test a move, please move away for a bit."

Fatty reacted the fastest. Seizing the opportunity to slack off, he quickly found himself a spot at the corner while hugging his heavy shield.

Everyone then stopped practicing and moved to the sides.

All eyes were focused on Ai Hui and the sword in his hands.

Chapter 202: Yan Hai's Losses

Yan Hai advanced in the darkness, half his body dully aching.

The impact from that collision earlier had nearly caused his whole body to fall apart. Quite a few bones were broken. If not for his strong recovery ability, he would still be confined to his bed, paralyzed.

His blood spiritual force was still shallow but his recovery ability already exceeded that of others. Thinking about the mystical skills set his heart on fire. If he could establish enough contributions, he could possess those mystical skills.

He must have that blood crystal.

Tonight was his last chance. There was a mission the next day and everyone within the city had to battle, him included. Plus, his disguise was still useful for him.

He did not enter upon arriving at the alleyway of Vanguard Training Hall. The accident from earlier had taught him that he couldn't afford to make the least bit of a mistake. The A-1 unit's strength exceeded his imagination. He couldn't defeat any one of them.

He needed the blood crystal, not a battle.

There were many ways to gain possession of the blood crystals,

and battling was just one of them.

He took out a small flag; its face was badly damaged and its pole was left with only half a bone. On its face was a little demon painted with cinnabar. This was an object he had gotten hold of unintentionally while training. He had not known what it was initially, but after much researching and consulting of friends with related experience, he found out that this small flag was actually a spirit-beckoning banner.

During the Cultivation Era, the spirit-beckoning banner was the most common treasure within the blood sects. It was generally used to train spirits, blood demons, and the like.

It could develop a certain connection with the blood spiritual force within his body.

As time passed, the spirit-beckoning banner became dilapidated. To Yan Hai, however, it was still an outstanding treasure. It was also because of this that he realized the artifact remnants from the Cultivation Era were of use to him. Later on, he committedly searched every place that collected artifact remnants, but failed to find anything else he could use.

He took out a small knife and slit his own arm, making a shocking cut.

Fresh blood dripped on the banner in a steady flow and disappeared upon contact with it. The little cinnabar demon on the flag then started to look more tender, beautiful, and alluring.

Following the unceasing blood flow, Yan Hai's face turned rather pale.

Suddenly, a red blood mist rose from the spirit-beckoning banner and amidst it, a faint and blurry little demon could be seen.

Joy spread across Yan Hai's pale face. He sat cross-legged on the ground and shut his eyes.

The silhouette of the little demon gradually faded and disappeared.

This was his biggest card and also where his confidence lay tonight. Able to conceal itself, the little demon was more than suitable for theft. If he could get the blood crystal, this amount of fresh blood sacrifice wasn't even worth mentioning.

The little demon's field of vision was gray, ice-cold, and still. Yan Hai was adept in controlling it since it wasn't his first time.

It drifted over the wall. Yan Hai saw everyone standing in a circle with Ai Hui in the center. He could see clearly as he was looking from above.

He felt slightly puzzled. What were these fellows doing?

He scanned the surroundings but did not see the blood crystal. To

the little demon, the blood crystal was of great benefit. It was like a torchlight in the dark, very conspicuous.

Then, all of a sudden, a wave of intense motion burst out from Ai Hui's body.

Not good! Had he been discovered?

Yan Hai's heart started beating faster, but he tried hard to remain calm. That shouldn't be the case. The little demon beckoned by the banner had no elemental energy motion. It was impossible for even the dean of Central Pine Academy to detect its presence.

He reckoned Ai Hui was about to test a skill or something.

Yan Hai became more focused. Ai Hui hadn't displayed any moves since the start of the day, so he was also very curious about Ai Hui's abilities.

Ai Hui was very excited.

He did not expect the blood crystal to be able to activate the artifact remnants on the Dragonspine Inferno. The artifact remnants would cease to be. If the blood crystals could stimulate certain treasures, then the remnants left in the Silver Mist Sea which had once been considered trash would become much more valuable. Their prices would also increase exponentially.

It was a pity he had no money to start a business. Or? He could contact his master and mistress and perhaps earn more money at the embroidery workshop. Then again, he quickly started laughing involuntarily. He might not even survive this calamity, so why was he thinking about earning money?

He should further develop his Dragonspine Inferno instead. As its power increased, his chances of survival increased as well. Plus, it could be seen that the Dragonspine Inferno was still far from reaching its limit. That meant that he needed more blood crystals, since the sword had more potential to improve.

Ai Hui collected his thoughts.

He was already fairly familiar with [Crescent Moon]. Using [Big Dipper] to operate it was the challenge.

The seven palaces within his body vibrated simultaneously and out of them flowed seven rays of elemental energy. Ai Hui prepared to converge them.

Just then, without any sign, the sword embryo between his brows suddenly jolted.

An indescribable feeling overtook Ai Hui's body. Cold. From head to toe, he felt a sense of coldness. His joy and excitement vanished as he became immersed in this unprecedented, cool state.

Feeling something, Ai Hui turned his neck and walked towards

the perimeter wall.

There was clearly nothing, but he "saw" a mist-like presence.

He didn’t know what it was and could only feel its enmity.

The elemental energy circulating within his body became even fuller and richer. Before, Ai Hui had needed to multitask in order to control it, but now, everything went on naturally and smoothly.

Ai Hui drew a graceful trajectory in the sky with the Dragonspine Inferno. At that moment, in the eyes of Shi Xueman and the rest, he was like a completely different person.

He was merely waving the sword in his hand, but every movement was so co-ordinated and aesthetically pleasing that it brought about a casual freeness.

Shi Xueman’s eyes lit up as she recalled the first time she saw Ai Hui’s swordplay. He wasn’t bad then, but now he was becoming and feeling more like an expert.

Only after seeing for herself how he had changed bit by bit did she really understand how fearsome Ai Hui was.

What was even more shocking was that each time Duanmu Huanghun felt pleased about his own progress, Ai Hui would quickly deal a blow to him. He’d thought that his progress was already very speedy but Ai Hui’s was even quicker.

Seeing Ai Hui's grandeur, Duanmu Huanghun couldn't help but clench his fist.

You've already grown so much?

How great! How exciting!

Having such a strong rival like you is my greatest honor. I won't make you wait too long!

Duanmu Huanghun felt his blood boil. Unprecedented battlelust agitated his body like raging flames, causing it to tremble slightly.

Suddenly, Ai Hui struck out.

The Dragonspine Inferno in Ai Hui's hand drew a bow-like crescent moon.

The curvy sword ray flashed across the sky, matchlessly fast.

When Ai Hui looked towards him, Yan Hai jolted inwardly. He had been found! There was no time for him to figure out why and he quickly decided to turn and leave.

Before he could take any action, a dazzling light ray rose and a strong fear overtook him. The little demon turned to leave, no longer under control. He knew that this was the demon's

instinctive fear, as if there was something within the light ray that it was very afraid of.

A crescent moon came towards him at breakneck speed.

It was so fast that all he saw was a quick flash of light before feeling something run through his body.

Closely after, a numbness spread throughout his body.

He looked down and saw a hole in his chest area. A bright light ray flickered around its edges and like a dark flame consuming a piece of paper, it continued burning non-stop.

Was that... lightning?

Yan Hai blankly stared at the silver light ray, extending and spreading unceasingly.

He knew now why the little demon was so afraid. During the Cultivation Era, the undead, ghosts, and the like feared the sound of thunder most. Thunder and lightning were regarded as one of the most masculine forces between heaven and earth. It was the evil spirits' mortal enemy.

But, why was there lightning?

There was no lightning in the Avalon of Five Elements. Amongst

metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, only water elementalists were associated with lightning. Their clouds and mists could develop lightning. The lightning between heaven and earth was then affected by clouds. Its violence and destructive force entered people's field of vision very early. Countless water elementalists had tried creating lightning, but until today, they were still unsuccessful in using lightning in battle.

Lightning in the Cultivation World was entirely different. They were given a special name – "Thunder Stars". There were many types of Thunder Stars. Blood refinement had Thunder Stars as well, such as the Scarlet Blood Thundergod and the like.

But the Cultivation World was long gone. People today were no longer able to imagine what sort of existence the so-called Thunder Stars had been in the past.

No, not lightning, but Thunder Stars!

Yan Hai did not know why but this thought surfaced within his head and did not disappear.

He stared firmly at the Dragonspine Inferno in Ai Hui's hand and when he saw the prismatic crystals on it, he finally understood. Artifact Remnants!

But how did Ai Hui activate them? Probably not... by using blood crystals, right?

The heart-wrenching pain caused Yan Hai to withdraw from the little demon's body and a small wisp of electric current continued to corrode its body. The little demon was like a piece of paper, slowly being eaten up by a dark flame until there was nothing left.

Yan Hai opened his eyes and disgorged a mouthful of fresh blood, his face a few shades paler.

The spirit-beckoning banner in front of him combusted spontaneously without any fire. He couldn't extinguish it in time so the banner was reduced to ashes. Even the bone, serving as the flag's pole, was no more.

Yan Hai looked far into the alleyway in bitter resentment before turning to leave.

He had lost a lot today. His one and only treasure was gone and he was also injured. As compared to the blow he was dealt in the day, this psychological damage could not be repaired easily.

Like an injured wolf, he disappeared into the night.

In Vanguard Training Hall, everyone was discussing with excitement about how breathtaking Ai Hui's swordplay was.

The sword embryo between Ai Hui's brows fell into a deep sleep once again, and Ai Hui separated from that absolutely ice-cold state. He wondered what he had "seen" earlier. Why was the sword embryo's reaction so big? Did it sense danger?

Ai Hui felt uneasy and immediately thought about the Blood of God. Thinking about the old prisoner, he wondered, had the Blood of God found him?

That wouldn’t be a good thing…

Chapter 203: New Blood Fiends

"Yan Hai, you are late." Team Leader was displeased.

"I encountered a blood ant and sustained some internal injuries." Yan Hai explained.

Although most of the blood ants in the city had been purged out, some blood ants still appeared sporadically and easily hurt people.

Team Leader's face softened upon seeing Yan Hai's ghastly white face. "It's fine as long as you did not sustain any external injuries; if you had, I would have had to send you to isolation. Everyone be more cautious. There are always some random blood ants. Our mission today is not very serious. The blood ants have been almost eliminated, we just need to keep guard on the underground tunnels. If any of us encounter any sneak attacks, send out a warning. Understood?"

"Understood." The resounding answer was not unified. Everyone's morale was low.

Team Leader did not say much as he was not in high spirits either. In the battle just yesterday, half of their troops were killed and only thirty-odd people managed to survive. While they had gotten more manpower, they still could not feel secure.

It was like they were just sitting there awaiting death. It was depressing.

Today they were standing guard at a small hill located in the west of the city. There were many tunnels there, courtesy of the blood ants. The mayor residence was helpless regarding all those underground tunnels. Even sealing up the tunnels was ineffective. What else could be used to ward off the blood ants?

Everyone could only hope that the other blood fiends did not like to dig holes. The only fortunate part was that the blood ants had a small build. Those larger blood fiends were unable to enter the tunnels which were as big as a fist. Nevertheless, there were still many potential threats. Some insects that were not too large were still able to make use of the tunnel created by the blood ants to travel.

The mayor residence had set up a large number of snares around the tunnels. Nobody knew if they would be able to hold back the blood fiends, so the vicinity of the tunnels was also guarded by people. Even if they were unable to hold back the blood fiends, they could at least warn the others.

The small hill was positioned against the direction of the wind. Everyone hid in a corner where there was no wind.

"Today is the fifth day, right?" Someone asked suddenly. "Are we really going to get reinforcements? Will it be another ten more days?"

Everyone stayed silent. Nobody could answer this question and nobody dared to try.

The mayor residence claimed that the support troops would reach them after fifteen days. The higher-ups of the Avalon of Five Elements definitely wouldn't leave them in the lurch.

Yan Hai turned his gaze towards the Team Leader.

The two of them were neighbours and were on good relations. When he'd first arrived at Central Pine City, Team Leader had taken him under his wing. Out of all of Central Pine City, Team Leader was the one who he'd want to survive.

Yan Hai held Team Leader's conduct in high regards. Compared to his own timid and cowardly nature, he felt that Team Leader was better than him in many aspects. He did not have any talents and he had a weak temperament. Why else would he have been eliminated so early?

He had thought more than once, perhaps he could influence Team Leader into becoming a blood elementalist?

He was slightly hesitant. He did not know if Team Leader would be willing to accept it.

Yan Hai believed that the Blood of God was the best way to go. Given Team Leader's capability, he would be able to prove himself within the organization quickly; however, unlike him, Team Leader had a family to go back to.

Yan Hai had been a member of Blood of God for a long period. He was clear of the boundary between the blood elementalists and the elementalists. Once the boundary comes between one and one's family, it would be the cruelest thing in the world.

Some pain was worse than death.

Unless it was as a last resort, he definitely wouldn't change Team Leader into a blood elementalist. Team Leader was a loyal and passionate person, aspects which were also his Achilles heel and might cause him more pain.

He did not want Team Leader to blame him, regardless of the reasons.

The dead would be struggle-free while the living shoulder the burden. Sometimes, it was hard to determine which was better.

"Have a good rest. I will take over," said Team Leader to Yan Hai.

Yan Hai looked at Team Leader. He opened his mouth, but not a sound came out.

Team Leader pat his shoulder and smiled at him.

Having said that, he turned and walked to the vicinity of the tunnel entrance and sat down cross-legged.

Yan Hai fell asleep amidst his thoughts. The little demon being beheaded had brought about a huge, negative impact on his state of mind.

Suddenly, he was awakened by a mournful siren. He violently sprang up.

"Be careful! Something is approaching!" Team Leader stood up and shouted the reminder.

A ray of red light flew out from underground and passed through Team Leader’s chest.

"No!" Yan Han shrieked and his features twisted. He stood blankly. He saw the light going out of Team Leader’s eyes. They became empty and his body dropped on the floor with a loud bang, sending dust flying up.

The air was filled with endless miserable shrieks. Yan Hai could only turn a deaf ear to them. His pale and shrunken in face seemed to have lost its soul. He stared fixedly at Team Leader who was lying motionless on the floor.

The red ray was like a strange sword ray. It was able to twist around freely in the air and was as fast as lightning.

In a flash, the underground was filled with corpses.

The red ray fell on the floor and surprisingly, it was a blood

snake that was as thick as an arm. Its scales were red and it was covered with distinctive black blood traces. Its blood red pupils did not have any hint of emotions. It stared at Yan Hai who was frozen in shock. A flicker of suspicion flashed across its eyes. The prey in front it seemed to have the scent of their species.

The blood snake fixed its attention on Yan Hai before catapulting and disappearing without a trace.

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The mournful siren was sounded simultaneously at a few places in the city. It triggered everyone’s nerves. They’d just managed to suppress the blood ants and now there was a new surge of blood fiends.

"We have no buffer time at all!" The dean wore a furious expression. "Five to seven days? Didn’t you say they need five to seven days to transform? Damn it! The blood ants were attacking us from day one!"

"This simply implies that we had misjudged them." Wang Zhen replied. "The current wave might possibly the first wave of the completed transformation."

"Attention! Six places have issued the alarm. The defending troops... were wiped out." The elementalist who came forward to make the report spoke with a trembling voice.

Wang Zhen was silent for a moment before gravely saying, "What sort of blood fiend was it?"

"Those that we could confirm right now would be blood snakes, blood rats, and blood butterflies," replied the elementalist.

Wang Zhen muttered to himself, "The previous wave was all blood ants. It is a different type of fiend for this wave. It seems like every time they complete a cycle of transformation, our pressure and stress increases. What about the blood traces?"

"The blood traces were very distinct." The elementalist's eyes showed signs of fear. "They were even clearer than the traces on the blood ants."

"Send the Elite Unit to hunt them down." Wang Zhen decided resolutely. Despite the worsening situation, he still held hope. He continued, "Group the students and the average masses. We need to have lookout posts in all the corners of the city. We need to know where exactly the blood fiends are located."

"Yes!" The elementalists hurriedly replied.

The Elite Unit was the nucleus of Central Pine City. It was the equivalent of the guards in the training hall. Compared to the average troops formed by the students and the masses, their capabilities were much stronger.

The dean exhaled heavily. He knew Wang Zhen's original plan.

Wang Zhen initially predicted that he would only make use of the Elite Unit after nine days.

It was four days earlier than they had intended.

"Notify A-1 unit and have them prepare to attack." Wang Zhen suddenly said.

"No!" The dean opposed. "They are still kids! Also, do not forget about their status!"

Wang Zhen angrily said, "Status! Whatever status is not important now! Everyone has to participate in the battle! They have to battle, you have to battle, and I too have to battle. Everyone is fighting for themselves!"

This was the first time the dean witnessed Wang Zhen flying into a rage. Yet, he replied calmly, "Do you think they are competent enough?"

The dean's calmness rubbed off on Wang Zhen's rage. He tried to tone down his temper and responded, "No idea. But I feel that they have potential. All along I have been paying attention to their progress. They are improving faster than we'd expected and their adaptability is also better than we'd thought. They are the best performing small team and also the team with the most potential. They might be the best hands we could have!"

The dean was shocked. "You are going to bet on them?"

"That’s right." Wang Zhen continued gravely, "I have thought about all the possibilities. We are unable to get through the fifteen days. I only realised yesterday that there are only two variables in this death battle. The first variable is Master Han and Wang Shouchuan; I was surprised that Wang Shouchuan managed to complete the design. The problem now is whether or not Master Han will be able to implement it. Can we hang on until the day Master Han seals up Central Pine City?"

The dean replied, "The other variable is the A-1 unit?"

"Yes! I suddenly realised it when I saw them defeat the blood-traced ants. The A-1 unit is also a variable. Their potential is bigger than we had imagined and their progress is astonishing. Ai Hui has already attained seven palaces. What was his cultivation level before the battle? Shi Xueman is also starting to expose her battle capability. It is the best amongst them. As long as she has adapted to battle, she will be our trump card. As for Duanmu Huanghun, look at his recent performance. He was practically a new person. The rest of the students have improved drastically as well. Why did I allocate so many resources to them? Because I am unsure of their limits. They are a group of talents and perhaps they will be able to create a miracle."

The dean had completely calmed down. "Perhaps they might die. Would they be able to adapt to such a high intensity battle? That is something unknown to us."

"But it is worth a gamble." Wang Zhen stared deeply at him. "If they die, then it implies that they were not our variables and none

of us will be able to escape. Only through battle, constant success, and getting stronger, would we be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

The dean shook his head. "Nobody could improve so much in such a short period."

"You have forgotten about the Battle of the Dawn." Wang Zhen continued indifferently. "Look. It was also fifteen days. History always has the tendency to be surprisingly similar."

Blankly, the dean said, "That was just a legend..."

"It was not a legend." Wang Zhen gave him a glance. "Because I am a lucky survivor."

The dean was dumbstruck.

At that moment, an elementalist rushed over hurriedly. "I am here to report that the A-1 unit is suspected to be under attack by the blood fiends and they are in an intense battle right now!"

Their expressions changed in unison.

"There’s no support team?" The dean asked anxiously.

"The support team is still making its way over. Their station is located further away as compared to the Elite Unit." The

elementalist cast a glance at them before he continued, "The nearest elementalist would also need a minimum of five minutes to rush over."

Five minutes...

The dean’s expression became as white as sheet. In an intense battle, five minutes was enough to end everything. Even if he was to fly over from the mayor residence now, it would still take him ten minutes to get there.

Wang Zhen smiled. "Look, you need not make a decision now."

The dean glared at Wang Zhen and soared into the sky. He was unable to let go of the students.

The smile on Wang Zhen’s face vanished. His gaze became filled with worry.

Chapter 204: The Blood Worm

Ai Hui and the rest were caught up in a grueling battle.

When one was down on his luck, his bad luck would just accumulate. A blood worm had emerged from the ground of the courtyard. The hard ground erupted as if it was a body of water. The traps they had set up previously were completely useless and were ripped to smithereens.

At first glance, everyone thought it to be a blood snake. But upon closer inspection, they could not help but gasp in terror.

The blood worm was extremely hideous.

It was the largest worm they had ever seen in their lives. Its body was thicker than the width of a bucket and at least twenty meters long. The blood worm had yet to completely exit the ground, and on sections of its body, thin, black stripes could be seen in even distributions.

Its gigantic body gave it terrifying strength. With one hit, even if it didn't cause death, there would at least be severe injuries as a result.

Most troublesome of all were its natural attributes. It could move swiftly and nimbly through the ground, allowing it to attack from any angle. Wang Xiaoshan's ability to manipulate the earth was nothing compared to this. As long as it was in the ground, it was astonishingly active without the slightest incoordination.

When the blood worm suddenly shot out of the ground, a few unlucky students failed to dodge in time and were knocked into the air, incurring severe injuries from the impact. Fortunately, they were bruised but not infected by the blood poison.

Ai Hui and a few others reacted quickly by entangling the blood worm.

Worried about damaging the message tree, Ai Hui lured the blood worm out of the alley. Since the nearby houses were already in ruins, Ai Hui had no worries about thrashing the area further.

On the surface of its body, there was a layer of bloody light, and beneath it, a covering of mucus. The bloody glow was able to withstand most attacks, but even if it were to be broken through, the mucus layer was able to deflect the attack smoothly.

The trio that comprised Ai Hui's group attacked to no avail.

This blood worm was much stronger than the blood ants; it appeared that the blood fiends were becoming increasingly stronger.

Ai Hui felt uneasy when he saw that their attacks had no effect on the blood worm at all. The blood traces on its body were much more distinct than the blood ant's, and its strength was clearly more terrifying as well.

If not for his warning beforehand, the number of casualties would have been more devastating....

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman, and Duanmu Huanghun were embroiled in a battle with the blood worm.

Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun dispersed the students and arranged them strategically on the roofs of the abandoned houses.

"Get ready!" Jiang Wei said with a deep voice.

Every student held their places and prepared to take action.

Suddenly, Ai Hui and the others, who were well-coordinated, dispersed like scattered butterflies.

"Attack!" Jiang Wei roared.

Streaks of colorful lights fell upon the blood worm like raindrops, making for a spectacular scene.

The results of their attacks, however, shocked everyone. The rain of light beams and arrows were either reflected by the blood light or slid off of the mucus. The blood worm remained completely unharmed.

Splash—the chili concoction was poured onto the blood worm's body, only to be immediately evaporated by the bloody glow.

"Ai Hui, it’s not afraid of chilies!" Lou Lan yelled.

The smell of the chili concoction pervaded the air, but the blood worm did not show the slightest reaction to it.

It seemed bad news followed one after another.

"Ai Hui, my elemental energy can’t penetrate through the ground!" Wang Xiaoshan cried fearfully.

Only now did Ai Hui realize that the ground glowed with a red, bloody color. It made the terrain seem like a scarlet, watery surface that undulated slowly with the blood worm underneath it.

The crimson ground made Ai Hui more restless as he thought of the Garden of Life and the blood forest outside of the city.

He had to stop it!

Ai Hui became more resolved in his intent.

If their attacks continued to prove useless against the blood worm, everyone would become dispirited, thereby making their next round of attacks even less impactful.

Boom!

The blood worm's body as thick as a bucket suddenly shot out of the ground with a loud bang.

Ai Hui had long sensed the blood worm's approaching presence and ducked out of the way. With [Misty Strike] prepared ahead of time, he lunged forward ferociously with his Dragonspine Inferno.

Rip!

The Dragonspine Inferno materialized into a shooting star and pierced right through the layer of bloody light. Yet immediately after, an overbearingly slimy and smooth feeling could be felt on the tip of the sword, and Ai Hui's Dragonspine Inferno involuntarily slid off of the layer of mucus. It was as though he had pierced into a wall that was smeared with oil.

It was the same as before when his attacks had been continuously deflected by this layer of mucus. Until now, nothing seemed to work.

Ruthlessness shined in Ai Hui's eyes. At the moment his sword tip slid off, Dragonspine Inferno began to vibrate slightly. The seven palaces in his body trembled with the activation of [Big Dipper].

A strand of elemental energy was formed with unprecedented speed.

A cold glint flashed across Ai Hui's eyes.

[Crescent Moon]!

A brilliant crescent moon swiftly sliced through the blood worm's body.

Pfff!

A cloud of blood mist spurted out. Luckily, Ai Hui was wearing the Central Pine Armor, stopping the blood from spraying over his body.

Ai Hui immediately retreated.

The students behind him cheered. This was the blood worm's first sustained injury, and it gave everyone some hope for victory.

At the following scene, however, everyone's cheers came to a sudden stop.

The blood worm's mucus rapidly submerged the wound. Following which, the muscle tissues that were slashed regenerated frantically with a visible speed. Its wound, which had previously been a bloody mess, had healed completely.

The recently boosted morale of the students immediately dropped to zero.

Ai Hui's face darkened. The previous two moves had consumed a tremendous amount of his elemental energy, and yet they dealt negligible damage to the blood worm.

Shi Xueman rushed forward to engage the blood worm, but her attacks similarly failed to deal any significant damage.

Weakness. What was the blood worm's weakness? It must have a weakness!

Ai Hui stared fixedly at the blood worm as he racked his brains. Any beast had a weakness.

Ai Hui remembered at once the old man's words—that the blood traces may be the blood fiends' weakness.

Blood traces....

Ai Hui narrowed his eyes and carefully observed the blood worm's blood traces.

They were ring-shaped and overlapped the black stripes on its body. The width of each blood trace was about a palm-span, which seemed extremely thin on the blood worm's enormous body.

Eh?

Ai Hui counted carefully. There were nine blood traces.

Nine?

Was this a coincidence? Ai Hui thought to himself perplexedly. Nine was a special number during the Cultivation Era, and he couldn’t be sure whether this was related to the number of blood marks.

The red glow on the surface of the ground continued to intensify, but Ai Hui noticed that the bloody light on the blood worm’s body was significantly dimmer than before. Could it be that the intensifying red glow of the surface was related to the dimming of the blood worm’s bloody light?

"Jiang Wei, blast open the red ground!" Ai Hui screamed at the top of his lungs.

Raindrop-like light beams enveloped the ground.

Boom!

The dazzling burst of light was accompanied with a burst of sound.

Chunks of red soil flew into the air, revealing an enormous pit in the ground and the body of the blood worm in it.

The blood worm was clearly enraged. It twisted its gigantic body and swept it across the area.

Its terrifying rampage forced everyone to retreat.

Boom boom boom!

The abandoned houses that stood above the ground of rubble were completely demolished. Stones and bricks flew everywhere as explosions resounded through the air. The destructive power of the blood worm was formidable.

Everyone was in a state of confusion, and it caused the formation of the unit to collapse immediately.

"Are there any ways to deal with it?" Shi Xueman appeared beside Ai Hui and asked anxiously.

"There are some developments," Ai Hui said softly. "Enrage it and let it exhaust its energy."

Without asking why, Shi Xueman engaged the blood worm straightaway.

Ai Hui’s brain was turning rapidly. He roughly understood the situation with the blood worm. It was indeed a troublesome opponent with its gargantuan body, strength, defense, and regenerative ability. However, this did not mean it lacked weaknesses. For example, its destructive power was rather limited,

which could be seen from the small number of casualties on Ai Hui's side—not many were severely injured by it.

It must have been crucial for them to alter the terrain, or else they would not have drawn out such an enraged reaction from the blood worm.

Bloody glow, mucus, blood traces.

The bloody glow on the blood worm's body had dimmed significantly, with only a thin layer left. The main issue was the layer of mucus. It was slippery and thick, an impregnable armor. So long as they could break through this layer of mucus, they would be able to attack the blood traces.

There must be a way!

Ai Hui encouraged himself. In the past, when he was in the Wilderness, he had witnessed many formidable dire beasts slayed at the hands of humans' meticulous strategies.

His eyes lit up at once, and he yelled, "Who has a freezing ability? Or any ice-freezing drugs?"

The mucus was impregnable, but it was a liquid after all. Once it came into contact with the chilling cold, it would freeze and harden. And with the layer hardened hardened, its viscosity would drop until it could no longer endure the blood worm's tremendous strength.

"I do!" Duanmu Huanghun replied.

"Alright!" Ai Hui screamed. "The rest of you use ranged attacks!"

At his command, Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun unleashed a torrential pouring of arrows onto the blood worm as if their arrows cost nothing. They did not care anymore about the unit's formation; instead, everyone focused on channeling their elemental energy with all their might.

The sky was raining with streaks of light.

At this point, nobody held anything back in their attacks.

"Ingrate, get ready!" Ai Hui snarled.

Duanmu Huanghun almost tripped and fell down. This bastard!

However, he could not be bothered with Ai Hui right now. He channeled all of the elemental energy in his body, revealing cloud-like patterns beneath his feet. Soon after, he flew through the air and appeared above the blood worm.

Duanmu Huanghun was extremely imposing as he hovered in the air with swirling green flowers beneath his feet. That handsome face of his stared ruthlessly at the writhing blood worm, and the clothes on his body fluttered despite the lack of air currents. The

glinting of his eyes became brighter, resembling the stars in the night sky.

From the battle's beginning until now, his [Viridescent Flower] had been unable to pose any threats to the blood worm. Against its gargantuan body, his vines were too feeble.

When Ai Hui asked for someone with a freezing ability, he had responded without any hesitation. [Viridescent Flower] had a freezing move, [Symbol of Ice].

Only, it was as pity that he hadn't fully mastered this move yet. Given his current base level, it would exhaust him to execute this move.

But he did not think about such things and directly volunteered himself for the task.

There was no time for hesitation.

Suspended in the air, Duanmu Huanghun emanated a powerful aura, the elemental energy in his body channeled to the limits. He raised his arms, his slender fingers spread out like blossomed flowers.

The elemental energy in his body followed an unfamiliar path.

He was concentrated now more than ever before. The usually smooth elemental energy felt abnormally sluggish. He uncaringly

continued to channel his elemental energy with great determination and urgency.

Numerous green flowers flew from his fingertips and swirled around his body, resembling leaves that were swept up by the wind. They danced and aggregated until they formed a cascade of green flowers that spun rapidly around him.

His lips curled into a crazed smile. The ruthlessness in his eyes resembled blazing flames.

How can a mere [Symbol of Ice]....

Bright-red blood flowed from the corner of his mouth, lending an ethereal beauty to his pale-white, handsome face. The clothes on his body fluttered loudly as the cascade of green flowers swirled with increasing speed around his body.

.... stop me, Duanmu Huanghun!

In the air, Duanmu Huanghun smiled silently. Traces of blood stains could be seen on his neat and white teeth.

The flower-like blossomed fingers suddenly froze, sending the cascade of green flowers in a deluge towards the blood worm.

Chapter 205: [Viridescent Flower, Icy Fissure]

"I didn’t expect the mayor to be a survivor of the Battle of the Dawn."

The teacher speaking was Tao Yiwei, a good friend of Wang Shouchuan.

He was the teacher with the best performance in the entire Central Pine City. Not only was he cool-headed during combat, but he also led the students to achieve remarkable battle results. The continuous string of battles wore down his educated appearance, however, making the current Old Tao a different man altogether. Even his good friend, Wang Shouchuan, could not recognize him at first sight.

Similarly, if Tao Yiwei saw Wang Shouchuan, he wouldn’t be able to recognize the latter at first glance either.

This blood catastrophe was like a large smelting furnace, and all those thrown in came out a different person.

In the past, Tao Yiwei did not treat Wang Zhen with respect, but this time around, a tinge of respect could be sensed in his tone towards the mayor.

As the two flew with all their might, they exchanged some words.

"Yes." The dean sighed with sorrow. He used to think of Wang Zhen as an ordinary veteran retired from the front lines. Never did he expect him to have such an illustrious background.

He suddenly recalled that when he asked Wang Zhen about his leg injury, all he'd been told was that it happened ten years ago.

Ten years ago, there was nothing more sensational than the Battle of the Dawn.

Ten years ago, Ye Baiyi led 42 elite members and 80 reinforcement troops from the Icy Flames Division against the boundless flood of dire beasts and held onto the Flaming Canyon for fifteen days.

The battle began and ended at dawn, and thus it was given the name Battle of the Dawn.

By the end, there were only six survivors.

Corpses were splayed about the Flaming Canyon, and the rivers flowed with blood. From that battle onwards, the canyon reeked of blood and remained barren forever.

Ye Baiyi gained prestige from that battle and led a meteoric rise to the top of his profession. He eventually displaced the disfavored Le Buyu as the division leader of the Icy Flames Division at the age of twenty-two. Everyone went on to call him Icy Flames Ye.

He was written into the annals of history as the youngest leader of the Thirteen Divisions.

The Battle of the Dawn was one of the most famous battles of the past twenty years. And in the past fifty, its devastating nature remained unmatched.

The Avalon of Five Elements had long achieved a dominant position over the Wilderness. Hence, for the past few hundred years, territorial expansion had been their main priority. This is what made the Battle of the Dawn so memorable—there had been zero indication of the dire beasts' invasion, which threw them into a precarious situation.

Upon hearing that Wang Zhen was one of the survivors of the Battle of the Dawn, their astonishment was unimaginable. It was no wonder Wang Zhen never disclosed his division.

"I didn't expect it, I really didn't expect it." Tao Yiwei shook his head in disbelief. "The hero of the Battle of the Dawn actually came to our Central Pine City. It seems our city is a blessed place."

"It's a good thing for us." The dean used to think that Wang Zhen was leading poorly, but now that he knew his background, he immediately felt that the situation was far graver than he originally thought.

Tao Yiwei replied, "He has a lot of confidence in the A-1 unit."

He thought about Old Wang's disciple, Ai Hui. He was the only student of Central Pine City whom he was familiar with. He then recalled Wang Shouchuan's blueprint and felt only the greatest admiration for his old friend. Both master and student were extremely formidable.

"It's not that I don't have enough confidence in them," the dean explained, remembering his previous objections. "But in the end, they're still kids. Who can be responsible for them if they are to meet with any mishaps?"

"Maybe he thinks the A-1 unit can produce an Icy Flames Ye." Tao Yiwei chuckled.

"How can there be such a good thing?" The dean laughed along.

If one made a joke, the listener would treat it as a joke as well.

Which division leader of the Thirteen Divisions wasn't an extraordinary individual? It was inaccurate to say that they were the thirteen most powerful individuals in the Avalon of Five Elements, but surely it wasn't wrong to say that they were some of the most powerful elementalists in the Avalon of Five Elements.

For every one that became a leader of a division, everyone in the world would address them by their surname, followed by "division leader" out of respect.

The division leader was not only the leader of a division that held

power over life-and-death—they were also the spiritual emblem for that division. To become a division leader, they were required to have top-tier capabilities, and another was to have charisma. A subordinate would only be willing to follow and pour in their utmost effort for a good leader. If the leader was widely disapproved of, they would not be able to hold on to that position for long.

By now, everyone's distrust towards Wang Zhen had disappeared.

With a veteran who had gone through such a devastating experience like the Battle of the Dawn as their commander, they still could not obtain victory, thus proving that the situation was indeed outside of their control.

Suddenly, an energy wave from ahead caught their attention.

"Wood elemental energy.... It's [Viridescent Flower]!" The dean's facial expression changed minutely as he blurted out, "Duanmu Huanghun!"

The dean understood Duanmu Huanghun more than anyone else, and as such, he could immediately identify whom the energy wave belonged to. It was Duanmu Huanghun's genius that had built up the prestige of his Central Pine Academy—he was the number one talent in the school.

Such a formidable display of elemental energy far exceeded Duanmu Huanghun's base level.

The dean was burning with anxiety.

……

Duanmu Huanghun’s fixed his rigid fingers at the blood worm.

The green flowers that rapidly swirled around Duanmu Huanghun suddenly disappeared. With an ear-piercing sound like that of a shattering vase, numerous green flowers then exploded into green snowflakes that engulfed the blood worm.

A penetrating, haughty gaze overtook Duanmu Huanghun’s eyes. His mouth curled into a cold sneer before he clenched his fists.

Splat!

He spat out a mouthful of bloody mist. Even so, his facial expression did not change. It was as if the blood he expelled was not his own.

The green flowers that exploded disappeared once more. Following which, numerous green flower patterns appeared on the scarlet body of the blood worm. The uneven verdant patterns that spread across the blood worm’s body made it look as though it was made of green porcelain.

In the air, Duanmu Huanghun abruptly straightened his body.

He did not bother to wipe the blood stains from his mouth. His tall and upright suspended form displayed an indescribable confidence.

There was an impish smile on his devilishly handsome face, like that of a child who had done a mischievous deed.

He elegantly clapped his hands once.

[Viridescent Flower, Icy Fissure]!

Crack crack crack!

Throughout the layer of mucus on the blood worm's body, numerous cracks appeared. It was like watching an iceberg crack and disintegrate upon itself.

The blood worm twisted frantically from the pain caused by the frostbite.

Crack crack crack!

The crackling noises sounded more frequently and with increasing volume. In mid-air, Duanmu Huanghun resembled a refined magician who was waiting for his magic performance to unfold.

Large chunks of ice fell from the blood worm's body—the frozen

mucus.

The naked body of the blood worm finally appeared before everyone's eyes.

"Iron Lady, the blood traces!" Ai Hui roared as he surged forward.

When Shi Xueman heard the two words 'iron lady', she did not have any reaction except to grasp her Cirrus tightly, revealing the fury in her heart.

[Oblique Slash, Misty Strike]. Using all of his might, Ai Hui pierced his Dragonspine Inferno into the blood traces on the blood worm's body.

The jabs from Shi Xueman's Cirrus landed on the blood worm like torrential rain, each motion surrounded by snow-white mist. With each strike on the blood worm's body, the sprays of blood became larger and larger.

Sang Zhijun also clenched her teeth and retrieved her Bunny Hair Arrow. Once the arrow was shot out, it materialized into a thin streak of light that pierced into the blood worm's blood traces.

The blood worm's astonishing vitality was drained slowly, and it wrung its body agitatedly. For each strike on its body, that part shattered.

Ai Hui was frenzied; the stabbing effect of [Misty Strike] was not

useful in this situation. While he attacked with his [Oblique Slash], he continued to actively dodge the blood worm's attacks.

Slash by slash, he hacked at a specific blood trace continuously.

Pop!

Suddenly, his Dragonspine Inferno hit nothing but air. A section of the blood worm's bucket-wide body was chopped off by Ai Hui.

The students broke into cheers.

Despite being cleaved into two, it refused to die. The two separate parts were writhing, but Ai Hui noticed that after chopping it apart, its powers had dropped significantly.

Pop. Shi Xueman had chopped off another section.

The rest of the students, who previously could not find an opportunity to launch their attacks, surged forward together. Even Fatty was overwhelmed by a fervor of unknown source and rushed ahead to attack the worm.

With more manpower came more power. The students strictly followed Ai Hui's orders and hacked at the blood traces only. The blood worm with its nine blood traces was being hacked into ten pieces.

At last, the last strand of life disappeared completely from the massive blood worm.

The dean, Old Tao, and the elite unit arrived just in time to see everyone converging to hack at the worm.

Seeing the ten separate sections of the blood worm’s corpse on the ground, shivers crawled down their spines.

They had heard about the A-1 unit’s exceptional capability. Now that they witnessed it with their own eyes, the A-1 unit was truly terrifying....

Exhausted to the bone, the students collapsed to the ground as one.

Even as the elite unit descended from the sky, nobody bothered with them. When Ai Hui saw them gathering around the blood worm’s corpse, he reminded them, "Don’t touch it. The blood crystals are ours."

Instead of flaring up at Ai Hui’s impoliteness, the commander of the elite unit merely said, "Don’t worry, who wants the blood crystals? Not bad. All of you actually managed to kill a blood worm. It seems we can’t underestimate this unit anymore."

"You flatter us. Sir, how do I address you?" Ai Hui replied weakly.

"My surname is Zhang. You can call me Old Zhang." The man

chuckled. "You don’t need to introduce yourself. As of now, the A-1 unit is renowned. In the future, if we’re ever in trouble and you happen to pass by, please lend us a hand. These blood crystals are our spoils of war from our previous battle. Let’s form a partnership then."

Ai Hui looked with surprise at Old Zhang. He felt that this person was rather nice and nodded. "Thank you for your gift then, Old Zhang. If we encounter you and your unit, we’ll do our best to help you."

Ai Hui did not want to promise Old Zhang anything. Even though the blood crystals were valuable, they were not worth their lives.

"All right, we’re considered friends then. Now, we still have another mission awaiting us, so we have to leave. Until later." Old Zhang chuckled and left with his unit.

Seeing the other party leave, Ai Hui rubbed his throat and said, "Lou Lan, clean up the blood crystals."

"No problem, Ai Hui!" Lou Lan cheered.

Ai Hui cast a glance at Duanmu Huanghun and said, "Ingrate, if you’re not capable enough, then don’t force yourself. Tsk, I thought you were confident, but I didn’t expect that you were taking a gamble."

Duanmu Huanghun didn’t bother with Ai Hui. He greedily

gulped in breaths of air as an indescribable excitement arose within him.

Despite his severe injuries, he had relieved the pent-up anger inside his heart during the battle. He felt an indescribable contentment, and his body was extremely relaxed.

This was the life he wanted!

This was the Duanmu Huanghun he knew!

He didn’t mind dying as long as it was a glorious death!

He didn’t mind dying as long as he garnered everyone’s respect!

Chapter 206: Yu Mingqiu

Yu Mingqiu was a man of tall stature. His long hair was tied up into a ponytail using a red hairband and his small and slanted eyes made him look as if he would fall asleep at anytime. On the contrary, all the elementalists around him were on high alert. They had already reached the depths of the Induction Ground.

"How much longer until we reach Central Pine City?" Yu Mingqiu asked while yawning lazily.

"Approximately three days' time," replied an elementalist after doing some calculations.

"So sleepy." Tears welled up in Yu Mingqiu's sleepy eyes. "Life is tough. Rushing here and there, how many nights of sleep have we missed? Light equipment and little manpower; how can I be so low-profile, I am, after all, a division leader..."

"Sir, you're only a vice-division leader," reminded one of his subordinates.

"Oh, oh, oh... I'm still a vice-division leader, huh." Yu Mingqiu chuckled while yawning again. "A blemish does not obscure a jade's lustre. In any case, vice-division leaders are always being dispatched for such situations. Haven't you noticed that only the vice-division leaders are being dispatched?"

"All the division leaders are being stationed at the front line and they can't be moved," an elementalist replied. "Reportedly, the

front line is rather unsettled recently and there has been continuous harassment from the barbarian tribes. There are already a few places where fights have broken out."

"Bullshit!" Yu Mingqiu snorted. "How long have we been fighting the barbarian tribes? Don't you know their actual capabilities? It's such a coincidence that they attack us at this critical point in time. Haha, they are definitely colluding with the mastermind behind the blood catastrophe. As far as I am concerned, the blood poison is what we should prioritize right now!"

"Isn't the blood catastrophe a natural epidemic? You mean it's a man-made one?" The subordinate's face turned pale with fright.

"You're right about that."

"No wonder the blood fiends are getting stronger these days." the subordinate's tone was filled with worry. "We need to increase our speed. The other units might have already arrived."

"It's impossible," Yu Mingqiu replied with irritation as he involuntarily yawned again. "No one can be faster than we are. They are heading out from the front line while we are coming from our holidays. How can it be the same? It's a different scenario! Those old fogeys had better compensate me handsomely for the time I have wasted. Otherwise, I will not let them off!"

"But Sir, you're the one who wanted to go over..." the subordinate retorted.

"Rubbish, I need to go and save Mingxiu. Otherwise, Senior will kill me." Yu Mingqiu took a sweeping glance at everyone. "How about I let you all go back now? The next time all of you are in trouble, there will be no need for me to come to your rescue, right?"

Everyone remained silent.

"Sir, are we those kinds of people?"

"Sir, we have been following you for several days and nights!"

"Sir, you are only thinking about Miss Mingxiu, right?"

...

"All the while, I have been missing her," Yu Mingqiu replied lazily. "If not for her master's wrath, I would have gone to Central Pine City for my holidays and lived happily ever after with Mingxiu. I wouldn't even care for the position of division leader."

"Mister Lu will beat you to death, no, he would not let you die that easily." The subordinate ch"It appears that Miss Mingxiu has rejected you a few times," the subordinate continued. "Actually, both of you are rather close. She treats you like her own elder brother."

uckled.

When Yu Mingqiu thought of his senior, he couldn’t help but tremble in fear. If he was to fall into the hands of his senior, he would not be allowed to die easily even if he wanted to.

"It appears that Miss Mingxiu has rejected you a few times," the subordinate continued. "Actually, both of you are rather close. She treats you like her own elder brother."

With a look of disdain, Yu Mingqiu replied, "What do you know? Which girl in the world doesn’t say that? Mingxiu’s rejection is precisely why I see that there’s still hope for me. It’s normal for a nice and beautiful girl like her to be pursued by so many guys."

"Then it will be very difficult for you," the subordinate replied after a long hesitation.

"It’s a pity that there’s not enough time for Mingxiu and I to cuddle this time around." Yu Mingqiu put on an unhappy face. "There’s also a small Junior who Master has just accepted as his disciple, a brat from the Duanmu clan. Why can’t it be a female Junior? Really! Why can’t Master spare a thought for the love lives of his two disciples? I don’t care if Senior wasted his life by practising abstinence, but what about me? Do I need to waste my youthful years as well? Speaking of which, I feel really sad. Alright, since we are under the same Master, I don’t mind saving my little Junior; but then, what about Shi Beihai’s daughter? What does she have to do with me? He is from the North Sea Division whereas I’m from the Deathgrass Division. We’ve got nothing to do with each other."

"So, we don’t save them?" the subordinate questioned.

"Hmm... we still have to save them." Yu Mingqiu gave a bitter-looking face. "I’m afraid of Shi Beihai beating me up. He would definitely do it. Other than Master and Senior, none of us here are his match. If it happens, Master and Senior definitely won’t help me."

"Miss Shi is a great beauty," the subordinate reminded.

"My heart belongs to Mingxiu!" Yu Mingqiu gave a slight cough. "I heard that she is an austere beauty. Oh, that means she is also an icy beauty. I think she’s Senior’s type of girl. I can forget about it. Anyways, I’m doing this for everyone’s sakes. We only have around one hundred people. How many people can we actually save?"

"How many can we save?" The subordinate asked while looking at Yu Mingqiu. Yu Mingqiu’s reply would decide the difficulty of the situation they were going to face.

Everyone’s gaze turned to Yu Mingqiu simultaneously.

After a slight hesitation, Yu Mingqiu replied, "We will first help them with their defenses. If the defense can’t hold, we will bring three people to retreat with us; they will be Mingxiu, Duanmu Huanghun, and Shi Xueman."

He had to think of and be responsible for his subordinates. They

had a total of one hundred men and the blood fiends were getting increasingly stronger. It would be very difficult for them to break out of a siege if it was necessary for them to do so. They did not have the capability to bring so many people out with them.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. The atmosphere of the unit brightened up once more. It was not a big problem for an elite unit like them to retreat with three people.

Suddenly, Yu Mingqiu’s eyes shrunk and he yelled, "There are enemies right in front of us, prepare for battle!"

A massive red cloud was flying towards them at a terrifying speed.

When the massive red cloud flew closer to them, they could clearly see that it was a bunch of oversized blood bats. The blood bats were huge in number, looking like a massive red cloud from afar.

Yu Mingqiu shook his head and moaned. "There are birds coming from afar, prepare to feed them the melons!"

A seed appeared out of thin air on his palm. As he channeled his elemental energy into the seed, it germinated, grew, blossomed, and bore fruits at a visible speed.

Within seconds, two fist-sized, dark green, ripened melons appeared on his palm. The vines, stem, and roots of the melons

had reduced to nothing but dust, leaving only a few pieces of leaves.

These melons were called the Thousand Seeds Exploding Melons. The ‘Thousand Seeds’ referred to the huge number of seeds that it had inside of it. There were more than a thousand seeds in every melon. This melon was one of the classic battle melons that the Deathgrass Division liked to use.

Yu Mingqiu inserted two pieces of leaves into every melon.

Everyone followed suit.

With a frivolous look on his face, Yu Mingqiu blew his whistle and yelled, "Get ready!"

"Fire in the hole!" Yu Mingqiu roared and threw the melons in his hands towards the incoming blood bats.

Everyone followed suit. Two hundred melons flew towards the incoming blood bats with a whizzing sound.

When the blood bats noticed the small black dots that were flying towards them, they flapped their wings and dispersed in all directions.

Suddenly, the leaves that were inserted into the melons started flapping. Like wings, the leaves flapped faster and faster. The melons’ flying speed increased abruptly, causing them to fly even

faster.

The deafening whizzing sound got increasingly louder, striking fear into one’s heart.

They were like shadows of death, ruthlessly plunging into the bunches of blood bats that did not manage to disperse in time. The melons then exploded with a loud bang. Hundred of thousands of seeds exploded in all directions. Every seed that pierced into the body of a blood bat exploded once more.

The series of explosions wiped out the horde of blood bats like a violent storm.

This wave of attacks certainly caught the powerful horde of blood bats by surprise. A tremendous amount of flesh and blood bat corpses fell from the sky. The previously cloud-like horde of blood bats had been reduced significantly in number.

"There are no big birds in this world that would want to gnaw on grass after eating melons!"

As Yu Mingqiu was reciting his poem, he loaded his bow with an arrow.

Everyone broke out in laughter, following which, they also loaded their bows with arrows while reciting, "There are no big birds in this world that don’t want to gnaw on grass after eating melons!"

A rain of grass arrows came pouring down from the sky.

When the blood bats saw the incoming weak-looking grass arrows, they did not bother to dodge and surged forward.

At the instance when the grass arrows made contact with the blood bats, all of the arrows transformed into a huge grass net, trapping the blood bats within them tightly. The grass nets might look extremely fine and weak, but in actual fact, they were very sturdy. No matter how hard those blood bats struggled, they could not break free.

The blood bats fell from the sky, resembling a rain of dumplings falling from the sky. Numerous thumps could be heard coming from the ground.

Splatters of blood that resembled blossomed flowers were formed on the ground.

In the blink of an eye, more than half of the cloud-like horde of blood bats were killed. The remaining blood bats lost their fighting spirit and retreated.

Everyone was laughing happily as they kept their bows and arrows.

"Sir, nice poem!"

"This is a rare opportunity for us to use these lines. Everyone must memorize them properly!"

"But Sir, bats aren’t birds."

...

Yu Mingqiu acted as if he hadn’t heard them, then played with the bowstring and sighed. "It’s a pity that Mingxiu didn’t see my heroism. Otherwise, she’d definitely devote her life to me. The youngest division leader ever..."

"Sir, it’s vice-division leader!"

"Okay, okay, I’m a vice-division leader. I almost forgot about it. Every time I recite a poem, I become mentally exhausted."

Yu Mingqiu put on an act and shook his head. No one had seen the tinge of worry in his eyes.

After five minutes, a flock of blood sparrows emerged from the blood forest beneath them.

The blood sparrows were not really powerful, but there was a huge number of them. Furthermore, they launched a surprise attack from underneath, catching the elite unit by surprise. They were starting to have casualties.

Yu Mingqiu's face darkened.

After a few minutes, as they were passing through the clouds, a wave of blood falcons suddenly appeared and attacked them.

The blood falcons were as fast as lightning. They caused the elite unit to have more casualties. The worst thing was that they had expended a huge amount of their resources and elemental energy.

Yu Mingqiu's heart sank. It felt as if there was a huge, invisible net silently entrapping them.

This thought suddenly came to his mind. Could the Induction Ground be a bait?

The blood catastrophe had started at the weakest place, the Induction Ground where everyone's children were located. As such, the Thirteen Divisions must reinforce it. In this critical moment, the barbarian tribes had suddenly launched an invasion against the front line, causing the situation to worsen. What followed was the same response from every division leader, which was to dispatch their vice-division leaders.

On one side, the higher-ups must defend the front line; on the other side, they had to protect everyone's sons and daughters. Hence, they had to send the vice-division leaders for the latter task. The life of a vice-division leader was so miserable...

Until now, a lot of people still thought that the blood catastrophe

was a natural disaster.

This was such a perfect plan, Yu Mingqiu exclaimed in admiration silently.

Encircling an enemy post in order to attack the reinforcements coming to its aid. Even when one recognized the trap, he or she would have already been caught in it.

Yu Mingqiu’s facial expression changed. Then, he said to his subordinate, "We must split ways. You all will break out of the siege while I will continue towards Central Pine City."

"Sir!" the subordinate became worried immediately.

"Listen to me." Yu Mingqiu’s usually joking self had completely disappeared as he spoke solemnly. "We will split ways and all of you will return to seek reinforcements! Remember, stop the other divisions from following and try to make them do their best to unite together. There’s a mastermind behind the blood catastrophe! I will go to Central Pine City. Don’t worry, I will fly at my highest speed. The blood fiends will not be able to catch up with me. I will wait for your reinforcements in Central Pine City. Hurry up, I will cover all of you for awhile."

Even though his subordinate was unwilling to do so, he did not dare to disobey Yu Mingqiu’s order. Clenching his teeth, he turned around and flew off.

Yu Mingqiu looked at the incoming blood falcons and blew a whistle. An aura of killing intent rose in his slanted eyes. "I really want to see who caused all these troubles? It’s never easy to take advantage of me."

Chapter 207: The Discussion on Blood Crystals

Ai Hui and his counterparts were able to defeat the blood worm, but were mentally and physically exhausted at the same time. The previous order that required them to launch another wave of attacks had been cancelled as a result.

The first thing Ai Hui did when he returned to the training hall was to run to the message tree and write down everything that had happened today. He carefully described the process of attacking the nine blood traces on the blood worm's body.

At this critical stage, he no longer cared about the Blood of God as he might be killed by blood fiends at anytime. The threat of the Blood of God might be great, but it was not greater than the threat of being eaten by blood fiends on the spot.

If he did not even know whether or not he would live to see tomorrow, why would he care about the day after tomorrow?

The old man simply asked him to be careful and to survive this catastrophe. If necessary, he wanted Ai Hui to destroy the message tree and that piece of leaf. After all, any message tree could be used to contact him.

Ai Hui was slightly disappointed. He wanted to know specific information about the blood fiends, such as their weaknesses, which would be helpful for his current plight.

Although Ai Hui was disappointed, the fight against the blood catastrophe carried on, and he still had to depend on himself.

The amount of blood crystals that the blood worm produced was far more than what the blood ants had yielded. Furthermore, the blood worm's blood crystals were also of higher quality. There are a total of 10 pieces of blood crystals. Every piece was thumb-sized, sparkling, translucent, and smooth. Even though the body of the blood worm was so huge, it had only produced 10 blood crystals. Ai Hui was cursing the blood worm repeatedly in his heart. What was the point of growing so big when it could only produce 10 pieces of blood crystals?

The elite unit's leader, whose surname was Zhang, had given them three additional blood crystals. The quality of his blood crystals was not as good as the blood worm's. They must have been obtained from the blood ants.

Shi Xueman, Duanmu Huanghun, Sang Zhijun, Jiang Wei, Fatty, and Wang Xiaoshan were called over by Ai Hui. Perplexed, everyone looked at Ai Hui..

"These are blood crystals." Ai Hui pointed at the blood crystals on the table.

Everyone cast a baffled glance at Ai Hui. You don't say! Everyone knew that these were blood crystals...

"I have discovered one of their uses."

Everyone became alert at once with a look of curiosity on their faces. Initially, they thought Ai Hui wanted the blood crystals for monetary reasons like before. They did not expect for him to find a use for the crystals.

"What use does it have?" the straightforward Sang Zhijun blurted out.

Shi Xueman took a glance at Ai Hui and felt utterly astonished. Was there anything that this fellow did not know? Even the mayor failed to find a use for the blood crystals, yet this fellow actually had.

"All of you, take a look."

Ai Hui put his Dragonspine Inferno on the table, picked up a blood crystal, and placed it on one of the prismatic crystals of the sword.

The blood crystal rapidly melted and was absorbed into the prismatic crystal.

Buzz. A strand of electricity sparked off between Ai Hui’s fingertip and the Dragonspine Inferno

Everyone widened their eyes as amazement rose upon their faces..

A glint flashed across Shi Xueman’s eyes as a pensive look appeared on her face.

There were many things that Ai Hui could not explain to them, like the Blood of God, the old man, etc. As such, he could only lie to them. "Last time, I touched a blood crystal to the Dragonspine Inferno and this phenomenon occurred. The prismatic crystal on the sword is an artifact remnant. What is an artifact remnant? It’s a portion of an artifact that’s left behind. This blood crystal is able to stimulate the artifact remnant. I suspect the blood crystals might contain spiritual force."

Simultaneous gasps of shock could be heard. Everyone knew exactly what spiritual force was.

From the day the Avalon of Five Elements was established, there had been fanatics who were persistently trying to seek the remains of the Cultivation Era. The Avalon of Five Elements had directly progressed from the Cultivation Era. People were not completely ignorant of the Cultivation Era. There were numerous records that contained information on various mystical spells and artifacts. The legacies of the Cultivation Era were very rare and precious, causing countless people to lust over them. The worth of just a miniscule portion of a Cultivation legacy was enough to surpass the value of the entire Avalon of Five Elements.

However, no one had succeeded until now.

That was because of spiritual force.

All artifacts and spells needed spiritual force to function. Without spiritual force, the mountainous heaps of artifacts might as well be thrown into the Silver Mist Sea. Without spiritual force, those apocalyptic supreme spells were just cheap-selling scraps and rubbish.

Of course, if spiritual force could be found, those mountainous heaps of artifacts and spells would become mountain sized heaps of gold.

While talking, Ai Hui shamelessly took another blood crystal and pressed it against his Dragonspine Inferno.

"Let us see how many blood crystals the Dragonspine Inferno can absorb?"

Everyone else's gazes were immediately captivated by the Dragonspine Inferno, with curiosity surging through their faces.

After absorbing three blood crystals in a row, the Dragonspine Inferno could not absorb any more blood crystals. There was an astonishing transformation in the Dragonspine Inferno's appearance. The previously reddish-black body of the sword had become silver-white in color. The sword was surging with silvery lightning sparks. The red prismatic crystals had become transparent and the lightning sparks within them were much more stronger than before.

The entire sword was glowing with a white luster. One could tell that it was an extraordinary weapon with just a single look.

The sword had become lighter and thinner as well. Its texture resembled that of metal instead of wood. The edge of the sword became much sharper. Even the previously crimson wave patterns on the blade were replaced by silver ones.

"It’s magical!"

"Oh my god!"

Cheers broke out. Everyone was flabbergasted and even Ai Hui was shocked. His jaw dropped and a stupefied expression was fixed on his face. Was this his Dragonspine Inferno? If he had not seen the entire process of the transformation with his own eyes, he would never have thought that this gleaming treasure sword was his Dragonspine Inferno.

Brandishing his new sword, Ai Hui felt something unusual from it.

Indeed, even though the sword had become much lighter and thinner, Ai Hui did not find it unfamiliar. On the contrary, he was weirdly accustomed to the sword, as if it was part of his body.

"Do you want to give it a try?" Ai Hui looked at Shi Xueman.

"All right!" Shi Xueman replied without any hesitation, looking somewhat eager and excited.

Such a transformation had exceeded the limits of her imagination. She was extremely interested in Ai Hui's sword.

Ai Hui executed the [Oblique Slash] and a streak of lightning flashed across the air.

Amazement rose in Shi Xueman's eyes. It was so fast!

Ai Hui's [Oblique Slash] was approximately 33% faster than usual. This shocked Shi Xueman and she quickly pulled out her spear to deflect the incoming attack.

The streak of lightning and the Cirrus collided against each other.

Ai Hui took two steps back. The weight of the Cirrus was indeed frightening. Furthermore, with the powerful spiralling effect of the spear, Shi Xueman's attack was violent and mighty.

On the other side, Shi Xueman did not move a single inch.

Upon seeing Ai Hui's gaze, a weird look appeared on Shi Xueman's face. "My palm is a bit numb."

So this is the feeling of being hit by a lightning-type attack...

Shi Xueman felt rather curious. In the Avalon of Five Elements, lightning-type offensive methods were not really developed yet.

This was her first time seeing a lightning-type attack. The numbness in her palm piqued her curiosity.

The rest were curious as well. All of them jump forward, wanting to give it a try.

"It’s numb, it’s numb!" Sang Zhijun yelled excitedly.

"Eh, it’s really numb," Jiang Wei felt incredulous.

"It feels as if I have eaten a lot of peppers! Why does it feel worse than peppers? Even my face feels numb!" Wang Xiaoshan shouted.

"That’s because you never eat chillies before! If you eat enough chillies, not only your face will be numb, haha," Fatty spoke from his experience.

"Your face will be numb if I stab a sword into it," Duanmu Huanghun said suddenly.

...

It was as if everyone had found a toy. All of them were extremely excited.

The direction that the discussion was going to... did not seem right...

Ai Hui was stunned.

He coughed softly and interrupted the ongoing nonsensical discussion, "All right, let us discuss how to make use of this unique characteristic of the blood crystals?"

Everyone stopped talking and looked at him pensively.

"Our target is to get out of this place alive. Looking at the current situation, this goal is rather difficult to achieve. We are in deep water now. Even though the mayoral office keeps on emphasizing that there will be reinforcements, we still need to prepare for the worst. What if there are no reinforcements? What if the reinforcements are slightly late?"

Ai Hui said a lot of things in one go. However, there were a lot of things he left unsaid, like the Blood of God for example.

He had a hunch that the reinforcements might not reach them smoothly. He did not know how to explain this to the other, and as such, he could only use the phrase "prepare for the worst."

When he saw a contemplative look on everyone’s face, he continued, "No one knows how to use the blood crystals yet. Can we use them to strengthen ourselves? How should we do it then? Everyone, let us think about these questions together."

All of them nodded their head. They did not care about anyone else. What mattered the most was that they, themselves, survived.

"We need to better understand the nature of the blood crystals first." Surprisingly, Duanmu Huanghun was the first to speak out. He then continued coldly, "It worked for your Dragonspine Inferno, but what about other artifact remnants? Do they work on artifacts? If so, what types of artifacts do they work on?

"There are too few blood crystals." Fatty's face was sore. "With a scarcity of blood crystals, they will be gone in an instant if we try anything with them."

"That's right." Sang Zhijun was reluctant as well.

Shi Xueman collected her thoughts and said, "What Ai Hui said is right. If the reinforcements are able to reach us quickly, the blood crystals are not really that important. If the reinforcements are late or there are no reinforcements, then we will have plenty of blood crystals. Furthermore, we can ask other teams for their blood crystals as well. We can say we are investigating the uses of blood crystals. Huanghun and I will go and find the mayor. He most likely will agree to our proposal."

Everyone nodded their heads.

"We can investigate the crystals openly, including their effects on artifacts. I believe the mayor will help us to locate a large amount of artifacts and artifact remnants." Shi Xueman might not have a loud voice, but her words contained a convincing power. "Other than that, we will need blacksmiths as well. We need help to embed the artifact remnants into weapons or to transform the

artifact remnants into equipment."

"Lou Lan can do it!" Lou Lan raised his hand happily.

"Lou Lan is fabulous! You know everything!"

"Almighty Lou Lan!"

"Lou Lan, can you just directly tell us what you don’t know?"

"Lou Lan, come home with me!"

Everyone was praising Lou Lan with liveliness.

Lou Lan was very happy that everyone liked him.

"After we finish with our investigation, we will report our findings to the mayor’s office," Shi Xueman continued to explain. "Once Ai Hui’s lightning sword appears, it will catch the attention of the mayor’s office. We can’t hide it. Rather than being forced to give it up, why not take the initiative? Furthermore, without the support of the mayor’s office, our progress will be very slow. Also, if we report our findings to the mayor, we will be rewarded with merit points. If we do it before any of the others, we might be able to get Heaven Merit Points. And if we can survive this catastrophe, these merit points will be very useful to us. As for the gains we obtain before we submit our findings to the mayor, I believe he won’t make things difficult for us."

Shi Xueman’s explanations were clear and precise, displaying authority and convincing everyone.

"Let’s do it then!"

Ai Hui made the final decision and cast a thoughtful look at Shi Xueman.

For an iron lady that had big boobs, she was rather smart.

Chapter 208: Weak Aura

Yu Mingqiu spat out a mouthful of saliva. When he saw the flying beasts in the distance, his face darkened.

The difficulty of the battles had far exceeded his expectations.

These blood birds were far more troublesome than what he had anticipated. The most troublesome thing was that there was a huge number of them. In less than half a day, he had killed more than 10 blood birds that had nine blood traces on each of their bodies. He had encountered a variety of species such as falcons, vultures, etc. There were also a lot of species that he had never seen before. It was possible that these unknown species might have mutated after being inflicted with the blood poison, causing them to become drastically altered so that he was unable to recognize them.

There were all kinds of odd-looking blood fiends, but all of them had one thing in common—they had nine blood traces on their bodies.

He might appear nonchalant on the surface, but he was an experienced and well-trained elite after all, so he definitely would not miss such an obvious characteristic such as the nine blood traces. He conjectured that the number of blood traces might have something to do with the base level of the blood fiends. Dire beasts also had such unique marks to indicate their base level.

The nine traced blood birds were rather powerful, but in the eyes of Yu Mingqiu, who was a vice division leader, they were weak.

However, there were truly too many blood birds, and they were very crafty. The soaring blood birds in the distance did not expect Yu Mingqiu to specialize in archery. After he killed several blood birds in one shot, these blood birds flew further away from him.

To free himself from these blood birds, Yu Mingqiu flew down into the blood forest below him. However, the situation in the blood forest was even worse. Blood fiends surged toward him like tidal wave.

He had no choice but to ascend to the sky again.

To break free from the blood bird flock, he could only fly forward at his top speed. However, every time he was about to break free from the pursuing blood birds, he would encounter a new concentrated legion of blood birds that flew toward him from his front. He had no choice but to engage them in battle.

Once he engaged, his flying speed would slow down.

To kill each subsequent group of blood birds that were obstructing his forward path, he would exert himself strenuously and the pursuing blood birds behind him would catch up to him. In the end, the number of blood birds that surrounded him was getting larger and larger.

"Why am I so popular? Is it possible that I’m considered handsome among the blood fiends?" Yu Mingqiu muttered to himself with a helpless look on his face.

All along, he suspected that there was a mastermind commanding the fiends from the shadows. However, even after he racked his brain, he could not pinpoint the perpetrator. He had experienced countless battles of all sizes, but this was the first time he had encountered such an unusual situation.

I will kill all these birds and see if you will reveal yourself!

"The life of a handsome man is never easy!"

Yu Mingqiu sighed with sorrow and helplessness as he thought about his life. With a jolt of his body, he suddenly appeared a few hundred metres away from a particular nine traced blood bird. Pulling the bowstring with all his might, he released his arrow and shattered its head in one shot.

"Why wouldn’t the blood birds be attracted to me too? Oh, you are male. Sorry. Regardless of the gender, a true handsome man will kill anyone, male or female."

Killing two birds with one stone!

"Perfect archery! Perfect man! A man that even Mingxiu can’t resist! Luckily senior is not here...."

Yu Mingqiu kept on uttering nonsense nonstop. His hands did not slow down. His body was as fast as lightning, darting left and right. The glint of his arrows appeared and disappeared unpredictably, yet they never missed their targets.

In the blink of an eye, the entire sky was painted with blood and feathers were scattered everywhere.

He cleared the horde of blood birds in exactly 10 minutes. Panting heavily, he had satisfied look on his face.

"I’m really pitiful. How can a perfect man like me do such heavy manual labor? It’s really not appropriate."

This time around, it appeared that he had stunned the shadowy mastermind. After flying for a long while, he did not encounter a single blood bird.

As he continued to fly forward, he realized that something was off.

He stopped flying and took a look at his surroundings. He was surrounded by a sea of blood forest and could not even see the end.

His face turned pale white. Damn it! How could he forget such an important thing...

This handsome man had a poor sense of direction...

.....

Shi Xueman understood the mayor’s office very well. Together

with Duanmu Huanghun, they headed to the government building. Even though Wang Zhen was very surprised that the A-1 unit was interested in the blood crystals, he still gave them all of his support.

Not only did he grant them all of the blood crystals from the other units, he also dispatched a team of his subordinates to help them collect artifacts and artifact remnants.

However, the mayor could not help them recruit blacksmiths and they could not even find one.

It was also at this point in time that Shi Xueman and the rest learned that the official strategy revolved around Master Han Yuqin's concept of "treating the city as a piece of cloth."

At such a critical time, the efficiency of the mayor's office was extremely high. No one wanted to waste any time.

When Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun returned to the Vanguard Training Hall, they discovered that the first batch of blood crystals, artifacts, and artifact remnants had already been delivered.

The job of processing the blood crystals was fully given to Lou Lan.

"Treating the city as a piece of cloth." Shi Xueman cast a glance at Ai Hui. "The designer of this plan is your master, Wang

Shouchuan. The administrator of this plan is your mistress, Master Han Yuqin."

When Shi Xueman heard about the concept of "treating the city as a piece of cloth," she was very surprised. Treating the city as a piece of cloth, what an imposing idea! If not for the fact that this plan had been approved by the embroidery master Han Yuqin, Shi Xueman would have thought that it was a bullsh*t concept.

No one had ever done something like this before.

The one who designed the plan was Wang Shouchuan, who was Han Yuqin's husband and Ai Hui's master. Other than this background information, she knew nothing about Wang Shouchuan and had never heard of his name before.

She did not know the specific details, but when she saw how the mayor and the dean both praised the concept to high heaven and how all of the deployments revolved around this plan, she felt extremely confident.

"Master and mistress!" Ai Hui was shocked. However, he soon calmed down and spoke without any hesitation, "I absolutely believe in master and mistress. Tell me more about this concept."

Upon discovering that his master and mistress were taking actions, Ai Hui immediately felt more at ease. His master and mistress were proud individuals. If they were willing to take action, it meant that they had confidence in what they were doing. Ai Hui was rather excited to see his master and mistress display

their magnificence.

Shi Xueman explained, "Generally speaking, the entire plan is split into two parts. The first part is to produce nine gigantic gold needles. Reportedly, the nine gold needles are extremely fine. Right now, the blacksmiths are forging them with all their might. We will not be of any help for this part. Once the gold needles are completed, they will be nailed to nine specific points in Central Pine City. This step will allow for the conduction and direction of the elemental energies in the city, forming a network.. Our mission will most likely be focused on the second part of the plan."

Ai Hui rubbed his palms together with an eager look on his face. "I hope the gold needles can be completed soon."

As a disciple of his master, he could not miss such a big event no matter what!

This was the first time that Shi Xueman saw such a facial expression on Ai Hui. From her impression of Ai Hui, no matter what time it was, he was always calm and cool-headed. Many times, he was so calm that he seemed unreasonable.

It was only at this moment that she saw Ai Hui express an emotion that belonged to their young age.

"We have to endure through this period of time," Shi Xueman reminded. "The attacks from the blood traced fiends will get more and more ferocious. Our situation will be more dangerous and arduous as a result. The elite unit has suffered massive casualties.

At the least, we have to endure until the day Master Han takes action."

She felt slightly sad since the Shi Clan Training Hall had already had a few men that were sacrificed.

Since the Shi Clan Training Hall's guards were more competent than the average guards, they had been enlisted into the elite unit. The last battle had a very high number of casualties.

She was worried about Uncle Yong Zheng, but she did not use her status to influence the mayor despite her concern. The mayor might agree to protect Uncle Yong Zheng, but this would be considered an act of misappropriation and would only bring shame to both Uncle Yong Zheng and her family.

The point of conscripting the whole city was to make sure that everyone contributed part of his or her strength and life. No one was exempt.

After going through such an ordeal, everyone was extremely exhausted. Everyone was relieved after resolving the main problem. Even an iron lady like Shi Xueman could not handle it.

Duanmu Huanghun stood motionless at one side, resembling a stationary wooden stake. Upon closer examination, one would realize that this guy had actually fallen asleep. A strand of crystal-clear drool could even be seen on the corner of his mouth.

Today, he was completely worn out.

Everyone lay all over the hall, fast asleep.

Ai Hui did not sleep. He sat cross-legged on the ground while holding the brand new Dragonspine Inferno in his hands. The more tired he was, the better time it was for him to train. If he could endure the extreme fatigue, his training results would be exceptionally good.

In a state of extreme fatigue, one's mental state and thought process were scattered and disorganized. It would be very difficult for one to stay concentrated.

Ai Hui, who possessed a sword embryo, was different from the others. The essence, breath, and spirit were used to nurture the sword embryo.

The essence, breath, and spirit were incorporeal energies. A corporeal entity like the sword embryo was usually nurtured using incorporeal energies. Ai Hui's everyday training had established a solid foundation for this process.

During his training, Ai Hui quickly felt that his sword embryo was behaving differently from usual.

Its slow pulsation made Ai Hui feel as if he was in a creek between a valley. The sound of water flowing resounded through his ears. However, within a short of period of time, the sound

disappeared and Ai Hui felt another type of pulsation.

This one was extremely weak, resembling a lit candle placed in a windy area that would be extinguished at any moment.

This was...

Ai Hui calmed himself down and tried to understand what was going on. He filtered the undulations of elemental energy in his mind and tried to locate this extremely weak pulsation.

Dragonspine Inferno!

When Ai Hui found the source of the pulsation, seven weakly-lit dots of light appeared in his consciousness.

Their luminosity was so weak that he could even differentiate them from one another.

Their auras were similarly weak.

The faint aura... a somewhat familiar aura... the sword's aura!

Ai Hui's mind jolted suddenly, almost causing him to lose his focus.

These seven artifact remnants might have been part of a flying

sword or a sword-related artifact. Even though they had been corroded by the Silver Mist Sea for thousands of years, the remnants still emitted a faint tinge of sword consciousness after being stimulated by a small amount of spiritual force. It was as if he had wiped off the dust from an ancient treasure, revealing its original radiance.

Ai Hui was overjoyed.

It was a lifelong dream for him to be able to comprehend the sword consciousness that could only be found in the Cultivation Era.

He suppressed his ecstasy, gradually calming his mind again.

He was feeling the faintly discernible sword consciousness.

There was absolute silence in the training hall.

In the depths of the training hall, there was a room that was brightly lit.

Lou Lan, who had been given a heavy responsibility, was busy going through experiments.

"Deconstruction of the blood crystal, trial number 12. Sand core, begin recording. Test subject, artifact remnant number 12. Attempting to derive the unknown energy. Failure!"

...

"Deconstruction of the blood crystal, trial number 37. Sand core, begin recording. Test subject, artifact remnant number 37. Attempting to derive the unknown energy. Success. Beginning power analysis. Analyzing in process. Type of energy, unknown. Setting up a template. It's called blood spiritual force. Undergoing deeper analysis..."

...

"Ratio analysis between blood spiritual force and elemental energy, trial number 19. Sand core, begin recording."

...

"Interaction between blood spiritual force and elemental energy. Sand core, begin recording."

...

"Blood spiritual force and earth elemental energy are colliding against each other. Sand core, begin recording... Warning! Sand core is being invaded by the blood spiritual force! Defense mechanism of the sand core activated! Defense mechanism of the sand core failed! The sand core seal is being damaged! The sand core seal has been removed! Warning! Elemental energy in the sand core has been depleted... Substitution mechanism has

activated. The sand core will begin to absorb the blood spiritual force... Absorbing the blood spiritual force in progress... Absorbing... Absorbing...

...

"Absorption completed."

"Midnight activated."

Chapter 209: New Sword Moves and Elemental Energy Soup

Ai Hui slowly opened his eyes and a bright ray of light flickered past them.

Ai Hui could not get his mind off the sword ray that had triggered the lightning and thunder. That scene was simply too stunning.

When he had been engulfed by the sword embryo, Ai Hui had witnessed the sword intent of the seven artifact remnants.

Just that scene alone almost made him lose his mind.

At that moment, there were only three words in his mind: ‘Destroy the world.’

Thinking back to the times when he’d read through the sword manuals, he’d thought that the descriptions were simply too exaggerated; however, having witnessed first-hand that sword intent, he understood that the descriptions had not been exaggerated. Rather, they were too understated.

Glancing down at the Dragonspine Inferno in his hand, the silver ray was still dazzling; however, he was no longer able to detect the indistinct, feeble energy of the seven artifact remnants.

Ai Hui was somewhat surprised that the sword embryo could

absorb the sword intent. After pondering, he came to an understanding. If he were to compare the similarities between the sword embryo and sword intent, then they were both categorized as part of the three essential life-sustaining energies.

Ai Hui did not know whether or not his conjecture was right. In any case, it was how he understood it.

He grabbed the Dragonspine Inferno and started his sword dance.

His initial sword moves were slow and coarse. Sometimes, he would stop and ponder and make some adjustments. The sword moves always had some minute changes.

He had read many sword manuals, but the sword manuals were just objects. Their descriptions of the sword moves were just limited to literature. There were many mysterious meanings behind the sword moves that were difficult to put into words.

For a long time, he could only fumble about persistently, like grasping something in the dark and pondering about it.

The moment the sword intent of the seven artifact remnants had been engulfed by the sword embryo, Ai Hui was able to experience the sword intent as it was during the Cultivation Era. While it was still simply too high-end for the current Ai Hui, it was still of an unusual significance to him. He could use it as a source of reference.

He waved the long sword, occasionally went forwards, and occasionally retreated. He attempted different moves persistently and used such a method to sort out his recent comprehensions and gains.

Gradually, a change occurred in his sword ray. The sword ray became smooth and no longer flashed and disappeared. Instead, it was congregated and did not disperse.

His heart was filled with immense happiness.

So, it was like this... it was like this...

Countless inspirations started to appear in his mind. He was elated and the sword moves changed continuously. The sword ray also changed accordingly.

The silver sword ray became increasingly congregated and stayed in the air, not dispersing. Ai Hui made move after move and did not stop. The sword in his hand was getting increasingly fast.

The silver ray was emitted continuously, like a moving electric snake. It lit up his stern face and devoted eyes.

The rest of the people in the courtyard were startled. They could not help but watch while standing at the side.

Shi Xueman was long alerted. She felt a unique, peculiar aura, one she had never experienced before. It felt like being high above

the clouds, at a hard to reach, remote place, where a lone figure bathed in sunlight walked as if he were flying and giving off an electric sensation.

Following which, she saw Ai Hui who was practicing his sword dance.

Ai Hui's figure was almost concealed by the intense, never-ending sword ray.

Shi Xueman's eyes widened. Oh gosh, what sort of swordplay was this? Why didn't the sword ray disperse?

Ai Hui was still completely absorbed in his sword dance. In a flash, the surrounding sword rays were like an ever-increasing pile of silver snow. His figure had completely disappeared within the silver sword rays.

Then, in the next moment, a melodious sword chime was heard throughout the training hall.

The sword rays which were like a pile of snow dispersed with a loud bang!

The silver rays dispersed and filled up the sky. Ai Hui stood perfectly straight, like a long sword, and looked majestic.

He gave a long exhale and, just like the sword ray, the joy in his eyes vanished. His eyes regained their usual cold gaze. His gains

were huge. He'd managed to understand three more sword moves: [Heavenly Thrust], [Uprising Moon], and [Ruined Clouds]. After some modifications, these basic moves were able to trigger elemental energy.

[Heavenly Thrust] was a thrusting move, but was not as mighty as [Misty Strike]; however, its movements were more clean cut and the range was larger.

[Uprising Moon] was a move that required lifting the sword. Ai Hui made use of some of the techniques used in [Crescent Moon]. The tip was similarly moon shaped, although it was slimmer.

[Ruined Clouds] made use of the resonance of the elemental energy. It had an oscillating impact and could be used for both attack and defence. It could also be used to extricate oneself from a dangerous situation.

Having gained three additional moves implied that Ai Hui now had more means with which to act. Usually, [Misty Strike] and [Oblique Cut] needed extra steps or other methods to complement the gaps. In a battle, it would cause Ai Hui to easily land into a dangerous situation.

However, Ai Hui's biggest gain was actually his understanding of the sword moves. This was the first time he could appreciate the sword intents, including those of the Cultivation Era. While the terrifying sword move had been far beyond his comprehension, he was still enlightened and it helped him a lot.

When he'd created [Misty Strike], he had understood the reasoning behind why sword moves required the ignition of elemental energy. In the Cultivation Era, they had ignited spiritual force. Despite this, he had still lacked understanding regarding resonance. After looking at the thunderous sword move, however, he had developed a new understanding regarding resonance. The sword ray which had been concentrated and not dispersed was a unique form of elemental energy resonance.

Ai Hui's sword moves were like a magnet. They attracted the elemental energy and formed a unique sword ray.

As a result, the sword moves became more formidable. Ai Hui reckoned that [Misty Strike]'s formidability was twice what it had been before, and this did not take into account his faster reaction speed resulting from the improved Dragonspine Inferno.

Ai Hui's strength was completely transformed.

Shi Xueman stared blankly at Ai Hui. That chap completely undermined all her knowledge. Since she was young, she had been surrounded by geniuses. Despite seeing countless geniuses, she has never met anyone like Ai Hui.

His capability was changing daily.

Shi Xueman suddenly thought, if Ai Hui has any enemies, they would definitely suffer.

Duanmu Huanghun gave Ai Hui a glance. He lowered his head and looked at the [Viridescent Flower] circulating around his hand. His mouth curled and his eyes flickered with intent to battle, like a blazing fire in the dark.

"Ai Hui!" Lou Lan rushed out of the room and ran to Ai Hui. He looked up and earnestly said, "Lou Lan seems to have become more brilliant."

Ai Hui gave a hearty laugh and patted Lou Lan’s head. He pretended to be stern and said, "Lou Lan has always been the cleverest!"

"Ai Hui, really?" Lou Lan’s eyes was shining and filled with delight.

Ai Hui rushed into the courtyard and shouted to the others, "Does everyone think that Lou Lan is the best?"

"Of course! Who could be better than Lou Lan?"

"When Lou Lan brings out his elemental soup, I will surrender!"

"When Lou Lan brings out his elemental soup, everyone will surrender!"

"When Lou Lan brings out his elemental soup, even the dead corpses on the battlefield will climb up and surrender again!"

...

.....

Lou Lan’s smile was so wide that his eyes formed a crescent moon shape. He said delightedly, "Lou Lan would prepare elemental soup for everyone!"

There was a short moment of silence and everyone started to rush over. Fatty was the most dramatic. He kneeled down and slid over impressively, emitting sparks due to the friction. He forced himself to the front and said righteously, "Lou Lan, please give me a chance to surrender!"

After a moment, Lou Lan brought out a pot of brightly-colored soup. An unpleasant smell enveloped the place. Everyone’s expression turned slightly green. Just by the smell alone, it was enough to make them nauseated.

"This is Lou Lan’s newest creation. It is a specially concocted elemental energy soup based on the properties of the blood crystal. The pressing matter on everyone’s minds right now is raising their base level. The blood crystal contains blood spiritual energy and is a unique source of strength. It can increase the effect of elemental food, furthermore, it consists of properties similar to the origins of wood elemental energy. It can eliminate internal injuries sustained from training. Except for its pungent odor, there are no other faults."

Lou Lan spoke frankly and assuredly. His tone was filled with confidence. The pot of soup emitted a colorful vapor and the air was filled with a smell that made everyone nauseated. It made the atmosphere eerie and gloomy.

Everyone looked at each other in dismay and there was a span of awkward silence.

Ai Hui laughed and said, "This is the first time Lou Lan created an elemental energy soup with such a foul smell. My interest is piqued."

He walked to the big pot. He pinched his nose while taking a big scoop and ladling out a bowl for himself.

"Courageous Ai Hui!" Lou Lan said happily.

"What can I do? Lou Lan is Ai Hui’s sand puppet. While this soup looks scary, being your master, I need to show some support. This is the willy-nilly of life."

Ai Hui spoke helplessly. He pinched his nose and with a martyr-like posture, he downed the soup in one gulp.

The next moment, his eyes widened and his face turned green.

Ai Hui felt that this was the most disgusting soup he had ever drunk. Even those medicines that were hard to swallow could be considered a delicacy when compared to this soup. While he was

downing the soup, he almost puked it out.

Not giving him a chance to puke it out, the soup transformed into a ball of blazing flame.

Ai Hui's eyes widened further. This is...

The turbulent waves of elemental energy suddenly exploded and scoured his body. The quiet sword embryo was stimulated and started jumping about crazily. Ai Hui did not have any time to react before the elemental energy in his body began the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

The amount of elemental energy was simply too much. It was too much to the extent that the Circulatory Cycle Revolution was momentarily unable to fully absorb it.

Part of the elemental energy seeped deep into Ai Hui's body. The remaining elemental energy was dispersed around the surface of his body.

Ai Hui's body emitted a faint silver light. Everyone was dumbfounded by the sight in front of them.

Ai Hui could no longer care to speak. He held the sword hilt and single-mindedly concentrated on controlling his body's elemental energy through the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

The dumbfounded crowd regained their senses and rushed

towards the pot. The ecstasy and the excitement on their faces could not be contained. So what if it was disgusting? As long as it could increase their elemental energy, they were more than willing to drink it.

"Everyone must fully absorb it. The elemental energy in this soup is very suitable for absorption. Such an effect can only appear in top-quality elemental energy soup. The blood crystal is indeed a magical object..."

Lou Lan explained while looking at Ai Hui. Lou Lan's sand core had recorded in detail the moment Ai Hui had stood up and drunk the bowl of soup while pinching his nose.

"... Lou Lan is Ai Hui's sand puppet..."

What a happy moment!

Lou Lan has improved. Lou Lan will be able help Ai Hui more. What a happy moment!

The elated Lou Lan transformed into a long tail made up of the word "willy-nilly" with a loud bang and danced around everyone.

"Ho-Hey, All the best! All the best! All the best!"

"Ho-Hey, willy-nilly! WIlly-nilly! Willy-nilly!"

Lou Lan was so happy!

Chapter 210: A Strange Outcome

Ai Hui circulated the elemental energy with all his might, but after the seven palaces were filled, the huge volume of elemental energy had nowhere to go to, so it started to surge towards his sky palace between his eyebrows.

Due to the existence of the sword embryo in the past, his sky palace has not been activated.

However, due to the huge volume of the elemental energy this time round, the powerful surge forcibly opened Ai Hui's sky palace.

The moment the elemental energy entered the sky palace, Ai Hui started trembling. It was like his mind was suddenly crammed with countless objects. His mind was blank.

If Ai Hui was still in a clear state of mind now, he would realise that it was as if there was a door opened slightly in his sky palace. Behind the door was a bottomless pit. Regardless of how much elemental energy was going in, it would be engulfed cleanly. The surge of the elemental energy continued for a few more minutes. There were no signs of the sky palace being filled fully. The surge of elemental energy towards the sky palace started to weaken.

As Lou Lan observed Ai Hui surreptitiously, his yellow eyes flickered. He noticed the change within Ai Hui's body and immediately ladled a bowl of elemental energy soup and poured it into Ai Hui's mouth.

Bang!

The surge of elemental energy increased dramatically once again and continued to flow crazily towards the sky palace between his eyebrows. What was surprising was that Ai Hui's sky palace did not move a single jot and still did not show any signs of being filled to the brim.

After a moment, the elemental energy started to weaken. Again, Lou Lan gave a bowl of soup to Ai Hui.

After giving Ai Hui five consecutive bowls of elemental energy soup, the speed at which the sky palace engulfed the elemental energy started to slow down.

"Ai Hui's sky palace is so formidable," Lou Lan muttered to himself. He was surprised.

He knew that each bowl of elemental energy contained a shocking amount of elemental energy. As a result, he only allowed them to have one bowl each. If they drank too much of it, they would not be able to support the amount of elemental energy. There was a process that they had to go through before the elemental energy would be absorbed. To activate and expand, the eight palaces needed time and effort. Those that base level were not high enough would not be able to handle too much elemental soup. In simpler terms, it meant that someone who wasn't in a good state of health would not be able to handle a strong tonic.

The amount of elemental energy one bowl of soup contained should be the maximum amount one could handle. However, Ai Hui had drank six bowls.

Ai Hui already had seven palaces. The only palace not activated was the sky palace. Initially, Lou Lan thought that one bowl of elemental soup would be sufficient, but this had far surpassed his prediction.

Ai Hui's sky palace was very unusual.

Lou Lan's yellow gaze flickered constantly. His curiosity was piqued. His sand core, Midnight, was rotating at a never-before-seen speed.

Midnight was in a strange condition now.

Midnight was created due to Master Shao's fruit of labor. As Lou Lan's body was unable to accept such a formidable core, Master Shao sealed up most of the regions in the core. However, Midnight was now engulfing the Blood Spiritual Energy which resulted in the breaking of the seal.

Midnight...

How are you doing, Master Shao? Lou Lan misses you a lot.

At this moment, Lou Lan's mind wandered.

Midnight had undergone a wonderful change. The life essence that the blood spiritual energy contained had seeped into the lifeless sand core. The sand core now had the essence of life.

If Lou Lan's sand core was a desert previously, it could be said that there was now an oasis in the desert.

Lou Lan did not know if this was a good or bad change; he had yet to understand many of the changes. Based on the current situation, these changes enabled Lou Lan to be stronger. The ability of the sandcore had increased tremendously while not putting an additional burden on his body.

The increase in ability was multi-purpose. He could transform more quickly, he could transform into more complicated shapes, and he was also better in examining capability, etc.

Now Lou Lan was using all of his might to examine Ai Hui. He could see many details that he had missed out on previously.

Ai Hui's sky palace was really strange. Once again, Lou Lan sighed.

It was common to have stronger and weaker components between the five residences and eight palaces. However, the difference between the stronger and weaker component was always within a specific limit. After all, the five residences and eight palaces were one entity. Just like our left hand and right hand, while they might have a difference in strength, the

difference was not too drastic. It was the same for the eight palaces.

After six consecutive bowls of elemental energy soup, Ai Hui's sky palace started to show signs of being full.

The addition of the blood crystals increased the effect of the elemental energy soup by at least three levels.

Lou Lan felt that the blood crystals would definitely be in huge demand in future. Even he was impressed by such an effect. The addition of blood crystals would increase the training speed of the elementalists drastically.

Suddenly, Lou Lan experienced an intense wave motion. He turned his face around.

It was Miss Shi Xueman!

The intense wave motions were emitted. Water elemental energy started to converge towards her direction. Shi Xueman was like a whirlpool, constantly and continuously absorbing the water elemental energy rushing towards her.

Shi Xueman was in the eye of the tornado, and there was a crazy gale at the training hall.

Not long after, another intense wave motion was experienced. It was Sang Zhijun.

Their breakthrough was expected. Shi Xueman and Sang Zhijun had the best base levels amongst the rest. They were just one step away from the Eight Palaces Completion. It would be strange if they did not break through after drinking such an outstanding elemental energy soup.

Lou Lan was jubilant. It was such a pleasure to be able to help others.

There were constant wave motions, and rays flickered from everyone's bodies. However, none of the waves were as strong as Shi Xueman's and Sang Zhijun's.

Lou Lan focused his attention back on Ai Hui. Ai Hui was also a potential candidate to attain the Eight Palaces Completion. However, Lou Lan was baffled. The absorption rate of the elemental energy from Ai Hui's sky palace has decreased drastically. This was a symptom of elemental energy being filled to the brim.

However, there were no signs of a breakthrough. So strange……

The yellow rays in Lou Lan's eyes flashed faster.

Shi Xueman opened her eyes and gradually regained the air around her. Her eyes exposed her happiness.

She finally attained the Eight Palaces Completion!

The water elemental energy within the sky blended into one body. The previous eight palaces were like eight small ponds that were interconnected. Now the elemental energy within her body was like an ocean.

This was a good change.

Every single movement was filled with elemental energy. She sensed that she was stronger than before. Even Cirrus, which she was holding on to, was as light as feather.

She no longer needed to control the elemental energy within her body. The Circulatory Cycle Revolution was automated. This implied that she would not need to train all the time. While the Circulatory Cycle Revolution was slower than when she was having a fixed regime, over time, the accumulation effect will be astonishing.

From today onwards, she would finally be an official elementalist. She would be qualified to join the Thirteen Divisions, she would be able to conduct missions, she would be able to enjoy the relevant benefits.

She was unable to describe how she was feeling. Many a times, Shi Xueman had envisioned herself being an official elementalist.

To the people from Avalon of Five Elements, being an official elementalist was of a huge significance. It was a child's coming of age ceremony. When you became an elementalist that was

recorded in the books, you would no longer be treated as a kid. It meant that you now had the ability to talk to the adults. It also implied that you were responsible for your own life and you are required to assume the corresponding responsibility.

Shi Xueman never thought that her coming of age ceremony would be in the middle of a disaster, and in the middle of an imminent crisis like the blood battle.

Life was so strange.

Her gaze swept across everyone. Everyone had some form of breakthrough, but it was not enough for them to attain the Eight Palaces Completion.

Where's that person?

Shi Xueman's gaze swept across the crowd and fell on the youth who was holding onto a sword and standing upright. Her mouth curved upwards. It was still that strange pose.

In her heart, she was actually clear of the fact that the reason they were still alive now was largely due to Ai Hui. She had also noticed that while Ai Hui did not lead the team personally, people would still rush to listen every time he spoke up. And there were many positive traits found on Ai Hui: he did not withhold the information he had, he shared things related to the blood crystal with everyone, and he was also reliable in times of crisis. She was already used to obeying his commands.

However, some of the actions that he took made it difficult for her to have a favorable opinion of him.

Thinking about it, Shi Xueman felt a surge of anger. She held on to her hatred. If this was the past, he would definitely have a tragic end now!

She noticed Ai Hui's condition and felt that something was wrong. While she did not have the yellow rays like Lou Lan and was unable to see within Ai Hui's body, her background and wealth of experience implied that she had more knowledge and understanding on training than average people.

Ai Hui's body was raging with brilliant rays, like he could soar into the sky at any moment. This was a sign that his body was filled to the brim with elemental energy. For some unknown reason, while the light rays continued to grow stronger, there was an invisible barrier that he was unable to surpass.

The raging rays of light were unable to rush out and started to dim.

How could it be? She started to get anxious. It shouldn't be! Ai Hui had already completed his seven palaces, so he should be as successful as her. Why was such a situation happening?

There were negative impacts to the person that failed to achieve a breakthrough in the Eight Palaces Completion. Not only would they fall behind others, it would also leave a shadow of failure in their heart. It would then affect their next attempt to break

through. Those that attempted countless times would find that their success rate would be inverted to their number of attempts. Even if they managed to achieve a breakthrough, there was still a possibility that it would negatively affect their training in the future.

Impossible!

In terms of character or experience, it was impossible. Those that failed to break through were usually those that were weak and did not have determination. Shi Xueman felt that there were few people who would be better than Ai Hui in this aspect.

The light surrounding Ai Hui was getting dimmer. However, within his body, the rotation of the light rays could be vaguely seen. The Ai Hui now was like a rubber ball that was filled with water.

When the last ray of light disappeared, Shi Xueman sighed silently. The attempt to break through was a failure.

At that moment, a powerful wave motion erupted behind her.

Shi Xueman turned and realised in astonishment that it was actually Duanmu Huanghun!

She stared blankly for a moment. The brilliant rays rushed towards the sky and the eight palaces blended into one. Wood elemental energy rushed in from all directions and caused a strong

wind to howl across the courtyard.

Within the brilliant rays was Duanmu Huanghun. His stance was imposing, his sleeve was fluttering without the aid of the wind, and his long hair was flying around.

This fellow……had actually achieved Eight Palaces Completion!

Shi Xueman felt bewildered. She looked at Duanmu Huanghun, then she looked at Ai Hui. The person who was supposed to break through and attain Initial Completion did not manage to attain it, yet the chap that shouldn’t break through managed to attain success.

What a strange outcome.

Chapter 211: Blood-traced Cat

"Stay behind and rest at the training hall if you are feeling unwell." Shi Xueman glanced at Ai Hui, and her tone conveyed that she had no confidence in Ai Hui's current condition.

Not only Shi Xueman, everyone could see that something was not right with Ai Hui.

His steps were empty, unstable, and not the least bit agile like they were in the former days.

The more capable someone is, the better they are at controlling their strength and gauging the distance. All of these meticulous traits seep into different aspects of their daily life. For example, the pace that they walk is even more uniform than by using a ruler to measure each step. Their sense of rhythm enables them to always be in their optimal condition. They are conditioned to be able to relax, but at the next moment they can give a fatal blow.

All of these special traits could easily be seen on Ai Hui in the past.

However, the current Ai Hui seemed to be a completely different person. His steps were uneven and he was staggering from side to side; he looked like a mess. One would even wonder if he was going to trip over his own shoes.

Duanmu Huanghun shot Ai Hui a glance and said indifferently, "Do not try to be a hero and become a hindrance to us later."

He laughed madly in his heart. Ha ha ha, he could finally use such a tone to talk to him!

At that moment, Duanmu Huanghun was more than happy. How long had it been since he was awaiting such a day?

Ever since meeting that scoundrel, Duanmu Huanghun constantly found himself at a disadvantageous position. Even if his capability was stronger, he would still be defeated by that scoundrel. In a state of muddle, he was healed by that chap. In a state of muddle, he was saved by that chap. In a state of muddle, he owed a huge debt to that chap.

Duanmu Huanghun felt that the only reason he had not gone bonkers was due to his strong willpower.

If Duanmu Huanghun had not made clear why Ai Hui was leading before the blood battle, the performance that Ai Hui exhibited after the blood battle was at another extreme end. It was so strong that it was hard to contest against.

Duanmu Huanghun did not retreat. He had never once given up on his pride.

Indeed he was someone with strong willpower.

He finally managed to defeat Ai Hui. He gave an exhale and he felt that his mood could not get any better than this. Even his steps

seemed to be flying.

He felt that this was a turning point in his life. From this day onwards, he would start to surpass Ai Hui in all aspects.

He was destined to be the final victor!

Duanmu Huanghun lifted his head arrogantly, like a victorious hero that had just returned from a battle.

"When will you return the money?"

Ai Hui's question caught Duanmu Huanghun by surprise. It was like shooting a fatal arrow which stabbed Duanmu Huanghun directly in the heart.

Duanmu Huanghun's expression froze.

"Could it be that you are not planning to return it? Let me tell you this: while there are many matters between us, you still need to return what you owe." Ai Hui's tone was filled with suspicion. Duanmu Huanghun felt humiliated. When the gaze of the others fell on him, his face heated up.

He wanted to rush forward and punch Ai Hui. However, he still had his pride, so he forced the words out of his mouth. "I will return it to you once we are out of the Induction Ground."

"You have said this many times." Ai Hui curled his lips, his face filled with despise.

Duanmu Huanghun wished that he could dig a hole and hide. Despite being familiar with all of them, he was still ashamed when he was asked to return the money in front of everyone.

Damn it, why didn't he have money? Poor Duanmu Huanghun was unaware that Ai Hui's mindset had rubbed off on him.

Shi Xueman almost laughed at Ai Hui's righteous and shameless look. She too wanted to ask when Ai Hui would return her money. However, given that she would expose her identity as the girl from the noodle store, she restrained herself.

Ai Hui became more carefree after jeering at Duanmu Huanghun.

There was indeed something queer about his condition.

He felt that he was disorientated, and he was swaying while walking. It was mostly due to his sky palace. His sky palace was almost filled to the brim and it was jam-packed with the elemental energy. His brain seemed to be filled with water. Even a minute move would make it sway.

When the elemental energy within his head swayed, Ai Hui would also sway about.

In the past, he had experienced situations where he was unable to

control his body. However, this was the first time that he experienced such a situation. While he was unable to control his actions in the past, he was still in a stable state of mind.

However, a slight movement now would also send his world spinning.

"Ai Hui, sorry," Lou Lan said softly, in a tone filled with regret. He did not expect such a situation to occur. He did not know what to do regarding the situation with Ai Hui's body either.

"Lou Lan, you did not make any mistakes. You need not apologise," Ai Hui said firmly, and she continued nonchalantly," It is just a small trial; it is a good thing"

"Ai Hui, really?" Lou Lan opened his eyes wide and was somewhat surprised.

"Of course." With a deep expression, Ai Hui continued, "For such an unusual person like myself, there will definitely be some aspects that are unusual as well. There is nothing strange."

"Ai Hui is the best!" Lou Lan cheered.

Not only Lou Lan, the rest of the people suddenly saw the light. They felt that Ai Hui was right. In their eyes, Ai Hui was never normal. There were many aspects of him that were not seen on the others. As such, it was common for him to have some difference in the process of achieving the Eight Palaces Completion.

Shi Xueman was convinced by such reasoning. There were many aspects of Ai Hui that she was unable to explain. Adding another aspect that she was unable to explain was nothing strange.

Duanmu Huanghun did not know why, but he suddenly felt threatened. His victory did not seem too stable suddenly. It seemed like it would be taken away from him any time.

He could not wait to start training and he would not let Ai Hui make a comeback.

"Ai Hui, there are blood-traced fiends in that direction."

Lou Lan suddenly stopped and pointed to the street on the right. Everyone tensed up immediately.

Their goal for this expedition was to kill the blood-traced fiends.

The report on the blood crystal had been handed over to the mayor residence. While the mayor residence was distributing the rewards, everyone came to a unanimous decision to kill the blood-traced fiends. The purpose of the blood crystal was starting to come to light, and everyone’s strength had increased tremendously. The blood-traced fiends were now like dire beasts to them.

The blood crystal could increase elemental energy and could be used to create defense weapons.

The situation had changed. Previously, they were unable to gain any benefits from battling with the blood-traced fiends. Now they were able to obtain the blood crystals, and in turn, the blood crystals would increase their capability.

In other words, the appearance of the blood crystals increased their likelihood of survival.

Ai Hui was shocked and surprised that Lou Lan could detect the blood-traced fiends from such a far distance. Lou Lan was unable to do this previously. But he did not question it too much. It was not unusual given that Lou Lan had researched the blood crystal and discovered the characteristics of the blood-traced fiends.

Lou Lan was an all-purpose sand puppet.

Fatty walked to the front of the troop. He was in high spirits and felt that he had limitless strength. Amongst the people, his base level had increased the most. He had already attained seven palaces and was not far off from attaining the Eight Palaces Completion.

However, his increase in base level was aided by external forces like Lou Lan's elemental energy soup, chili fire oil, etc. It was not due to his training. While his base level was high, his battle capability was low.

Thank goodness he was only required to defend. The higher base level had an obvious effect on his strength. The heavy shield on his

hand seemed as light as a feather.

Except for Shi Xueman, Sang Zhijun, and Duanmu Huanghun, the rest of them were more or less confronted with the same problem. Of course, Ai Hui was the worst off.

After the row of them treaded cautiously for around 300 metres, they saw a blood-traced fiend.

A red blood-traced cat was gnawing on the carcass on the floor. Upon seeing Ai Hui and the rest, it raised its head. The blood-traced cat was much bigger than the average cat; it looked like a leopard. Its four limbs were thick and solid, its red fur emitted a bewitching luster, and the black blood traces decorated its whole body. The scarlet red cat stared coldly at them.

"Nine blood traces," Ai Hui said softly. His eyes were still sharp and he could clearly see the number of blood traces at one glance.

Everyone exhaled in relief. The blood worm that they killed had nine blood traces as well. They had successfully killed one. Furthermore, their strength had increased, so they shouldn’t be at a disadvantage.

The blood-traced cat no longer looked at the carcass. Instead, it walked slowly towards Ai Hui and team.

It lifted up its tail and walked measuredly and gracefully.

Suddenly, it disappeared in front of everyone’s eyes.

"Fatty!" Ai Hui bellowed urgently.

Bang!

The shield on Fatty’s hand was split into pieces, like it had been hit by a hammar. The pieces flew all around. Fatty’s cowardly character saved his life. He was used to hiding completely behind the heavy shield, and he never exposed his head.

Fatty was frightened stiff by the huge display of strength and shattered shield. He did not have any intention to resist and he followed the source of strength and rolled around on the floor.

Fatty was like a ball being kicked around. In one breath, he rolled towards Ai Hui. The blood had left his face and his face was pale; he was terrified.

Not only Fatty was scared out of his wits, everyone was frightened.

The blood-traced cat landed on the floor steadily. Despite its huge figure, it was nimble and light on its feet.

Fatty had just increased his base level, so his strength was two times higher than usual. Yet he did not manage to withstand the impact when the blood-traced cat pounced. The iron shield, which was invincible in everyone’s eyes, was also shattered into pieces.

That pounce was simply too formidable, so everyone was intimidated.

Both Ai Hui and Shi Xueman had nasty expressions.

While the blood-traced cat was smaller than the blood-traced worm, it was much more dangerous and threatening.

It was as fast as lightning and was extremely deadly. Only a few clearly saw the leap it did. The reason why it could create such an impact was due to its astonishing speed. Due to that scarily fast speed, a simple move could easily become a killer move.

Furthermore, it was extremely agile. It immediately landed on the lamppost after it leaped.

But what Ai Hui was most afraid of was that this blood-traced cat was very crafty.

Those ice-cold eyes were emotionless, yet it was smarter than any of the blood-traced fiends that Ai Hui had seen before. It was also cunning. That leap was a show of strength. The blood-traced cat was also testing the waters.

It stayed a distance away from Ai Hui. It looked at them coldly, and unlike the rest of the blood-traced fiends, it did not rush towards them without a care in the world.

Ai Hui knew that they had met an opponent that was hard to deal

with.

Chapter 212: Danger

Ai Hui sized up the blood-traced cat before his eyes carefully. This was the cleverest blood-traced fiend that he had seen so far. There was a sense of calm within its ice-cold eyes instead of the blood-thirstiness evident in other blood-traced fiends.

Ai Hui had a faint feeling that the cat was also sizing him up.

Under the pressuring silence, they stood opposite each of other.

The blood-traced cat had blood-red hair, but each strand was abnormally hard and thick like needles. Its paws were solid and wrapped up in fine fish scales. This was also the only part of its body that had scales.

According to Ai Hui’s experience, fish scales meant strong defense. Iron hooves? Was this still a cat?

Its sharp claws were like blades that could easily pierce into solid ground.

Ai Hui’s gaze fell upon the cat’s tail, which was as thick as a whip. A "whoosh whoosh" sound filled the air when the cat swept its tail, undoubtedly convincing Ai Hui of its strength.

Life was full of surprises indeed. Ai Hui sighed.

In the Wilderness, every dire beast was like an uncrossable, tall mountain. At that point, he absolutely did not imagine that one day he would casually bump into strange and extraordinarily strong dire beasts.

The good thing was that everyone’s skills had improved tremendously as well.

Ai Hui’s mind was spinning rapidly. When dealing with this blood-traced cat, the most important thing was to restrain its speed. Otherwise, not to mention hunting it, he would get attacked.

"I’ll go first, you guys cover for me."

Shi Xueman said suddenly while holding onto Cirrus, eager to give it a go. As a newly registered elementalist, she wanted to test her own abilities.

The water plant-like fog on her back had now grown into a pair of snow-white azure wings. She took off the broken Central Pine Armor, revealing the blue-white war armor.

Central Pine Armor had very low defensive power. After her battle with the blood worm last time around, it had become utterly dilapidated.

There it was, her snow-white azure wings, jet-black and thick hair, exquisite blue-white war armor, and stainless Cirrus, whose

body emitted white mist streamers. Her cold-as-ice appearance was suffocating to look at, and her bright and clear eyes displayed great confidence.

She held onto Cirrus and ambled along as a representative.

Filled with elemental energy, Cirrus hummed, as if responding to her. Cirrus was a top-notch Heaven-grade weapon, hand-casted by her father. She felt full of courage whenever she held it.

The blood-traced cat gradually retreated.

Everyone fell into a daze. Retreated...

They had come across countless blood fiends, but it was their first time seeing one withdraw. Before, all of the blood fiends would directly pounce on their enemies upon finding them.

A premonition arose in Ai Hui’s chest.

Suddenly, the blood-traced cat let out an expected whine. This wasn’t a mournful sound. Then a wisp of incorporeal motion was emitted from its body.

After two seconds, two incorporeal motions exploded simultaneously at two different places.

Ai Hui quivered before shouting, "It’s calling backup!"

Calling backup…

Everyone’s faces changed. No way…

Why were the blood fiends becoming more and more different?

But they quickly got ready to battle any way, as Ai Hui’s judgments were usually never wrong.

Boom boom boom!

The floor trembled. With his right hand, Ai Hui raised up enough dust to hide the sky and cover the earth. The noise of buildings collapsing sounded incessantly, and with loud rumblings, the ground started to close up. Some blood fiends were frantically moving toward that side too.

Boom!

The house to his right exploded suddenly, and the fragmented bricks flew everywhere as if there was a storm. A red, short silhouette emerged amidst the raised dust.

When the dust dispersed, a two-meter-long blood-traced lizard appeared before everyone’s eyes. A dense, blood-like light circled around this lizard’s body, spun non-stop, and was very destructive. The blood-traced lizard’s body was wrapped in red fish scales.

Seemingly forged by a mysterious metal, they carried a strong, golden luster.

The blood traces on its body were very peculiar, like an irregular pattern formed by black, warped characters. After counting, Ai Hui located nine blood traces.

The blood-traced lizard had ice-cold, completely emotionless eyes.

Just then, a blood fog arrived quietly from their left. It moved in an observable speed and started fading as a petite, red blood fox appeared in front of everybody. It glared at them with its red, ceramic-like eyes, giving them the cold sweats.

Everybody's faces turned pale. They wanted to hunt for one blood fiend but never imagined that there would be three appearing together! No, the two that were summoned.

Blood-traced fiends who knew how to fight in groups were bad news to Ai Hui and the gang.

The tremendous pressure brought about by three nine blood-traced fiends was stifling and the air froze up.

It was as if everyone had been doused with a pail of ice water. The joy from the earlier breakthroughs vanished into thin air.

They had been battling for days, and not one was as ruthless as

today’s.

Duanmu Huanghun’s eyes flicked with light as he took a stride forward, saying cooly, "I’ll deal with the small fox."

This moment, Ai Hui took a deep breath before speaking. "I’ll get the lizard."

Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun turned over at the same time.

Ai Hui quickly added, "The rest, please provide assistance."

They turned back around. While Ai Hui wasn’t in his best condition, it was manageable if he had everyone’s support.

The first to move was Duanmu Huanghun. He had long been impatient. Thinking about how he would be able to render Ai Hui speechless fired his whole body up.

Reaching Initial Completion was a major breakthrough for him, and it changed the quality of his [Viridescent Flower].

With a slight flick of his fingers, the viridescent flower coiling branch drilled its way out from the blood fox’s paws, winding around the blood traces.

The blood fox’s paws stomped on the branch, crushing it with a

bang.

A strange smile appeared at the corner of Duanmu Huanghun's lips. Without any movement, the shattered viridescent flower suddenly released an intense, cold air. Caught off guard, the blood fox's paws were covered with a layer of frost.

The viridescent flower coiling branch trace and the ice trace switched around naturally without any pause. From this, it was obvious that Duanmu Huanhun's control of [Viridescent Flower] had improved greatly.

Cold entering its body, the blood fox shivered and tons of blood fog surged out of its body. In the blink of an eye, its body was completely concealed within the blood fog.

The blood fog rolled up swiftly and went straight for Duanmu Huanghun like a rapacious beast.

Duanmu Huanghun made a "hmph" sound and a viridescent flower cloud appeared below his feet. Then he made a few jumps in the air to dodge the blood fog. Following closely behind, the blood fog flew up as well and pounced on Duanmu Huanghun.

The battle between Shi Xueman and the blood-traced cat was similarly intense.

The newborn azure wings increased Shi Xueman's speed exponentially, but even then, she could barely keep up with the

blood-traced cat's speed. The blood-traced cat's body was soft, as if boneless. It could turn and reverse in any direction like a bolt of strange, red lightning, reflecting and refracting within the building incessantly.

It was Shi Xueman's first time meeting such an opponent, so she was highly-focused. She had to be. Any negligence, if she were to touch the red lightning even just a little for example, would lead to death or serious injury. The cat's incomparable speed allowed it to execute each move fatally.

Within just ten seconds, Shi Xueman's forehead was filled with sweat.

She knew that she couldn't continue like that. She had to make a change, or once her body strength declined, she would never be able to follow the blood-traced cat's speed. When that time came, there would be no chance left to launch a comeback.

She spun Cirrus with both palms suddenly, before shouting in a clear voice, "Open!"

The surging cloud of mist spread through the air like a deluge.

The blood-traced cat charged into the cloud of mist and found it amiss immediately. The cloud of mist was not lethal, but it had remarkable buoyancy, which caused the cat to lose control over its body. But with a strange snap, the blood-traced cat stabilized itself by assuming a twisted posture. It dodged Cirrus' silent hit from within the mist.

But quickly, the blood-traced cat found that the situation was turning for the worse. The cat, trapped deep within this soft, cotton-like cloud gas, was immobilized. More critically, the cloud gas that wrapped around it was rising non-stop.

Having sunk into a dangerous situation, the blood-traced cat's hair was as straight as steel needles. Its body trembled violently and the needle-like hair shot out from all around like a rainstorm.

Shi Xueman shook Cirrus promptly before drawing out a ring to block the incoming needle rain.

Just then, the red, needle-like hairs exploded simultaneously.

Shi Xueman only felt a strange force breaking into her Cirrus ring. She flew backwards seven, eight meters before regaining stability. She stared at her broken cloud gas as a red silhouette descended.

With this short showdown, both parties knew that their opponent wasn't to be trifled with.

The blood-traced cat's tail stood erect and its hair was pencil-straight. It glared unwaveringly at Shi Xueman, who was in midair.

The hair on the cat's body was badly damaged and looked very ugly, but Shi Xueman dared not to belittle it at all. What she had

thought to be a fatal blow had easily been undermined by the blood-traced cat.

Surveying the whole battlefield, no one, be it Shi Xueman or Duanmu Huanghun, had fallen into a disadvantageous position.

Except for Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was almost completely suppressed by the blood lizard. For a few times now, he had nearly knocked against the blood ring around the lizard's body, causing him to sweat profusely out of fear. He saw with his own eyes how the blood ring had wrung and crushed incoming rain arrows.

The only person who could break through the lizard's blood ring was Sang Zhijun. But her arrows, upon passing through, no longer had sufficient power to even leave a scar on the fish scales.

Ai Hui, who was experiencing vertigo, could not coordinate his Dragonspine Inferno properly, and his sword moves were crooked.

If not for the fact that the blood lizard had a restraining fear of Dragonspine Inferno, he would have retreated.

Ai Hui was anxious. What was happening to him? It would be difficult to withdraw if this continued, not to mention claim victory.

He gathered all of his energy, trying hard to control the

elemental energy within his body.

His sky palace had no elemental energy… no elemental energy…

Ai Hui was hypnotizing himself non-stop, to force himself to ignore the blurriness and dizziness.

He placed all his attention onto the seven palaces, onto operating [Big Dipper], and onto the sword moves.

[Oblique Slash], [Heavenly Thrust], [Uprising Moon]…

Bit by bit, he channelled his attention onto the disobeying Dragonspine Inferno in his hands.

Chapter 213: Contrast and Standstill

Ai Hui never thought that there would be a day when he would be a burden. His current condition was horrible. He wanted to pass his role over to someone else, but no one was up to task. Fatty's heavy shield had been shattered to pieces in one blow and he was probably still scared out of his wits. Ai Hui knew Fatty well. Fatty was still far from qualified to be a shield bearer. It was already a miracle that he had been able to hang on for so long without being terrified.

The impact was too strong, way more than Fatty could withstand.

If he had just met these students, he could have treated them like grenades run for his own life without a second thought; however, after going through a few battles with them, he could no longer disregard their life and death.

While the speed of the nine-trace blood lizard was not comparable to the nine-trace blood cat, it was still much faster than most of the students. Its potential for attack was also terrifying. Even Ai Hui could not guarantee that he could withstand its direct attack.

As such, the others must have also been incapable of taking a hit. If the nine-trace blood lizard charged into the middle of the troop, it would be like letting a tiger into a flock of sheep.

Ai Hui needed to prevent the nine-trace blood lizard from

breaking into the students' formation.

He was relying on the Dragonspine Inferno now. From time to time, rays of lightning flickered from the sword. It exhibited significant utility. Unless it was a huge and powerful dire beast like the whale, most living creatures were fearful of lightning. It was as if they were born with an instinctual fear.

Otherwise, based on Ai Hui's disarrayed attacks, he would have long been gobbled up cleanly by the nine-trace blood lizard.

When was the last time he had been caught in such a difficult situation? Ai Hui did not know. While the nine-traces blood lizard was powerful, he hadn't yet despaired. He was used to being in such a poor state and then experiencing an unprecedented improvement.

Ai Hui had experienced situations in which he was forced into a corner due to the opponent being too powerful as well as situations where his reaction speed could not keep up with his agile sword embryo state. This was the first time, however, for him to be unable to control his own body.

To someone who was used to being in control, losing control over your own body was like being a swordsman and losing the sword on your hand.

Still, he remained calm. The sword embryo enabled him to look like a swordsman and he still had his last weapon, which was the calmness he had developed after having gone through life and

death situations.

He tried his best to disregard his disoriented state and the swaying elemental energy in his Sky Palace. He slowly managed to focus and transferred his attention to the Dragonspine Inferno in his hand.

According to his previous experiences, when he came across many distractions, he should focus on one particular thing. Only then would it be possible to remove the distractions.

He forgot about [Big Dipper], forgot about elemental energy, and forgot about sword moves. His whole mind was fixated on the Dragonspine Inferno.

For example, the tremble of the sword's body when the Dragonspine Inferno collided with the nine-trace blood lizard's blood ray. There was also the tiny vortex that was formed when the sword blade cut through a stream of air.

This was the first time he has ever been so focused on the Dragonspine Inferno. He noticed many details that he'd missed out on before. Like how the body of the Dragonspine Inferno was not as straight as he'd thought; it actually had a slight arc. The sword was also lighter than before due to being constantly refined by the electric rays. The original wooden blade was filled with countless tiny pinholes that were even smaller than the tip of a needle. Large amounts of electric rays infiltrated through the densely packed, tiny pinholes and gathered on the blade, then formed lightning that could be seen by the naked eye.

When the Dragonspine Inferno and the red glow surrounding the nine-traces blood lizard collided, he saw the explosion of the lightning. Countless electric rays were infused into the red glow and destroyed it.

However, compared to the intense red glow, the lightning was much dimmer.

The red glow from the nine-trace blood lizard was, in fact, not a ball of red glow as could be seen with the naked eye. Instead, it was a ball of red glow that was rotating at high speed and was shaped like a sawtooth. Rotating at such high speeds made the red glow potentially destructive.

After observing a few collisions between the Dragonspine Inferno and the red glow, Ai Hui jolted. The angle was wrong!

Without thinking, he cut into the red glow with his Dragonspine Inferno and followed the direction of the rotation. All of a sudden, the Dragonspine Inferno penetrated right into the middle of the red glow. The electric ray from the sword blade abruptly caused the blood trace to explode.

A few traces of fine electric rays split and fell onto the nine-trace blood lizard's scales. The nine-trace blood lizard jumped in shock and retreated in a panic.

Ai Hui did not bother to chase after it, instead standing blankly at a faraway place. His attention was only on the sword.

Sang Zhijun and the rest were pleasantly surprised. Ai Hui's performance was much better now. He could actually prevent the nine-trace blood lizard from reaching them; however, the atmosphere seemed rather queer. Ai Hui did not have his usual spiritual energy. Instead, he looked lifeless.

He stood on the spot motionlessly, just like a puppet. He would only react when the nine-trace blood lizard attacked him.

When he reacted, it was like he was another person. He was fast and precise. Occasionally, he dodged. Occasionally, he seized an opportunity to strike back. Occasionally, rather than a sword move, it looked like he was just waving his hand around. Regardless, the effect was on point.

During that short span of time, Ai Hui portrayed himself as an exceptional swordsman.

Once or twice, Ai Hui would gain the upper hand. Sang Zhijun and the rest could see that it was a good opportunity, but every time the nine-trace blood lizard retreated, Ai Hui would fall back into his lifeless state.

Again and again, he lost many opportunities. Sang Zhijun wanted to shout a reminder to Ai Hui; however, seeing that Ai Hui was in a weird state of mind, she restrained herself.

The contrast between the puppet-like Ai Hui and the competent Ai Hui when he was entangled with the nine-trace blood lizard was

drastic. Given that the contrasting behaviours were coming from the same person and occurred in such a dangerous battle, it gave a strange feeling to those witnessing it.

While it was a strange phenomenon, it was enough that Ai Hui had managed to stay in front of the nine-trace blood lizard.

Without any qualms, everyone started to attack.

The effect of Lou Lan's blood crystal elemental energy soup was extraordinary. The lowest base level amongst the troop was six palaces. The majority of them had seven palaces. Those that were like Jiang Wei had already activated the eighth palace and were just a step away from attaining the Eight Palaces Completion.

Relying on external forces to raise their base levels was considered disdainful to many and it would also be harmful for their future training; however, given that they were struggling between life and death, neither was a pressing issue for them.

They first had to survive and would think about it later.

The troop had yet to adapt to their higher base levels, but now that Ai Hui was on the frontline, everyone became more relaxed. They were not as tensed up and their performance got better.

The change in the students could be seen through the reactions of the nine-trace blood lizard.

Their initial attacks had been messy and their stances dreadful. Gradually, their moves became more adept, the elemental energy became more concentrated, and the attacks became more coordinated; as such, they were more threatening.

The red glow surrounding the nine-trace blood lizard started to look badly damaged and uneven. The nine-trace blood lizard was also aware of the danger.

Suddenly, it turned around and leaped away.

Sang Zhijun and the rest were stunned by such a move. Was it... escaping?

Ai Hui stood as still as a puppet. He was not bothered at all.

The nine-trace blood lizard only stopped after running for two hundred meters. It then turned around again and faced Ai Hui.

A frightful ray flickered in its eyes. It lay on the ground, accumulating some energy before taking action.

Suddenly, its four limbs shot out and the nine-trace blood lizard shot out like a released arrow, rushing towards Ai Hui. The ground trembled with every step it took. Its speed began to increase it became dramatically faster. In the wake of such speed, the surrounding red glow started to increase.

The rumbling lingered on. It was as if Sang Zhijun and the rest of

the students were standing on a vibrating drum. They could barely stand straight.

In the blink of an eye, the red glow had completely concealed the nine-trace blood lizard’s body. The red glow started to blur and the low hiss started to become high pitched. It was like a bullet had just been shot from a gun. Leaving a trail of red, it rushed towards Ai Hui with an imposing manner.

The students’ expressions changed drastically.

"Block it!"

Fatty rushed out of the crowd like a madman and threw himself towards Ai Hui.

But he was a moment too late. Like a whizzing meteor, the nine-traces blood lizard had hit its target.

No...

Time seemed to standstill. They were blinded by the dazzling red radiance.

Bang!

A destructive power exploded at that moment. A gigantic sound wave and a surge of air engulfed the place like a tsunami.

Subconsciously, everyone aimed to protect themselves. The shattered stones were like arrows raining down on them. Those students that reacted slower experienced an explosion of blood.

At that moment, however, no one could care. Their minds only had one thought, they were done for.

Even the most optimistic person could not bear to think what the troop would be like without Ai Hui. Ai Hui had long become both the core and pillar of the troop.

Ai Hui...

Like a whistling wall, the air waves brought along the dust and shattered stones to roll across the troop's bodies.

The scene unraveled in front of their eyes.

Hold on!

Momentarily, those heartbeats that had stopped started to beat again like crazy.

In the middle of a crack that resembled a cobweb and was around fifty meters in diameter, a youth was holding his sword horizontally. He used the sword to block the nine-trace blood lizard's dagger-like teeth.

The nine-trace blood lizard's cold eyes almost popped out. It displayed shock, fear, and confusion. It did not understand what had happened.

The scene seemed to have stopped in time. Not a single voice could be heard.

Sang Zhijun and the rest were dumbstruck by the scene in front of them. They forgot to have any reaction. The scene in front of them had some strange power; it could suddenly grasp their hearts and make them beat like crazy.

In the midst of the silence, Fatty's footsteps could be heard clearly.

Moving against the air surge, Fatty became able to see more clearly. He started to slow down.

In the centre of his shaky vision was a familiar figure. It was a figure that he had seen countless times in Wilderness.

Ah... Ai Hui... didn't die...

Fatty stayed rooted for a moment before rushing two meters behind Ai Hui.

Afterwards... He saw that Ai Hui's sword was caught between the blood-traced lizard's sharp teeth. There were still traces of blood.

It was not too far away from him...

It was quite close...

Fatty's pale face turned red and then back to pale. He violently turned around. With a blood-curdling howl, he rolled and crawled to rush forward.

Chapter 214: Attack and Kill

Shi Xueman was caught in a tough battle.

The nine-trace blood cat's speed was as fast as lightning. Shi Xueman barely managed to keep up by giving it her all. Furthermore, the nine-trace blood cat's agility also far surpassed hers. If not for the constant changes in [Hydromancy], she would have been in an even worse predicament.

The nine-trace blood cat was different from the other opponents she'd met before. It was nimbler and smarter. Cirrus was unable to play a big role here.

She had to increase the speed at which she used her spear.

Having gone through generations of developments, [Hydromancy] was currently a wide-ranging and profound training system. Each family's absolute art was not formed in a day, but instead consisted of countless years of hard work by the family members.

The Shi Family still kept with the ancient tradition of being regulated by the clan elders. The numerous clan elders from each generation were commanded by the oldest clan elder. The clan elders usually pay no attention to the affairs of the world, neither do they participate in family affairs. Instead, their sole mission was to constantly develop the absolute arts. They had different specialities. Using the family's resources, they made use of their gifts and dedicated their entire lifetimes to nurturing

[Hydromancy].

The accumulation of knowledge throughout the generations caused [Hydromancy] to constantly expand. It was like a deep-rooted tree with many branches. Some branches that might look unremarkable would actually be a clan elder's lifetime's creation.

The spear move that Shi Xueman was using was called [Cloud Whale]. It was created by an clan elder who roamed around the world three hundred years ago. It was not the best amongst all the moved in [Hydromancy], but it was her favorite and she had thrown herself into it. It was also because of this that her father had hunted down a humpback cloud whale to create Cirrus for her.

[Cloud Whale] was not known for being lithe and graceful. Shi Xueman experienced a strain when she met with the nine-trace blood cat.

Before today, she would have definitely been at a loss when meeting with such a formidable opponent. Now, she had slowly learned to battle. While she was unable to come up with a counter attack, she did not panic. Instead, she gave her all and tried her best to contend against the nine-trace blood cat.

At that moment, she heard a loud bang.

The sudden explosion of air surging and hissing shocked everyone present.

Not just her, the sudden sound caused even the nine-trace blood cat to jolt in shock. Shi Xueman witnessed a stunning scene. There was a crack that resembled an over fifty-meter diameter circular cobweb. From a bird's eye view, it looked like a blossoming flower.

In the centre of the blossoming flower was a youth holding a long sword guarding against the teeth of the nine-trace blood lizard. The diffusion of air waves blew around a huge amount of grey dust, like a retreating grey wave.

Shi Xueman stood blankly for a moment. Just from that explosion of strength, she could determine how terrifying the nine-trace blood lizard's attack was; however, Ai Hui had managed to block it off. Ai Hui's figure was puny and his shirt was tattered and unclean. He looked like a mess, yet, his small figure stood upright. This was a scene that stirred their hearts and brought many to astonishment.

This chap... Hadn't he failed finishing the Eight Palaces Completion?

How had he managed to block that attack?

This chap...

Unlike Shi Xueman, Duanmu Huanghun was situated at a better location and witnessed the entire process. After the surge of air had swept away, he saw the upright Ai Hui and the nine-trace blood lizard which was unable to move even an inch. It was as if Duanmu Huanghun had just gulped some strong spirits.

His handsome face became flushed as if he were drunk.

A sense of excitement and an intent to battle that was hard to put into words led to an uncontrollable tremble. Every inch of his skin was burning up. The raging inferno lit up the wasteland.

His blood was raging under that strong inferno. His heart was churning with the strong intent to battle. He wanted to look up into the sky and blow a long whistle.

His fists were tightly clenched and his nails turned white from the pressure. His trembling was like an electric current spreading throughout his whole body. He strongly restrained himself.

Because this was a magnificent performance by Ai Hui and not him, Duanmu Huanghun.

In that moment, his long, narrow eyes glinted with a strange yet frantic ray. Unconsciously, he licked his pale lips. This was a battle that he was looking forward to. This was the glory that he had been waiting for.

He narrowed his eyes and rushed towards the nine-trace blood fox.

Fatty’s loud howls were as if a wolf had bitten him on his rear.

Jiang Wei was the first to react. Releasing an arrow from his bow, he screamed and ran towards the nine-trace blood lizard.

Only then, did the others start to react.

Holding on to the Golden Silk Longbow, Sang Zhijun placed four sharp arrows close together. A ray of light flashed past her eyes. The four arrows swiftly blended into one and became a brilliant ray of light.

The nine-trace blood lizard was in a pathetic state. Its force had been met with force and it had received a tremendous impact. While it was still in a state of bewilderment, it was met with countless of attacks and was placed in a dangerous and difficult situation.

Furthermore, as the red glow surrounding its body had dispersed, all these attacks landed solidly on its body.

The rays immediately swallowed up the nine-trace blood lizard. It started to tremble violently and its disintegrated scales spattered around.

As Ai Hui was in close proximity to the nine-trace blood lizard, everyone withheld their attacks for fear of affecting Ai Hui. Nevertheless, the waves of attacks inflicted serious damage on the nine-trace blood lizard. Its scales were all over the place and its body was badly mangled. Black smoke was rising in spirals. It took the most hits on its abdomen, where there was now a thumb-sized hole out of which blood was flowing out. Sang Zhijun and Jiang

Wei's masterpiece. Jiang Wei's arrow had cut open the nine-trace blood lizard's scales and Sang Zhijun's Arrow Fusion Technique had landed on the exact same spot, piercing through the nine-trace blood lizard's abdomen.

The nine-trace blood lizard displayed extraordinary vitality. Even though it looked battered and exhausted, it didn't look any less threatening. Its initially cold eyes had now become scarlet red. Its eyes contained a fury that caused heart palpitations.

It gave a loud snarl. Not only did it not retreat, it brazenly tore at Ai Hui. The densely packed teeth sent chills through the people watching. The teeth were like huge metal shears and the thick neck contained a formidable brute force. Even before the nine-trace blood lizard had gone through the blood transformation, it had easily bitten a bison to death. The bison's huge body had been snapped in half by the lizard's teeth.

Now it was even stronger and its teeth was sharper and harder. Even if there was a thick steel bar blocking its way, it could still break it effortlessly.

It looked like the nine-trace blood lizard was going to bite Ai Hui. Ai Hui moved.

He was so fast, his movements were a blur. The nine-trace blood lizard's vision blurred and a violent pain exploded in its mouth. Its tongue was like a blood ball that burst into a bloody mist. Blood started to immediately flow out of its mouth, which had become filled with the taste of fresh blood. It was the taste of its own blood.

It had never before experienced such intense pain. It retreated. The pain controlled the blood-traced lizard's movements. It tumbled around on the floor to relief the pain, but to no avail. Fresh blood continued to flow out through the gaps in its remaining teeth. Its head constantly knocked on the floor. The floor quaked and stones shattered and flew.

Sang Zhijun and the rest reacted much faster this time. Different forms of attacks were thrown towards the nine-trace blood lizard. Many arrows and rays of light enveloped the blood-traced lizard in a split instant.

Without any restraints, the people threw in all their might and attacked like crazy.

They did not dare to stop and they did not bother to conserve their elemental energy. If they did not grasp hold of this opportunity, any future attack from the nine-trace blood lizard could very well cause many deaths and casualties.

Facing such a blood-traced fiend, they were not in a position to conserve their elemental energy. The fact that they could act with their elemental energy was already a good outcome.

Only after they had expended all their elemental energy and poured it onto the nine-trace blood lizard, did they stop their attacks.

Everyone was panting for breath.

The nine-trace blood lizard laid motionless and everyone exhaled in unison.

This round of attacks was fatal to the nine-trace blood lizard. No matter how strong its will to live was, it could not bear those crazy attacks from all over the place.

The poor nine-trace blood lizard did not have a single piece of intact flesh on its body.

"It should be dead by now?" Fatty asked apprehensively.

The yellow ray in Lou Lan’s eyes flickered. "Yes, it is dead."

Fatty gave a long exhale. After a moment, he asked anxiously, "Is Ai Hui alright?"

Lou Lan tilted his head. "Ai Hui is in a strange condition. Lou Lan is also unable to differentiate, however, he has no injuries. Let’s not disturb Ai Hui. He needs to break away from that state of mind by himself."

"As long as he is not injured." Fatty’s gaze relaxed. Thinking back to his pathetic state, he pleaded, "Lou Lan, do not tell Ai Hui I fled."

"Why not?" Lou Lan widened his eyes. "Fatty was very brave."

"It is no use being brave." Fatty's face was filled with grief and indignance. Could being brave reduce the amount of training? No!

If Ai Hui found out about this, what would await him would be countless training assignments.

The current training assignments that Ai Hui designed could cause Fatty to whine for days. Thinking back, life was better in the Wilderness. Ai Hui did not know then what training was. Otherwise, he definitely would not have had a chance to leave the Wilderness.

Not as a result of being eaten up by the dire beasts; instead, he would have worked to death doing Ai Hui's training.

Looking at his fat, Fatty was filled with grief and indignation. He has lost weight from all the training.

"Was the blood crystal destroyed by us?" Sang Zhijun asked worriedly. The blood crystal was even more important than money.

"Nope, just hand it over to Lou Lan!" Lou Lan said happily and confidently. He transformed into a sandstorm and rushed toward the mangled nine-trace blood lizard. The sandstorm wrapped around the blood-traced lizard and the flesh was quickly stripped off to expose the white bones.

The sandstorm rotated constantly until only shattered bones

remain.

The sandstorm returned to everyone and transformed back into Lou Lan.

Ding, ding, ding.

A melodious chime could be heard. Lou Lan was holding a few more blood crystals. After checking, he happily announced, "These blood crystals' quality is even better than before!"

The students cheered in unison.

Soon enough, their gazes fell on the remaining two who were still in the midst of battle.

Fatty stared for a moment before slapping his thigh and shouting, "Hey! Lure the monster over and let Ai Hui kill it!"

Sang Zhijun and the rest of the students' eyes brightened. Fatty's idea was good. Given Ai Hui's puppet-like state, no matter what rushed towards him, he would kill it without a second thought. Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun only needed to guard at the side. They could strike when the opportunity arises and it would be easier for them to gain victory.

Fatty's shout immediately triggered the two's anger.

Shi Xueman looked on coldly. To get help from that scoundrel? My goodness.

The craze in Duanmu Huanghun’s eyes became stronger. To be defeated by Ai Hui? Dream on.

Chapter 215: A Frightened Tian Kuan

"Did they really find out how to use the blood crystals?"

The dean found it hard to believe what he had just heard. The researchers in the mayor's residence were all teachers, yet they had been unable to discover anything. It was not particularly shocking to hear that students were able to discover things faster than the teachers, but the speed at which the A-1 unit had accomplished this was no mean feat.

"It's been tested," Wang Zhen stated. "It's effective."

Wang Zhen was taken aback when he first heard about it as well. He had not expected much when Ai Hui informed him that they wished to study the blood crystals.

"Since they don't have an officially designated researcher, the accomplishment will be considered as a group effort. Ai Hui and his core members will receive 400 Heaven Merit Points each, while the ordinary members will receive 100 Heaven Merit Points each. In addition, all members of their unit can each choose one inheritance."

When announcing the A-1 unit's rewards, Wang Zhen felt a little envious. Troubled times were indeed the best times to accumulate merit and accomplishments. It was hard to imagine the meritorious service required to earn 400 Heaven Merit Points during peacetime.

But this contribution was indeed worthy of such a reward.

Compared to the last time they were given a reward, the service rendered by the A-1 unit this time was much more impressive. Discovering the blood crystal's uses had far-reaching implications for not just battle, but also for the blood disaster as a whole. 400 Heaven Merit Points alone were honestly not a sufficient reward for such an enormous contribution. Under the present circumstances however, the higher ups probably could not award anything better. Although, Wang Zhen believed that the higher ranked authorities were beginning to keep an eye on Ai Hui and the others.

They would have bright futures if they managed to survive this disaster.

"The higher authorities have also requested for me to present them with suitable rewards." Wang Zhen laughed bitterly. "How can there be anything good left? The supplies and items that we still have are not exactly useful. I guess we'll just have to reward them with more blood crystals."

"Such an amazing group of youths," the dean commented solemnly. Thinking about their discovery, he soon perked up and said, "It's great that the blood crystals can provide such large benefits though."

"Indeed!" Wang Zhen nodded. "All those mercenary people out there will put their best efforts into hunting the blood-traced fiends once they find out about the blood crystal's uses. The higher ups have already released an announcement informing everyone

that blood crystals can be exchanged for Heaven Merit Points."

The blood crystals' immense value would change many things.

"How're the golden needles coming along?" the dean asked, deeply concerned. "This is the real key to victory."

"It's not progressing very well," Wang Zhen replied truthfully, his face racked with worry. "We lack a lot of the materials required, especially since a lot of the stores have been reduced to rubble. Thus, we have to dig through the ruins to find the relevant materials. The number of blood-traced fiends within the city has increased, impeding our progress."

"Ah, we need to hurry though." The dean sighed. "I wonder why the reinforcements aren't here yet. We're really running out of time."

All Wang Zhen could offer in reply was an awkward laugh.

Deep within the blood forest, a resting Tian Kuan was rudely awoken by the activity in the sky.

He shook his head, attributing the commotion to two blood birds fighting. Blood birds were sadly out of his reach.

Tian Kuan had yet to fully recover from his injuries. That fellow from the Infantry Division had sacrificed his two arms to cause massive damage to Tian Kuan. Luckily for Tian Kuan, the fight had

taken place in this blood forest that was full of blood-traced fiends. Otherwise, his injuries would have been much worse.

After devouring more than 20 nine-trace blood fiends, Tian Kuan had only managed to replenish half of his blood spiritual force. Nine-trace blood fiends were more capable of conscious thoughts, resulting in the emergence of territorial awareness and corresponding behaviours. As such, they were more spread out, and Tian Kuan had to travel longer distances between fiends.

He was unable to tap into blood refinement before completely recovering.

He regretted not learning the beast coercion spells. He would have been able to amass a huge number of nine-trace blood fiends by now if he had learned it, which would make for a really easy recovery meal.

The others must have progressed far ahead of him by now.

A huge explosion rang out in the sky, followed by brilliant flares which lit up the sky and immense fluctuations of elemental energy. Tian Kuan was startled by the display that signalled the presence of elementalists.

Elementalists who still dared to venture this deep into the blood forest were definitely not to be belittled. If it was a group, they would most likely be a particular division’s elites. If it was an individual, then it would be someone that Tian Kuan could not afford to provoke.

He noiselessly leaped up a tree, hiding behind its lush cover to survey the skies.

Tian Kuan was gobsmacked when he saw the figure fighting in the air.

He immediately recognized that the lanky elementalist was Yu Mingqiu, the vice division leader of the Deathgrass Division. Seeing this big-name target stirred him up. The contribution he'd make if he took down a vice division leader...

Tian Kuan eyes flashed with greed and aggression, but he quickly calmed down.

Even at full strength, he might not be able to handle Yu Mingqiu. With his present injuries, this was definitely not the right moment to strike.

Tian Kuan's ominous gaze was locked onto Yu Mingqiu's opponent, who he recognized as Situ Zhong, the apostle that Tian Kuan disliked the most. Situ Zhong was treacherous, cunning, and merciless. He was someone that could not be trusted at all.

Situ Zhong's black robes fluttered in the wind, making him look like a large bat flitting through the sky. Tian Kuan knew that the blood-red patterns embroidered on Situ Zhong's huge sleeves were his trump card.

Situ Zhong was a sly one. He hid among the blood birds, moving about erratically.

Countless blood birds completely surrounded Yu Mingqiu like a cloud made up of blood rather than water vapor.

Tian Kuan was shocked by Yu Mingqiu's sudden display of power.

More than 100 green arrows of light burst forth without warning, piercing through the blood-red cloud in all directions. Situ Zhong's face turned pale and he began to flee. Tian Kuan shivered in fear as he watched the wretched-looking Situ Zhong escape, his black robes riddled with small holes.

Tian Kuan hid behind the tree trunk, afraid to even breathe too loudly. It was only after the two figures disappeared from his view that he cautiously re-emerged.

That was too scary!

Was that the strength of a vice division leader? No wonder their superiors did not want them to engage in direct combat with elementalists that were equal or above this level. They had instead proposed to lure the stronger elementalists deep into the blood forest and ambush them with an army of blood fiends.

He calmed his nerves, shifting his focus once again to his recovery. The scene that he had just witnessed made him realize

that his original plan would not work. Even if he managed to complete the next phase of his blood refinement, he still would not be able to handle someone as strong as Yu Mingqiu.

He needed someone to aid him.

The beast coercion spells provided the easiest means of creating unquestioningly obedient allies, but he had not learned them. Tian Kuan was an obstinate man, but he was no fool.

A flash of inspiration hit him.

He started to move after thinking through his new idea.

Jade Embroidery Workshop.

Mingxiu stood guard outside her master’s door. She reported softly, "Junior has rendered great service again and was awarded 400 Heaven Merit Points."

Her eyes revealed a hint of sadness. She had initially been unable to understand or accept her master’s decision. Having been with her master for so long, however, Mingxiu knew her well enough to know when she had firmly made up her mind.

Han Yuqin’s cold, emotionless voice came from behind the door, "Your junior is better than you in that aspect."

Mingxiu cheerily replied, "Junior has naturally become stronger than me."

After a moment of silence, Han Yuqin slowly asked, "How's Shouchuan? Be honest."

Mingxiu was caught off guard and bit her lower lip before she could bring herself to answer, "He's aged quite a bit."

Han Yuqin heaved a heavy sigh. She kept silent for a long while before speaking again, "Don't let your junior know."

Mingxiu's tender disposition took another blow as the sadness in her eyes deepened. Looking down, she said, "That's what he instructed as well."

Han Yuqin laughed softly before falling silent again.

The elementalist in charge of delivering the mayor's reward had a weird expression when he delivered it to the A-1 unit's current location.

At one spot, Ai Hui was standing motionless like a wooden puppet. Anyone who went near Ai Hui would be swiftly attacked by him.

Duanmu Huanghun decided to give it a try and moved toward Ai Hui. He was almost stabbed in the throat.

Bangwan was frightened stiff. His recent gains in strength had helped him to narrowly escape dangerous situation after dangerous situation. Nearly being stabbed in the throat, however, drenched his back with sweat. The lofty thoughts that he had after beating the nine-trace blood fox were all but gone.

After Classmate Bangwan’s demonstration, the rest of the students consciously made sure that they kept their distance from Ai Hui.

"Is he experiencing spontaneous enlightenment?"

"That’s right," Shi Xueman replied, throwing up her hands in frustration. "There’s nothing we can do."

"I understand!" The elementalist nodded. He looked at the three blood-traced beast corpses on the floor that were still warm and realized just how strong the A-1 unit was.

Everyone in the unit had become numb to receiving Heaven Merit Points. To these students, rewards that could not be cashed in immediately were not of much use. Nobody knew if they would still be around by the time they could actually use these points.

However, the inheritances and blood crystals that were offered brought on cheers from the students.

These two things were what they really needed.

Shi Xueman promptly shut down all intentions to immediately pick out an inheritance. She pointed toward Ai Hui and explained, "We'll wait for him to wake up first."

The students who were prepared to rush forward and claim their rewards stopped dead in their tracks. Nobody moved up to choose an inheritance.

Classmate Bangwan could not stand it any longer. He snorted, "I'm not waiting for him since I have no need for an inheritance."

Right after he spoke, Duanmu Huanghun walked over to a corner and began to train by himself.

The elementalist from the mayor's residence who came to deliver the rewards was taken aback by the amount of respect that Ai Hui commanded from the rest.

It was an impressive achievement considering that this was a loosely-formed group.

"No problem. You have until midnight to pick out an inheritance from the mayor's residence," informed the elementalist before he left.

Seeing the elementalist leave, Shi Xueman asked Lou Lan, "Lou Lan, how many blood crystals do we have now?"

"26 of them," Lou Lan answered. "We have 10 lower quality blood crystals that were given as a reward and 16 of higher quality that were obtained from the nine-trace blood fiends."

Shi Xueman thought of the sword thrust that almost pierced Duanmu Huanghun's throat.

Was Ai Hui not a little too stalwart?

Wait a minute, it would be a waste not to make use of his current state...

She thought about how she and Bangwan had spent so much effort killing blood fiends. Oh, I'm also starting to call him Bangwan..

Shi Xueman's eyes twinkled as she thought of a brilliant plan.

Chapter 216: Monstrously Powerful

Old Zhang, who had just returned from the mayor's residence, told everyone about the blood crystal's uses. A commotion promptly ensued.

"No wonder that fellow wanted the blood crystals! He had it all planned out!"

"We've suffered terrible losses!"

"What a scheming young man!"

...

Everyone was engaged in a clamorous discussion. Hearing these comments annoyed Old Zhang. "Stop these ridiculous conjectures, the A-1 unit were the ones who discovered its uses! The higher authorities have rewarded them with four hundred Heaven Merit Points and the mayor's residence has given them additional rewards," he shouted, displeased.

Old Zhang spoke out of admiration for Ai Hui. He hadn't thought much of Ai Hui when they'd first met, but thinking back now, he had become acquaintances with someone impressive. As far as he could remember, no student had ever accumulated this many Heaven Merit Points before graduating.

Everyone was momentarily stunned, but then quickly continued

with their discussion.

"Amazing! Those squirts are already so amazing at such a young age, just how much potential do they have?"

"They come from prestigious families, how can we be compared to them?"

"We haven't lost much actually; we can always hunt for more blood crystals. It is more important that we build relationships!"

"Four hundred Heaven Merit Points are enough to request for a small leadership position in the Thirteen Divisions!"

...

Old Zhang clapped his hands and announced, "Listen to me."

Everyone gradually fell silent and looked at Old Zhang. He was outspoken, magnanimous, and commanded the respect of everyone on his team.

"I suggest that we go out and hunt some blood-traced fiends. Blood crystals can be used to strengthen ourselves, our weapons, and can be exchanged for Heaven Merit Points. The blood fiends are dangerous, but we are all mercenaries who chase riches and honor amidst danger. Hunting dire beasts isn't all that much safer anyway. All of you are brave lads who live life on the edge of a blade. Although money isn't of much use right now, Heaven Merit

Points are still good stuff. So what if we die here in the Induction Ground, these are things that we can leave for our loved ones. Does everyone agree with me?"

Old Zhang's words made everyone ponder deeply.

Soon, sounds of affirmation began to ring out among the crowd.

"Definitely! If we have to go out and hunt, we ought to hunt for blood crystals!"

"None of the dire beasts that we can hunt are worth any Heaven Merit Points!"

"Leaving some Heaven Merit Points for my kid sounds like a good idea. Perhaps he'll be able to become an official in the future and lead a stable life."

"What's so good about becoming an official? He could exchange those points for an inheritance! Inheritances that are exchanged with Heaven Merit Points are all excellent!"

...

Old Zhang nodded his head in satisfaction. He gestured for everyone to quiet down and waited for the noise level to fall before continuing. "We'll follow the old reward distribution rules of the hunting units that everyone is familiar with."

Everyone nodded in agreement. The hunting units were teams that specialized in hunting dire beasts. They had a very well thought out set of rules that governed reward distribution within each unit. Since everyone here had once been a part of such a hunting unit, they were very familiar with the established rules.

"I'm sure many other groups will have the same idea now that blood crystals can be exchanged for Heaven Merit Points," explained Old Zhang. "As such, we have to be alert and guard against other groups as well. Also, everyone here may be familiar with dire beasts, but none of us know much about blood-traced fiends. I'd advise all of you to put your lives first and avoid engaging blood-traced fiends that are too powerful. There'll be more to hunt as long as we stay alive."

Light-hearted laughter could be heard from the crowd. These were practical words that they've heard many times.

Old Zhang's group was indeed not the only one which became more active following the announcement. Many others had set their eyes on the blood-traced fiends as well. Some were after wealth while others were in it to become stronger, still others did it for a chance to live. All these elementalists with different motives had the exact same target.

Blood-traced fiends were no longer actively avoided. They were now actively sought after.

The number of elementalists roaming the streets increased

exponentially. The battles that they fought also became even more ferocious.

Old Zhang carefully led his members in search of prey. He made sure to maintain his composure, reminding himself that while blood crystals were very valuable, the slightest lapse in attention would see his entire team destroyed by the vicious blood-traced fiends.

"Boss, come and see this!"

One of his front scouts cried out in alarm.

Old Zhang swiftly made his way forward. He saw a familiar figure dashing wildly down the street with a red blur hot on its tail. Everyone could recognize the person being chased, it was Duanmu Huanghun!

Central Pine City’s elementalists knew the academy’s brightest students well.

The A-1 unit?

Old Zhang found it strange that Duanmu Huanghun was the only person around. Could they be in trouble? Why was he alone?

"Let’s follow them. Be on your guards."

The line of elementalists cautiously advanced. They soon heard the unmistakable sounds of battle.

The sounds caught their attention as they quietly moved ahead.

Old Zhang was shocked to see the battle that was occurring before him.

Ai Hui was standing motionlessly in one spot like a wooden puppet and a wretched-looking nine-traced blood cat was chasing after Duanmu Huanghun.

The fiend and the human were standing on opposite sides of the wooden puppet.

The two appeared to be revolving around Ai Hui.

What was going on?

Old Zhang was dumbstruck by the incredibly odd sight.

"Come on Classmate Bangwan!" Lou Lan cheered as loud as he could.

"Don’t be afraid Bangwan, Ai Hui won’t ask you for money in his current state!" Fatty chimed in.

"Go nearer!"

"Ah, almost there, just a bit closer!"

"Bangwan, what did you do to that cat? Why is it so intent on taking you down?"

…

Shi Xueman folded her arms across her chest, seemingly enjoying the show.

Duanmu Huanghun was sweating profusely. The blood-traced fiend that Shi Xueman had lured over earlier had been completely shredded by Ai Hui; however, this nine-trace blood cat that Duanmu Huanghun had found appeared to be too fast for this strategy. Duanmu Huanghun had almost been injured by it.

Ai Hui’s ridiculously small attack range meant that Duanmu Huanghun had to lure the blood-traced cat extremely close to Ai Hui in order to get it to attack him.

Duanmu Huanghun was, however, hesitant to go near Ai Hui after almost being stabbed by him.

The nine-trace blood cat continued to follow him in circles, completely ignoring Ai Hui. Duanmu Huanghun was so frustrated that he wanted to scream. What kind of lousy blood-traced fiend are you? Can’t you see that motionless target right there?

I have to think of something...

Duanmu Huanghun was struck by a brainwave. He cut his movement with a step forward, turning around to face the blood-traced cat before activating his [Viridescent Flower].

Countless vines weaved together to form a huge net in front of him.

The blood-traced cat wasn't expecting something like this net. Unable to react in time, it crashed into the net. The blood-traced cat desperately clawed at the vines, but to no avail. It only managed to break a few of them before becoming completely bound.

The next moment, it was sent flying.

The blood-traced cat was heading towards the motionless Ai Hui.

Old Zhang almost cried out in shock. Was Duanmu Huanghun trying to harm Ai Hui?

Stumbling through the air, the nine-trace blood cat noticed that it was getting closer and closer to Ai Hui. With a blood-red glint in its eyes, it shifted its limber body in midair as it prepared to pounce on him. Claws as sharp as the blade of a knife shot out of its meaty paws, menacingly reflecting the light.

Ai Hui remained completely motionless, seemingly unaware of what was about to happen.

What happened next shocked Old Zhang so much that his cry was stopped dead in his throat.

Just as the nine-trace blood cat entered attacking range, a silver coloured sword ray appeared out of nowhere.

A distinct ringing sound whistled through the air and was soon interrupted by the sound of blades clashing. Ai Hui's sword had collided with the nine-trace blood cat's claws.

Before the sword ray could dissipate, another one emerged in the exact same spot.

One more stroke!

Old Zhang wondered if his eyes were playing tricks on him. The clashing sounds were ringing out in such short intervals that they appeared to blend into one long, clear ring.

Ping!

The nine-trace blood cat's claws, despite being harder than steel, were reduced to dust.

Almost simultaneously, a slender, crescent moon-shaped sword

ray appeared on its abdomen.

[Uprising Moon]!

The nine-trace blood cat's abdomen had the highest number of blood traces. The crescent shaped sword ray penetrated the blood traces, opening a sleek wound on the abdomen.

The blood-traced cat's pupils dilated as its body became rigid.

But this wasn't the end of the attack. Dots of light lit up its abdomen like a starry night scene.

The wound on its abdomen was ripped open further, becoming a large, gaping hole.

An extremely keen sword ray then sliced its way out of the blood-traced cat's back.

Thin pillars of blood spurted out of the blood-traced cat's back.

Another sword ray emerged out of nowhere, striking the cat's neck. It pierced the blood-traced cat's muscular neck, emitting shards of lightning from within.

All of the attacks, from the moment the blood-traced cat had entered Ai Hui's attack range to the moment it was sent flying off, were executed in a frighteningly short amount of time.

Bang!

Like a ragged sackbag, the nine-trace blood cat collapsed to the ground. The sword ray on its neck exploded into a burst of radiance with a loud bang.

The nine-trace blood cat was motionless.

So was Ai Hui, who had returned to his wooden puppet state

A deathly stillness followed.

Old Zhang was struck dumb by the speed at which Ai Hui had decimated his opponent. He had never seen or even imagined that something like that was possible.

He looked at the motionless figure and felt a shiver run down his spine. Such terrifying strength!

What kind of swordplay was that?

He had never heard anyone mention something this powerful.

Since the beginning, he had only wanted to make friends. He had heard of the A-1 unit's prestige and fighting prowess, but had never seen it for himself. It wasn't until today that he realized just how formidable Ai Hui was.

Something as dangerous as a blood-traced fiend had been nothing in front of Ai Hui. He had thoroughly destroyed it before it even had a chance to fight back.

So-called elite groups like Old Zhang's were probably nothing in front of Ai Hui as well.

Old Zhang felt his heart quiver.

Their performance wouldn't have been much better than the blood-traced cat's. He decided to warn the other groups to avoid having conflicts with the A-1 unit at all costs.

Shi Xueman and the rest were taken aback as well. Her folded arms had fallen to her sides, her eyes filled with disbelief.

This time around, Ai Hui's attacks were much faster and much more precise!

He had executed three precise sword strokes in such a short amount of time, each one striking the exact same spot on the blood-traced cat's claws. That was how he'd managed to turn them into dust.

How was this bloke capable of improving even when in such an odd state?

Witnessing what had happened left her feeling slightly uncomfortable. Ai Hui's performance was simply unimaginable.

Duanmu Huanghun was dealt an even greater blow. He gaped at Ai Hui as though he had just seen a ghost.

No one could explain the strange state that Ai Hui was in. Duanmu Huanghun felt that it was something similar to spontaneous enlightenment, but that monstrous strength... was he not experiencing breakthroughs?

Duanmu Huanghun unwittingly tightened his fists. Ai Hui had just sliced a nine-trace blood cat like a melon, yet he himself hadn't accomplished much else...

Ai Hui's present state may be something out of this world but...

Duanmu Huanghun doesn't need excuses!

Damn it!

The wide street was completely silent.

All of a sudden, a loud rumbling noise could be heard. The ground began to shake violently.

Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun snapped out of their fright. Looking up, they noticed the huge column of smoke that was rising

from a distance away.

"It’s the city gate!" Duanmu Huanghun yelled at the top of his lungs.

"The city gate has been breached." Shi Xueman’s voice shuddered.

Everyone behind them went pale with fright.

Although Central Pine City was vulnerable to underground attacks, blood fiends that could enter via that route were often small. The city’s defenses were responsible for keeping the larger blood fiends out.

Once the city gate falls, however, the larger blood fiends would be free to enter as they pleased. It would be a complete disaster.

The ground was shaking. What was even more fear-inducing was that the tremors were getting closer.

"Run! Blood fiends!"

Screams of fear could be heard nearby. Nobody had the chance to react.

A red flood washed its way onto the streets, engulfing everything in sight.

Chapter 217: One Man Against Countless Numbers

Tian Kuan didn't follow the horde of blood fiends into the city, instead choosing to observe it from outside. If he remembered correctly, this was a painfully ordinary city within the Induction Ground known as Central Pine City.

As he neared Central Pine City, he noticed that its defenses remained completely intact. He became more guarded after making this observation since he had seen many other cities which were larger yet, had defenses that were much more dilapidated.

Surveying the area carefully, Tian Kuan noticed something peculiar. The blood-traced fiends near Central Pine City were all of a lower level.

He now understood why the city's defenses were still in such good condition.

Tian Kuan had hunted many blood-traced fiends on his way to the city and as such, was able to determine the blood-traced fiends' levels. There were a large number of wild beasts in the Induction Ground. Once they were infected by the blood poison, these beasts would continuously experience transformations and become much stronger as time passed.

Their large numbers would allow them to eventually overwhelm the elementalists and become the new masters of the Induction Ground.

The organization had never before attempted a blood fiend breeding operation of this large a scale. Tian Kuan believed that not even the higher ups knew what would result in the end.

One thing he was sure of, however, was that they were not only racing against the Avalon of Five Elements, but with the blood fiends as well. If the blood elementalists were unable to keep up with the blood fiends' swift transformations, things will not bode well for them either.

Once active, the blood poison brings with it a fundamental change. The changes it would cause were irreversible and uncontrollable. Unleashing it was like opening Pandora's box, nothing could be said after the deed was done.

While risky, it wasn't too different from most other big opportunities. Large opportunities were often hidden within huge risks. Besides, those who seek success must inevitably tackle such risks.

Death? Death was an inevitability.

Tian Kuan despised those hypocrites who thought otherwise.

He suddenly remembered that when the crazy lady in red had come to his aid, it had been from this direction. Did she have something to do with the lower leveled blood fiends in this area?

Tian Kuan couldn't detect any traces of her presence nearby. She must have left quite a while ago.

His eyebrows furrowed in thought. Although he wasn't quite sure what had happened here, he was certain that this phenomenon hadn't occurred naturally.

Blood refinement?

This was the most possible scenario since blood refinement required large amounts of blood spiritual force. The amount of blood spiritual force contained within plants was minuscule and definitely not sufficient for blood refinement. Only a large number of blood fiends could provide the necessary amount of blood spiritual force.

However, encouraging blood fiend transformation in such a large area was a slow process requiring an enormous amount of effort. Just how much blood spiritual force did that crazy lady need to have done something like this?

Tian Kuan calculated an approximate figure and quickly concluded that the amount of blood spiritual force here was beyond what she could handle.

What was the real reason then?

Tian Kuan couldn't think of anything else, so he turned his focus to the enigmatic little city in front of him. In order to prudently

tease out some of its secrets, he decided to break down the city gate and lure the blood fiends into the city.

The horde of blood fiends rushing inside would reveal any potentially dangerous individuals that resided within Central Pine City.

The sudden destruction of the city gate plunged Central Pine City into a state of crisis. Groups of elementalists which had been on the hunt for blood-traced fiends ended up becoming the hunted instead.

Old Zhang stared at the incoming wave of blood fiends in terror. "Run, quick!" he shouted.

A pair of azure wings spread out from behind Old Zhang and he swiftly took to the skies. The other elementalists rapidly followed suit. Looking down from above, they could see the blood-red torrent gushing down the streets in their direction. The earth rumbled and the mountains shook; it was a fearsome sight to behold.

At this moment, someone cried out in alarm, "The A-1 unit! They don’t have azure wings!"

Old Zhang unwittingly looked down and saw the stranded A-1 unit shaking before the might of the horde. He could see the look of despair on their young, immature faces.

"Damn it!"

He couldn’t help but swear.

The raging horde that swiftly approached the street below appeared to have no end. No one dared to venture down to save the A-1 unit.

It was too late!

He shut his eyes in resignation.

The A1-unit was in disarray, everyone was pale with fright. Although they had become much stronger, their fear stricken bodies still trembled before the destructive force that was headed their way.

The laid bricks that made up the street were groaning under the immense force of the blood fiends’ hooves. The thundering stampede caused the ground to quake intensely, making it difficult for Shi Xueman and the others to maintain their balance.

Everything that stood in the way of the blood fiends was reduced to dust. They raged on, crushing every last building and causing ruin in their path; nothing could withstand their might.

With their armor-like scales, forceful limbs, razor sharp teeth, and deadly gazes, the blood fiends charging towards the A-1 unit appeared to have come straight out of hell, bringing death and

destruction with them.

It was too late to retreat!

"Prepare for battle!"

Shi Xueman’s voice was drowned out by the thunderous rumbling.

Duanmu Huanghun looked paler than usual, but the fervor in his eyes burned brighter than ever. He understood that this could be his final battle and was ready to go all out.

It would be a disgrace if he couldn’t even put up a final struggle!

The elemental energy within his body erupted as the [Viridescent Flower] began to blossom beneath his feet. The vines burst forth along the ground stealthily, fanning across the street like tripwires.

Several blood fiends began to fall.

Blood fiends were constantly being tripped by Duanmu Huanghun’s [Viridescent Flower]. Those that fell were quickly trampled over by the other blood fiends, ground to mincemeat before they could even make a sound.

Shi Xueman threw every last Verglas Mist Pearl she had in front

of her. The pearls transformed into a wall of fog which advanced towards the blood fiends.

Upon contact, the fog seeped into the first ten blood fiends that were ahead of the horde. Their bodies instantly stiffened.

Before the Verglas Mist Pearls could exert their full effect, the affected blood fiends were mercilessly crushed to death by those behind.

The red torrent never once showed any signs of slowing.

"Fire!"

Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun, together with the rest of the team, whipped out their bows and began to rain arrows on the blood fiends.

Blood fiends were dropping like flies, but still the red torrent raged on, unobstructed. Nothing could stand in its way.

The ground quaked even harder as the distance closed between the two sides. The horde of blood fiends was only fifty meters away from them.

Shi Xueman and the A-1 unit could see the fiends' red eyes. Their hearts filled with despair and their minds blanked. Their young eyes opened wide in terror.

The trembling Fatty suddenly rushed towards the motionless Ai Hui and cried, "Ai Hui! Let’s go!"

A sliver of shock ran through Shi Xueman’s body as she stared at the immobile wooden puppet in the centre of her field of vision. Ai Hui appeared to be completely oblivious to the impending danger.

No!

She imagined the frail wooden puppet being shredded like a piece of paper in the wake of the stampeding horde.

This scoundrel hasn’t even settled his debts yet... You still need to pay off your debt...

Her eyes were brimming with tears, blurring her vision. Fine, we all have to die anyway...

Looking down from above, the elementalists witnessed the blood fiend horde drawing closer and closer to the group of youths. Twenty meters... Ten meters... Five meters...

The puppet-like figure standing up to the almighty horde made for a visually striking scene.

The formidable and the frail, the frantic and the still, the innumerable fiends against the lone figure.

Nobody else knew, but the sword embryo had become active in response to the danger that was about to befall Ai Hui.

Within a short span of time, the sword embryo's throbbing increased to an alarming rate. It was frantically hammering away at record speed.

The sword embryo's intense activity expanded Ai Hui's awareness away from his sword. Details that he could not perceive before surfaced in his mind's eye like an island appearing in the middle of the sea.

His sword wielding arm twitched ever so slightly as he awoke from his deep slumber.

Three meters... Two meters... One meter!

The red torrent finally crashed into the frail looking figure. At that moment, it was as though time stood still.

The sword in Ai Hui's hand reacted instinctively. An exotic chirping sound rang out from the Dragonspine Inferno's blade as lightning burst forth from its densely-packed pores. A silver glow spontaneously shrouded the entire blade, completely covering it in dense silver lightning.

As if he was playing the piano, his fingers grasping the sword hilt gracefully press downed one by one as he tightened his grip. He

gently lifted the Dragonspine Inferno horizontally in front of his chest.

The Dragonspine Inferno in his hand vanished.

An impeccably brilliant sword ray blossomed in its place. A massive [Crescent Moon] enveloped the coarse lightning as it arced through the air, slicing into the advancing horde.

Exploding with the force of a thousand suns, a radiant blaze lit up the entire space and momentarily blinded everyone within viewing range.

The [Crescent Moon] was like death's scythe, instantly claiming the lives of more than ten of the blood fiends nearest to Ai Hui.

Electricity snaked through the mass of blood fiends, violently shocking those struck into numbness.

Upon being blinded and shocked, a large number of the blood fiends subconsciously slowed down. Slowing down amidst this densely packed stampede was no different from seeking death.

The blood fiends behind trampled those in front, plunging the entire area into chaos.

Ai Hui was unaffected by the silver light. The only thing he could feel was the earth-shattering throbbing between his eyebrows. His heart was similarly beating at an insanely fast speed, matching the

rhythm of the sword embryo's throbbing. His entire inner world shook along with the frantic pulsing.

Amidst the activity within his mind, Ai Hui realized that time had slowed down considerably. His inner world appeared to have vastly expanded.

The huge, lifeless bodies were carried forward by their inertia and continued moving towards Ai Hui.

He sent them flying with a flick of his sword.

Ai Hui's movements were extremely fast. The Dragonspine Inferno in his hand became a blur and could hardly be seen with the naked eye. He was an immovable reef, standing stoically against the incoming wave of blood fiends. The red torrent was split down the middle the moment it rushed against the reef, splitting into two smaller torrents made up of blood, severed limbs and huge corpses that poured down its sides.

The intense, rapid throbbing.

The unbelievably fast sword strokes.

Both were moving to the same tenacious rhythm.

The blinding light dispersed completely.

Everyone stared dumbfounded at the sword wielding youth standing in the middle of it all. In that moment, his small silhouette looked much larger than before. All they could see was a majestic, towering figure standing amidst the sea of red.

One man stood alone against the seemingly endless horde of blood fiends. Retreat was not an option.

Chapter 218: A Magnificent Performance

Tian Kuan swaggered into Central Pine City amidst the blood fiends. Hearing the distant sounds of fighting and seeing the thick columns of black smoke brought a wry smile to his lips.

He was doubly cautious after witnessing Yu Mingqiu's impressive strength. Were he at full strength, Tian Kuan was confident of escaping even if he was unable to defeat his opponent.

While riddled with injuries, however, meeting someone as powerful as Yu Mingqiu would put him in an extremely unfavorable situation.

Yu Mingqiu's abilities had greatly exceeded Tian Kuan's expectations. Tian Kuan had initially expected blood-traced fiends to pose a threat even to vice-division leaders, but from the looks of it, normal blood-traced fiends were not powerful enough.

They needed more time.

This was also why he'd decided to sneak into the city. As of now, the blood-traced fiends were still inadequate when dealing with an opponent like Yu Mingqiu.

The current situation was, however, only temporary. As the blood-traced fiends continued to transform over time, they would continuously become stronger. As a result, the Induction Ground would constantly become more dangerous. In contrast, powerful individuals like Yu Mingqiu did not usually experience vast

increases in power over such a short period of time.

Tian Kuan felt that the blood-traced fiends were beneficial indeed. Not only could they aid him in his training, they were also useful in dealing with elementalists.

Ruins and rubble were the only things in sight. The entire city was a complete mess.

Seeing the chaos he had created with his own hands made him feel an inexplicable sense of delight. He was absolutely fascinated that such a small offensive effort on his part was capable of destroying an entire city.

At that point, he felt as though he was a god, capable of controlling the fate of the mortals beneath him. What a great feeling!

So this is what it's like to feel all-powerful!

He quickly suppressed his rising zeal, reminding himself that it was not yet time for him to become arrogant.

He cautiously inspected his entire body to ensure that every single one of his blood traces were concealed. The blood traces on a blood elementalist were not usually visible, but would surface once they started to activate the blood spiritual force.

Blood traces were a headache for both blood elementalists and

blood-traced fiends. It was a double-edged sword, being both the source of their energy as well as their key weakness.

The more formidable the blood elementalist, the fewer the number of blood traces present on his or her body. It was the same with blood-traced fiends.

It was said that the blood traces would all disappear upon attainment of the highest realm. This was of course, just a myth. It was a purely theoretical conjecture and did not have much value when discussing something this new.

Tian Kuan disguised himself as an ordinary elementalist.

He suddenly heard the intense sounds of battle ahead. Curious, he quietly headed towards its source. He hadn't met any form of resistance after entering the city, which wasn't particularly surprising. After all, who could oppose such a terrifying horde of blood fiends?

The sounds of the battle coming from up ahead reflected its intensity. Tian Kuan thought of the slowed-down transformations occurring in the city's vicinity. Could it be...

He moved as lightly as an apparition.

He was different from the others who had learned the beast coercion spells. Tian Kuan ultimately only believed in his own strength. All of his time, effort, and resources were spent wholly

on himself. As such, he had an impressive command over his own body.

Using the environment as cover, he occasionally adjusted his position. His figure faded significantly and blended well into his immediate environment. This was the technique [Shadow Body] that was derived from the [Blood Shadow Clone Spell] of the Cultivation Era. Blood spiritual force was a unique form of spiritual energy, distinct enough that it couldn't be tapped on to activate most Cultivation Era spells. The only way to utilize blood spiritual force was to adapt spells from the former blood sects.

Blood spiritual force possessed the basic conditions necessary for spell activation, but it was impossible to use it effectively at Cultivation Era levels. The biggest obstacles were the meridians, since all meridian-related studies had long been abandoned. In the past, cultivators would begin tempering their meridians from a young age, but this was something blood elementalists couldn't possibly achieve. Without the consistent tempering of the meridians, it was impossible to attain the levels of spell complexity achieved by the cultivators.

Despite this, it was still possible to satisfactorily draw out part of a spell's power.

With the help of the ruins, Tian Kuan managed to inch forward and take a good look at the battlefield. The sight before him made his pupils widen.

Tian Kuan wasn't the only one who was shocked.

Old Zhang and his team stared blankly at the scene below, their faces filled with disbelief.

"Too... too fast!" murmured one of the elementalists. He was completely distracted by Ai Hui's actions.

That same thought reverberated through everyone's minds as they watched Ai Hui move at an impossible speed, the long sword in his hand blurring into an illusion.

His moves were utterly different from the first strike that he had unleashed. His actions were now much faster and much more precise!

The silver colored Dragonspine Inferno was swung at an untouchable rhythm. Ai Hui's sword strokes were constantly changing, from slashing to flicking and even to slapping...

Each stroke was as fast as lightning, executed with the utmost precision and efficiency. The stampeding blood fiends were fatally injured upon coming within range, but they continued to charge in despite their injuries.

How Ai Hui handled his massive, charging opponents was truly astonishing.

The Dragonspine Inferno would somehow always appear right where it was needed. Then with the exact amount of strength

required, it would be swung, spun, flicked, or slapped against the oncoming fiends. All sorts of seemingly unorthodox strokes were incorporated into Ai Hui's fluid dance, taking out the oncoming blood fiends before they could even put up any resistance.

His pupils were dilating and constricting at an alarming rate. In his current state, Ai Hui was like an emotionless killing machine.

Lightning-quick movements, extreme precision, and a despair-inducing stability to boot.

The only thing Ai Hui could hear on the chaotic battlefield was the frantic throbbing of the sword embryo. Nothing could shake his resolve or break his focus, not even the angry bellowing of the blood fiends.

"Oh my heavens!"

Fatty wrapped his hand around his head, unable to believe what was happening.

The ground was still trembling from the stampede which looked as though it was never going to end. However, the feeling of helplessness that the horde had brought upon them had vanished.

The floor around Ai Hui was saturated with blood. Small streams of blood converged to form larger rivers. The rich, sweet smell of the blood poison pervaded the air around them, causing some people to choke.

Fresh blood was flowing freely, but it seemed to avoid the immediate area around Ai Hui. Not a single drop of blood was found within a one meter radius around him.

Shi Xueman was stupefied. She looked at Ai Hui, her mind a complete blank.

She had never before thought that swordplay would still be relevant in today's world. This was the first time she had seen swordsmanship of such a terrifying calibre. Ai Hui's relentless, lightning-quick strokes, impeccable accuracy, and dazzling sword rays made her feel a little afraid.

As blood continued to rain down and the fiends continued to snarl angrily, the grim figure continued to cut down lives like they were nothing. His rhythm did not waver one bit.

Memories of Ai Hui suddenly surfaced in Shi Xueman's mind. She remembered the time when Ai Hui and Fatty had pettily fought over noodles, when Ai Hui had steeled his resolve to repay his debt of eighty million yuan, when he'd plotted to hit Duanmu Huanghun's annoying face...

The Ai Hui she remembered was remarkably different from this ice-cold killing machine in front of her. To think that he was this formidable...

Duanmu Huanghun's eyes were filled with overzealous excitement. Oh, oh, this is incredible! That speed! That precision!

What a vicious stroke... I love it!

To think you were actually this powerful!

Duanmu Huanghun felt himself teetering on the verge of insanity. Having been rescued from the brink of death by such frantic yet precise swordsmanship made him unbelievably excited. He wanted to howl to release his agitation.

So... he did it!

"Ahahahaha..."

He looked up at the sky and raised his arms to his sides. Craning his neck back, he howled like a wolf during a full moon.

Every last one of his nerves were trembling with excitement. The wanton massacre occurring before his eyes stimulated even the deepest regions of his psyche, destroying the restraints that maintained his composure.

Duanmu Huanghun’s madness prevailed over the silence that had washed over the A-1 unit. His fervor spread like a disease, infecting the other students who began to howl as well. The joyful feeling of renewed life, together with the graceful massacre in front of them gave an outlet for the feelings of dread and despair accumulated within their young souls.

Oh how they’d longed to release all that pent up frustration!

Release the fear within their hearts and release the despair that they had held in for so long. The students howled with the passion and wishes that they held for the future.

Using all of their might, the students cried out fervently in reverence of the lone, grim figure leading them towards the future!

Even the esteemed Shi Xueman and Sang Zhijun let go of their restraints, screaming and flailing without any care for their images.

The intense cries came like a sudden storm, ravaging the entire street and somehow drowning out even the sound of the stampede.

Old Zhang was deeply amazed by Ai Hui.

Other than his first strike, Ai Hui's sword strokes were very plain. No, succinct was a better way to describe them. Each and every one of his strokes were executed with no margin of error.

Old Zhang's experience allowed him to see beyond Ai Hui's sword strokes. Ai Hui's control of elemental energy was even more surprising.

Those rapid sword moves of his required superb control of elemental energy in addition to excellent swordsmanship.

Powerful techniques often required complex methods of circulating elemental energy, something people referred to as

elemental energy control.

An old hand like him knew that simple moves were often capable of unleashing as much power as more complicated ones.

Ai Hui was the perfect example of this.

The techniques executed by Ai Hui were all simple and unadorned, but he varied between a large number of them at an unimaginable speed. Old Zhang had no idea if this form of swordplay had existed in the past, but he knew that the control required to perform such a feat was extremely difficult to achieve... It was way beyond anything he could perform!

The A-1 unit’s rallying cry could be heard from the skies.

Old Zhang and his team smiled upon hearing their cries. They were young once and knew exactly how the youths below were feeling.

Old Zhang whistled. "As elders, I think we should show these rookies how to properly cheer."

Everyone laughed heartily.

"Come! The young lad deserves our cheers!"

Old Zhang banged on his chestplate, leading the cheer. The rest

of his team followed suit, banging on their armor, their shields, and their weapons in a uniform manner.

The zealous, passionate cries of the A-1 unit combined with the hunting units' banging. The two sounds resounded against the blood fiends' thunderous stomping and their angry snarls. In the middle of this chaos, the sword embryo continued to beat on. The sights and sounds of the battlefield merged into one big magnificent performance.

The sword in the young man's hand changed constantly.

Chapter 219: Blood Birds in the City

The streets of Central Pine City erupted with cheers. Since the blood disaster began, very few occasions could excite everyone like the current one.

The blood fiends that were blocked by Ai Hui began to split up, wandering down the other streets and alleys, eventually spreading to other parts of the city. Direct clashes between elementalists and blood fiends occurred simultaneously in different parts of the city. Casualties on both sides were rising sharply.

Fortunately, most of the blood fiends flocked towards the main street where Ai Hui was. The enormous benefits of the blood crystals also greatly reduced the elementalists' fear of the blood fiends.

If not for these two factors, the number of casualties would have been much worse. Even so, innumerable lives were still lost to the intense battles happening throughout the city.

The city had initially suffered heavy casualties, but after paying the price in blood, the elementalists learned how to better handle these powerful blood-traced fiends. People weren't afraid of the blood-traced fiends' raw strength, but rather, were afraid of the unknown. The blood-traced fiends' mysterious transformations, unique powers, and the blood poison they carried were all a mystery to most of the city's forces.

As the number of battles under their belts increased, these

unknown factors were unravelled one by one. The mystery shrouding the blood-traced fiends was fading away and the fear of them was rapidly diminishing.

Dire beasts could be just as strong as these blood fiends, but people weren't so afraid of them.

The elementalists came from all over the city, dispersing the main horde of blood fiends and surrounding them from all sides. They were applying dire beast hunting tactics to the current situation. Lives were constantly lost, but nobody took even one step back. Everyone was completely immersed in the slaughter.

Retreat? Where could they go? There was no path for retreat!

There was no alternative to fighting to the death. Destroying every last blood fiend in the city was the only way to survive.

The mayor's residence was quiet. The faint cries of madness and uniform knocking of shields in the distance did not disturb Wang Zhen in the least. He looked at the elite in front of him.

Standing in front of him were the strongest elites in Central Pine City. Among them were teachers who had experienced and survived various disasters, experienced hunting veterans, and former elites of the Thirteen Divisions.

Standing beside him was the dean.

Central Pine City had no one else to rely on in the face of such a formidable enemy; this was the most powerful team that they could put together. To Wang Zhen, this team of "elites" was woefully weak. During the Battle of the Dawn, at least they'd had Ye Baiyi and forty-two elite members of the Deathgrass Division.

He was just an auxiliary soldier, and a retired one at that. How did he end up as a leader?

Wang Zhen laughed in resignation.

He didn't expect this team to have to enter battle so soon, but the situation was critical and he had to make a swift decision.

He was capable of mobilizing the entire city, turning Central Pine City into a giant meat grinder. He was willing to send the weaker students out to their deaths in order to deplete the blood poison. He was also more than willing to throw himself out there without the slightest hesitation when required.

Having been to the battlefield, he knew that mercy and compassion to others or oneself were of no use out there.

On the battlefield, those who feared death were often the first to die.

"Our mission is to re-seal the gate. The A-1 unit seems to be attracting the main bulk of the blood fiends. As such, we will move along the inside of the walls and cut in from the sides. I don't care

how it’s done, as long as it's done in the end. We don’t have much time left."

Wang Zhen spoke swiftly and firmly. He only paused for a moment when he mentioned the A-1 unit. The A-1 unit had performed well beyond his expectations. He had to admit that seeing Ai Hui fend off the stampeding blood fiends had initially made him doubt his own eyes.

If not for Ai Hui...

Without Ai Hui, the horde of blood fiends would have completely destroyed everything in front of them. The entire Central Pine City would have become their playground.

Wang Zhen, who had experienced the Battle of the Dawn, understood that the most terrifying thing about the blood fiends was their overwhelming madness that seemed to crush everything.

Ai Hui was somehow able to resist it.

Wang Zhen had no idea how Ai Hui did it, but he’d definitely succeeded in resisting it.

He suddenly thought of how the Battle of the Dawn had unleashed the wargod-like Ye Baiyi. Perhaps Ai Hui was Central Pine City’s Ye Baiyi?

This ridiculous thought hovered in his mind for a couple of

seconds before it disappeared.

When he'd spoken to the dean, Wang Zhen had suggested that a miracle could happen. Deep down however, he'd known that placing his hopes on a miracle was laughably stupid. All hopes on the battlefield were only derived from fighting and bloodshed.

His gaze brushed over the group in front of him as he said solemnly, "We must re-seal the gate in the shortest time possible. As of now, flying blood fiends have yet to enter the city and we must accomplish our mission before..."

At that moment, he saw some blood birds flying in the distance. His expression changed slightly, but soon returned to normal. "Well, they're already here. All we can do now is to seal the gate as soon as possible and keep their numbers to a minimum. The dean and I will be leading this operation. We must succeed at all costs. Let's go."

Central Pine City's defences had always been robust, especially its air defence. This was the reason why they had been able to hold out until now.

The previous incident where blood bats had infiltrated the city had prompted the mayor's residence to completely reform the city's air defences. Wang Zhen himself had presided over their design. Under his meticulous arrangements, the blood bats were unable to invade Central Pine City again.

To think that there would now be blood birds within their

airspace...

Compared to the blood-traced fiends on the ground, the flying blood birds were a much greater threat. They were much more versatile and had more lines of attack. Even with the azure wings, it would take an expert to be able to defeat these flying blood fiends. To most elementalists, flying with the azure wings was just another technical ability. To the flying blood fiends however, flying was an evolutionary adaptation perfected over many millennia.

To make matters worse, Central Pine City's air defences were built to withstand incoming attacks. Attacks from within the city were much harder to deal with.

Wang Zhen was worried, but he had more pressing matters to deal with. The longer they waited, the lower the possibility of resealing the city gate. If the gate remained unsealed, everyone would just be sitting ducks awaiting death.

He grit his teeth, turned a blind eye to the sky, and led everyone towards the gate.

Central Pine City had turned into a large battlefield.

Old Zhang's team and the A-1 unit were fully engaged in battle. The two teams relentlessly launched attacks at the horde of blood fiends being fended off by Ai Hui.

There was no need to worry about dodging or defending, all they had to do was pour their elemental energy into all out attacks.

The number of blood fiends was dwindling. This was in part due to the blood fiends at the back of the stampede snapping out of the mania that had initially consumed them. Upon realizing that there was no way through ahead, the blood fiends began to find other routes.

The pressure on Ai Hui was greatly reduced, and the sword embryo's throbbing started to slow down.

This was reflected in Ai Hui's slowing movements. His sword strokes had become much more visible and were now relatively easy to capture with the naked eye.

Everyone was relieved that the situation had become less critical.

Nobody knew that Ai Hui was beginning to feel slightly uncomfortable.

Ai Hui's attention was still focused largely on his sword, but his bodily changes were starting to affect his mind. The constant depletion of the elemental energy within his body, had greatly reduced the lightness he felt in his limbs. Particularly, the frantic throbbing of the sword embryo had consumed a huge amount of elemental energy from his sky palace.

The elemental energy within Ai Hui's body had almost bottomed

out.

Although the sword strokes he executed were not complicated and didn’t consume much elemental energy, slaying such a large number of blood fiends still required a good amount of elemental energy. Describing the entire street as a river of blood was not an exaggeration at all.

In contrast to the depletion of his elemental energy, Ai Hui’s essence, breath, and spirit were rising sharply.

In order to maintain control over his body, Ai Hui had forced his mind to focus solely on his sword. If he hadn’t been forced to the point of desperation, Ai Hui definitely would not have come up with such an idea. He probably wouldn’t have been able to achieve such a deep level of focus either.

This level of focus had allowed him to achieve a special state of mind.

The sword manuals of the Cultivation Era referred to this state as "lucidity".

Every minute change experienced by the sword was clearly noticed by him. For instance, the same simple oblique slash that he had executed countless times before was now perceived to a much greater detail. The vibration of the blade, the flow of elemental energy, the movement of the air, and the changes taking place when cutting into flesh...

All these previously neglected or unseen details were now so vivid.

The steady stream of blood fiends forced Ai Hui to continue fighting. The ongoing high-intensity combat heightened Ai Hui's perception. If the amount of detail in a single sword stroke was like a river, then the countless sword strokes that Ai Hui had performed was akin to a sea of information.

Ai Hui gradually analyzed and absorbed the feedback that was constantly being generated. Making use of this information, he constantly revised and improved his swordplay. Ai Hui's swordsmanship was quietly transforming.

Such a transformation was extremely subtle. No one around had noticed anything different, not even Ai Hui himself.

Just like that, Ai Hui had experienced the first turning point in his swordsmanship.

As he processed more and more of the feedback coming from his sword, Ai Hui's swordsmanship continued to change. His power and presence were constantly on the rise.

From an onlooker's perspective, Ai Hui's killing intent had become much colder and much denser.

Just as Ai Hui was on the verge of experiencing a breakthrough, the number of blood fiends heading towards him decreased

significantly. As the fighting intensity decreased, so too did his presence.

All breakthroughs required a sustained effort to see through.

The fall in his intent was the reason for the slight discomfort he was experiencing.

It felt as though a violent storm which was about to take shape had suddenly begun to dissipate.

Right at that moment, one of Old Zhang's team members suddenly exclaimed, "Bad news, blood birds!"

Old Zhang was startled. Looking up and seeing the blood birds drained all color from his face.

A few elementalists who were closer to the blood birds had no time to react and were swiftly pierced by the them. The blood birds flew through the air like red arrows.

There were only a small number of elementalists in the air above Central Pine City. Old Zhang and his team were thus highly conspicuous and were immediately picked out as targets by the blood birds. Spreading their wings, the blood birds flew aggressively in their direction.

Old Zhang's face was as white as a sheet.

Hiding in the dark, Tian Kuan’s eyes brightened.

Chapter 220: Mini Lou Lan

Honestly speaking, Tian Kuan felt that he had already found the most dangerous person in the whole of Central Pine City.

When he was outside of the city and saw that the surrounding blood fiends were obviously transforming at a slower speed than those in other places, he became more alert. He felt that there must be a special reason or some kind of special person for this to be happening.

Now all his focus was on Ai Hui.

Whether or not Ai Hui was the cause of this phenomenon, he was the most dangerous person in Tian Kuan's eyes. He felt that Ai Hui was dangerous not because he was formidable. Truthfully, while Ai Hui had proven that he was a valiant fighter, amongst all the strong contenders Tian Kuan had met, Ai Hui wasn't up to par.

Whether it was Yu Mingqiu or the mysterious experts within the organizations, their skills far exceeded Ai Hui's abilities.

But with Ai Hui, he felt a sense of danger.

Tian Kuan chose a path different from others'. The money he had obtained from successive selections was all invested into his body. He only believed in himself and his body; he had never thought of relying on other forces.

That was a stupid choice.

He had suffered to no end because of that choice. He had no advantage in the beginning, and each victory came with bruises and scars. A few times, with serious injuries, he had come a hair's breadth away from dying. But he stood by his decision nevertheless, pumping resources into his own body and refining his blood continuously.

His investment gradually started paying off.

His body could endure the increasing grade of blood refinement, but he became crazier. The intensity of each blood refinement exceeded his body's safe limit. His stubbornness and rashness brought him a lot of trouble. For example, getting injured was an everyday thing. But these traits also brought him a lot of benefits. His body was much stronger than others', especially his recovery abilities.

In other words, he had a more tenacious vitality.

His opponents were always shocked to find out that many a times he had managed to survive despite his severe injuries. In fact, he had learned how to turn his injuries into opportunities, allowing him to claim victory more often than not.

But no one knew that he had yet another secret ability.

That was his intuition when it came to danger.

Under his unremitting perseverance, his body had undergone astonishing changes. Years of struggling between life and death had sharpened his danger-sensing ability.

It had saved his life many times, allowing him to brush past death.

In the first moments of him perceiving that Ai Hui was dangerous, he was still applauding his splendid performance while inwardly sensing a faint danger.

Tian Kuan wasn't worried about the condition of his body, as he had been involved in many worse situations. He just needed time to completely recover, and he had a strong premonition that if he could recover this time, his abilities would take a leap.

This was all thanks to the fearsome fellow in the Infantry Division.

That fellow's final, all-out blow broke through his elemental energy limit. With extreme willpower, the elemental energy underwent a change Tian Kuan couldn't wrap his head around.

At the last juncture, Tian Kuan detected his breakthrough.

Almost instantly, he decided that risk had allowed the fellow to run elemental energy into his body.

Li Wei's elemental energy was simply extraordinary, so much so that it damaged Kuan Tian's body significantly. With injuries exceeding his expectations, not only did Kuan Tian not get angry, he admired Li Wei. As for the anger on his face, it was merely a show for that crazy lady.

His body hadn't recovered fully because it was still stubbornly swallowing the elemental energy that contained strong willpower. Once the absorption of this unusual elemental energy was complete, his body would then transform once again.

That was for the future. All he could see now was the youth who was standing on a long street with a sword in his hand.

This was because of the danger he felt – a danger more intense than that of the elementalist from the infantry division. No one sensed the change in Ai Hui's swordplay except for Kuan Tian.

And the extremely cruel massacre that thoroughly subverted Kuan Tian's cognition. There had never been any psychological barrier preventing Kuan Tian from killing people; countless had died by his hands. But killing even one enemy now made his spirit waver. It could be from excitement, or from being relieved from a burden and so on.

No matter how seasoned a killer, it was impossible to feel nothing.

But the youth Tian Kuan observed on the street was absolutely still. No motions, excitement, or tension. It was an emotionless

machinery massacre. Perhaps what he had harvested wasn't life but the grass target in the training ground.

Tian Kuan felt danger, exceptionally intense danger.

He would have launched a sneak attack and gotten rid of that fellow if not for his injuries. But right now he couldn't because the youth's swordplay filled him with fear.

It was a swordplay he had not seen before. A dangerous odor.

Hiding in a dark corner, Tian Kuan thought hard about how to deal with that frightening slaughter machine. No kind of trick had any meaning when put before such slaughter machines.

When the blood fiend appeared in the sky, Tian Kuan's eyes lit up.

Speak of the devil!

The blood fiend close by transformed at a slower rate. Tian Kuan suspected that it could be because there had been a large-scale blood refinement, which took away too much Blood of God from the nearby blood forest.

Following the transforming and strengthening of the blood fiends, they become more territorial as well. Strong wild beasts had stronger territorial awareness as compared to weaker ones.

This led to two outcomes.

One was that they would display intense hostility toward intruders. It was also their way of dealing with elementalists from Avalon of Five Elements.

Another was that these increasingly powerful blood fiends would tend more to guarding their own territories instead of conveniently migrating.

The blood fiends surrounding Central Pine City developed slowly, so they were of limited threat. Blood fiends from further away, however, would not leave their territories so easily.

But there was an exception – flying blood fiends.

Central Pine City's perimeter was about sixty-two miles, which wasn't considered small to the blood fiends. A perimeter of about three hundred and ten was enough to contain extremely powerful blood-traced fiends. But to the flying blood fiends, travelling a few hundred miles was as easy as snapping fingers.

It was difficult for flightless blood-traced fiends to advance, unlike the flying blood fiends, who could come anytime.

These blood fiends had definitely flown over from far away. Their strength was exponentially stronger that those infiltrating Central Pine City. All of them had nine traces, unlike those on the

ground, who mostly had no coagulated blood traces. Coagulated blood traces were symbols marking blood fiends' and blood elementalists' step into the threshold.

This was a batch of seven blood falcons with nine blood traces on their bodies. The leading blood falcon had a blood trace that was clearer than the rest, a sign that it was about to transform.

Be it the blood fiends or blood elementalists, they will always start with nine coagulated blood traces. As their skills improved and they transformed, the number of blood traces would gradually reduce. They would also shrink significantly, becoming more refined.

Blood traces were weaknesses.

Blood elementalists with shallow skills would secure themselves in full armor. Following a rise in their skills, the blood traces would reduce in number and size, becoming unnoticeable. Then they would start to dress normally.

The appearance of the seven blood falcons immediately turned them into the focus of the entire battlefield.

They were fast like lightning; not one elementalist was able to catch up with them. In fact, few managed to escape death since the falcons swept everything before their eyes.

But to Tian Kuan's frustration, he realized that he did not know

how to train enslaved beasts, so how could he get these blood falcons to attack the youth?

He thought of an idea, but...

He clenched his teeth and decided to do it!

He was willing to pay any price to get rid of this dangerous fellow.

He went around the ruins, killed a blood fiend with a fixed look on his face, and sucked its blood essence dry, leaving only its shriveled skin. He opened and entered it, effectively disguising himself as a blood fiend and blending into the crowd of blood fiends.

While Ai Hui’s actions slowed down, the number of blood fiends on the street reduced drastically. Victory was near.

Exhausted, Fatty pestled his knees and took heavy breaths while staring at the corpse-filled street. "How many blood crystals will there be?! We can’t let others have it easy!"

Lou Lan stood at the side, recording Ai Hui’s progress. The flickering yellow light in his eye stopped flashing suddenly.

Lou Lan stopped recording upon hearing Fatty’s complaint.

He felt that Fatty’s words were reasonable, and blood crystals were very important to Ai Hui!

"Leave it to me!"

Lou Lan responded cheerily before turning into a pool of quicksand. The quicksand formed countless mini Lou Lans, one smaller than the other yet all remarkably true to life.

The mini Lou Lans moved around Ai Hui and dashed into the battlefield. Because their legs were short, their movements looked a little... comical.

Enormous in number, the mini Lou Lans permeated the battleground like a lump of sand.

Like ants, mini Lou Lans surrounded the corpses on the ground. They cooperated and quickly crumbled a blood fiend’s corpse, obtaining the blood crystal.

One mini Lou Lan carried a blood crystal much bigger than himself over his shoulder, puffing and blowing as he withdrew.

Suddenly, a shadow enveloped his sky.

A strong, powerful beast leg descended from above. Boom, the mini Lou Lan instantly became a flat sand cake and the solid blood crystal pierced into the ground. The blood fiend, oblivious to what it had just stepped on, simply left.

The sand cake rapidly combined to reform a mini Lou Lan, who then grabbed onto the blood crystal, effortfully attempting to pull it out.

The blood crystal was secured too tightly, so he couldn’t get it out at all. Ten seconds later, over ten mini Lou Lans gathered from all directions. Putting their strength together, they managed to pull it out of the ground.

The mini Lou Lans cheered, applauded, and celebrated.

The mini Lou Lan from before continued huffing and puffing as it transported the blood crystal back.

No one, blood fiends included, noticed these creatures moving about at all.

Chapter 221: Protecting Ai Hui!

Fatty was dumbstruck, as the blood crystals around him kept on piling up. He looked like a fat rabbit that was blankly watching fat and juicy carrots popping out of the ground.

Lou Lan was an assiduous individual, and his working efficiency was amazing.

They were like ants moving homes, rapidly separating the blood crystals from the battlefield and bringing them over to Fatty's side. Their miniature body size allowed them to clear the battlefield of blood crystals without anyone noticing them.

Tian Kuan, who was hidden among the blood fiends, had all his attention on the seven nine-trace blood falcons that were flying towards here. The seven blood falcons quickly dominated the sky, and the surrounding elementalists had disappeared. However, he was disappointed that these nine-trace blood falcons did not immediately attack Ai Hui. They were merely hovering about his head.

Tian Kuan was getting anxious. However, he knew that the more powerful a blood-traced fiend was, the more clever it was. It was highly possible that these nine-trace blood falcons were afraid of the fighting capabilities displayed by Ai Hui.

Tian Kuan was right. The gazes of the seven nine-trace blood falcons in the sky did not leave Ai Hui at all. Upon seeing Ai Hui annihilating the flooding blood fiends as though he was chopping

fruits and vegetables, they were terror-stricken.

The reason why flying-type blood fiends were so powerful was because they could soar in the sky. When they were fighting against ground-based opponents, they would always gain an advantageous position over the latter. The vast sky was their biggest advantage. They could attack from any angle, and even if they failed, they could fly up into the sky and escape. Their opponents without wings could only blankly stare at them disappearing into the sky.

However, God made everyone fairly. Even though they could fly and use the sky as their advantage, they still had weaknesses. Their bodies were extremely fragile, so any attacks that were insignificant to ground-based living things might be deadly to them.

As such, these nine-trace blood falcons, which had developed intelligence, were extremely scared of Ai Hui. No matter how fast their flying speed was, they were still not faster than the dangerous youth's sword.

However, they had rich hunting experience. They definitely did not lack craftiness in the process of surpassing other falcons in terms of their base level.

They were hovering unhurriedly over Ai Hui's head. No matter how powerful one was, he or she would be tired out eventually after being attacked continuously. Right now, all they needed was to wait for their target to tire out and deliver one fatal blow to him, then they could reap their rewards.

This target contained an unprecedented tastiness. They smelled the fragrance of a breakthrough in this fellow. As long as they could devour this youth, his flesh, which contained an abundance of an unique elemental energy, would propel them into the base level of eight blood traces. They could become much more powerful than before.

For the sake of this target, they needed to have enough patience.

However, they did not know that there was someone who was more anxious than them on the ground.

Taking just one look at the hovering nine-trace blood falcons, Tian Kuan knew what they were up to. However, he could no longer wait, as he saw with his own eyes how Ai Hui's swordsmanship kept on transforming.

He was worried that if he dragged on any longer, Ai Hui's swordsmanship might have a breakthrough.

The current level of his swordsmanship was already so dangerous and terrifying. If he made another breakthrough in his swordsmanship, how powerful would he be then?

Tian Kuan did not know. He had never seen such formidable swordsmanship. Swordsmanship had been irrelevant in the Avalon of Five Elements for a long time, and he had never heard of any powerful swordsmanship inheritances. If this youth made a breakthrough, he would become very difficult to deal with.

The thing that was causing him to trepidate in fear was the feeling of danger lingering in his mind. That feeling was so strong that he was willing to pay any price for it to go away.

Even if he did not know any beast coercion spells, he still had a way to deal with it as long as he was willing to pay the price.

Ruthlessness flashed across his eyes.

He took out a sharp knife that was flickering with a cold glint. Clearly, this knife was an unearthly object. With a flick of his wrist, the knife cut down on his arm. His movement was very slow. As the knife cut into his flesh, there was no spurting of blood. A tinge of agony arose upon Tian Kuan's face.

Even so, his movement did not slow down and he cut out a two-fingers-wide piece of flesh. The weird thing was that his arm did not bleed. His flesh was rapidly regenerating in a visible speed. In the blink of an eye, the wound had fully healed, leaving a pinkish-red scar on his arm

The piece of flesh that he had cut off was demonic red in color, giving off an extremely alluring and sweet fragrance.

A wave of commotion swept across the blood fiends around Tian Kuan. Their noses were twitching non-stop, trying to locate the source of the fragrance. However, Tian Kuan had long expected this situation. He quickly used his blood spiritual force to wrap up the piece of flesh.

All he needed to do now was throw this piece of flesh onto Ai Hui's body. His flesh had an irresistible power over the blood fiends.

The Blood of God in the bodies of the six of them belonged to the most outstanding batch of seeds that the organization had at that time. There were one hundred people that were implanted with the seeds of the Blood of God, but only the six of them survived.

For a very long period of time, their uniqueness was not revealed. Later on, during an elimination competition among the seed-carriers, the ones that survived and won the competition were the six of them as well.

He only found out about this later on.

Under the influence of the Blood of God, the six of them had completely different transformations from each other. No one knew that the seeds of the Blood of God in their bodies were of the same batch.

Tian Kuan knew a bit more as he was often injured. The organization was also very interested in how an injured body transformed. From the words of a doctor that treated and observed him, he knew a thing or two about certain classified information.

For example, no one knew why the formula for that unique batch of seeds was destroyed. The organization had tried numerous times to recreate that formula, but they failed and could no longer

reproduce the same type of seeds as the ones in their bodies anymore.

As such, the six of them were special, and that was also why they had a special opportunity to do all of this.

Due to him being injured frequently, Tian Kuan was able to discover that his flesh was fatally irresistible to the blood fiends. Elementalists and other seed-carriers would not react to his injuries, but if there were blood fiends around, the blood fiends would react in a terrifying way.

There was a time where he almost died in the hands of a berserk blood fiend. It was also from then on that he learned how to conceal the aura of his wounds.

He was used to using his wounds to create opportunities. Who would ignore such a unique characteristic? He had thought of ways to utilize the special characteristic of his wounds on more than one occasion.

As long as he could throw this piece onto Ai Hui's body, he could unleash all the blood fiends in the surroundings upon him immediately. The blood fiends would become more violent, more ferocious, and more formidable. Furthermore, the nine-trace blood falcons definitely would not miss this opportunity either. Just like the blood fiends, they could not resist the temptation of that piece of flesh either.

But how should he throw it over?

Tian Kuan thought for a moment. If he made a overhead throw through the air, he would just benefit the nine-trace blood falcons. Before the piece of flesh could even land on Ai Hui's body, it would be snatched by those crafty nine-trace blood falcons.

That meant he could only make a short distance, low arc throw.

There was still a lot of space between the thick and solid limbs of those blood fiends. As long as he could find a bit of space, he could throw the piece of flesh onto Ai Hui's body.

Even if Ai Hui's reaction was fast and he stopped the piece of flesh with his sword, as long as the sword was stained with the aura of the flesh, he would be drowned by the flood of berserk blood fiends.

And to ensure that he would succeed, he decided to close the distance between him and Ai Hui.

Concealing himself under the furs of the blood fiends, he moved forward silently. However, he did not notice that he stepped over an ant-sized mini Lou Lan.

This mini Lou Lan was right in the midst of the battle. When Tian Kuan stepped over his head, his body suddenly froze. The eyes of the mini Lou Lan started to flicker. His teeny weeny brain began to work hard, thinking about the giant-sized figure that had just stepped over him.

"Suspicious aura detected."

Through his core, this message was broadcasted to all the mini Lou Lans. Lou Lan's sand core, the Midnight, had broken down into numerous microscopic sand grains, and each mini Lou Lan had one in his body. As such, they were able to transmit messages to each other. This was also why they were so well-coordinated.

All the mini Lou Lans stopped what they were doing.

The mini Lou Lan that was being stepped over by Tian Kuan did not give chase. Clearly, his short legs did not allow him to run fast. However, his non-stop flickering yellow-glowing eyes were locked on to that giant figure.

No only him but all of the mini Lou Lans were locked on to Tian Kuan. All of their yellow-glowing eyes were flickering.

Numerous messages were broadcasted among them.

"Lou Lan is coming, carrying out light analysis!"

"Lou Lan is coming, carrying out scent analysis!"

"Lou Lan is coming, carrying out elemental energy analysis!"

"Lou Lan is coming, carrying out blood spiritual force analysis!"

...

"A unique type of blood spiritual force detected!"

"Its name is unknown!"

"Its characteristics are unknown!"

"Its source is unknown!"

All of the mini Lou Lans were scurrying around. If one were to look at the ground now, he or she would see strands of quicksand slithering around like a bunch of snakes.

When Tian Kuan stopped in his tracks, these fast-moving strands of quicksand completely stopped moving as well. They were scattered on the ground between Ai Hui and Tian Kuan.

The frozen mini Lou Lans might appear extremely gentle and quiet; however, the communication network among them was massive and congested.

"What will he do?"

"I’m so worried!"

"Is that a secret weapon?"

"He must be targetting Ai Hui!"

"Lou Lan is coming, protecting Ai Hui!"

"Lou Lan is coming, protecting Ai Hui!"

"Lou Lan is coming, protecting Ai Hui!"

...

The messages that were broadcasted through the sand core had all become the same message, which was "Protecting Ai Hui!".

Tian Kuan did not know that he was being targeted by numerous little sand puppets. He estimated the distance between himself and Ai Hui. Seven meters. A satisfied look appeared on his face. For such a close distance, even though his vision was constantly disrupted by surging blood fiends, he could still take good aim through the frequently appearing gaps.

He had enough confidence to land the piece of flesh on Ai Hui’s body.

At this very moment, a gap appeared in the densely-packed blood fiends ahead of him. Tian Kuan saw Ai Hui.

Now was the chance for him to make the throw!

Tian Kuan’s eyes lit up all of a sudden. Then he flung his arm and threw the piece of flesh at Ai Hui.

"Now!"

The messages in the sand core crashed and gave off countless sparks.

Numerous mini Lou Lans jumped up high and towards that fast-flying piece of flesh.

Tian Kuan was able to catch the timing accurately. He had great control over his throwing strength as well. That piece of flesh was noiseless, flying towards Ai Hui silently.

When Tian Kuan saw that the piece of flesh was about to hit Ai Hui, he became very excited. Even though he had paid a huge price to get rid of this fellow, he felt that it was worth it.

Suddenly, a huge, basin-like mouth that was made of sand appeared in front of the piece of flesh and devoured it in one bite.

Whoosh. The basin-like sand mouth disappeared into the boundless sea of blood fiends along with that piece of flesh.

Tian Kuan looked as if he was being struck by lightning,

dumbstruck and confused.

Chapter 222: Symmetry Is Also A Form Of Beauty

What was that just now?

Tian Kuan almost rubbed his eyes to see if his vision was blurred. However, his logic eventually did not allow him to make such an embarrassing action.

But the puzzlement still remained in his mind. What was that just now?

The big mouth seemed to be made up of sand, could it be... a sand puppet?

Since when did the sand puppet hide there? Why had he not discovered the sand puppet? How had the sand puppet known what he was going to do?

Other than the view of the densely-packed blood fiends' backs, he could not see a single trace of the sand puppet.

Furthermore... why was there a sand puppet?

Tian Kuan could not help but look at Ai Hui. Concentrated metal elemental energy that was infused with an unique aura flowed from his body. Tian Kuan was sure that he did not make a mistake.

A metal elementalist that brought along a sand puppet to the battlefield? That was ridiculous...

Could there be an earth elementalist hiding in the shadows?

Tian Kuan looked around vigilantly, but made no discoveries. His senses were extremely sharp, so if there was anyone hiding in the dark, he could definitely sense it.

However, when he thought about how he failed to sense the presence of the sand puppet, his confidence slightly wavered. He had encountered sand puppets many times in his life before, but this was the first time something like this happened.

Where was the sand puppet?

All he saw were blood fiends. His radar was unable to sense the slightest bit of the aura of a sand puppet. It was so weird! Tian Kuan felt puzzled. Previously, he could not sense the sand puppet, and right now, he could not locate the sand puppet. Could it be that he knew how to conceal himself?

The mini Lou Lans did not know that Tian Kuan was looking for them.

Currently, they were surrounding the unusual piece of flesh, securing it tightly. Every mini Lou Lan’s glowing yellow eyes flickered rapidly. This piece of meat contained the Blood of God that they had never seen before.

Because of the fact that Lou Lan had been studying the blood crystals, he had a deep understanding on the Blood of God as well. This piece of flesh had an aura that was different from any of the blood fiends they had encountered.

The blood spiritual force that was wrapped around the piece of flesh was completely absorbed by the mini Lou Lans in the blink of an eye.

Upon absorbing the piece of flesh, the aura of the mini Lou Lans had completely disappeared. If Tian Kuan could see this scene, he would understand why he could not find Lou Lan.

It was because the mini Lou Lans had emulated a special ability of the blood spiritual force that was wrapped around the piece of flesh. After getting injured numerous times, Tian Kuan was able to develop his own unique type of blood spiritual force that enabled him to seal and hide his aura. This characteristic was unique to him and no one else had this ability.

Tian Kuan named this ability [Shadowless]. Not only could this ability conceal the aura of his flesh and blood, but it could also conceal his own aura, enabling him to avoid detection his enemies' radar.

After absorbing this unique type of blood spiritual force, the mini Lou Lans quickly decoded the secrets of the [Shadowless] ability and emulated it successfully.

[Shadowless] was able to hide the mini Lou Lans and the piece of flesh from the rest of the world. Tian Kuan simply could not find them. He had never expected someone to emulate his [Shadowless] and also never thought of how to counter it.

Previously, when Lou Lan broke down into numerous mini Lou Lans, the latter's aura was extremely weak and scattered, preventing Tian Kuan from being able to sense their presence.

After emulating the [Shadowless] skill, the mini Lou Lans kept on analyzing this weird piece of flesh.

"Sand core, begin recording. Type of Blood of God, unknown. Source, unknown. Name of blood elementalist, unknown..."

The active mass of quicksand on the ground looked like dough that was being kneaded by a pair of invisible hands. The piece of flesh in the middle of the mass of quicksand was shrinking at an incredible rate.

All the mini Lou Lans' glowing yellow eyes were flickering at an increasingly faster pace. Tremendous amounts of messages were transmitted to the sand core.

The Midnight sand core's operating speed had become incredibly fast. The mysterious power from the piece of flesh allowed the sand core to operate at an all-out effort. The mini Lou Lans suddenly stopped moving. Their glowing yellow eyes formed waves of yellow phosphorescence that repeatedly swept across the piece of flesh.

As the piece of flesh was scanned by the yellow phosphorescence, it started to melt and evaporate like snow. Eventually, it became a puddle of blood. This puddle of fresh blood was mixed with a faint silvery color. Under the yellow phosphorescence, the silvery color became unusually bright.

The puddle of silvery-tinged blood continuously changed its form. It looked as if it was alive and had sensed danger, wiggling nonstop to resist the corrosion from the yellow phosphorescence.

The mini Lou Lans' yellow phosphorescence kept on sweeping across the puddle of silver-tinged blood. It was as if they would not tire at all.

In order to decode the puddle of blood, the mini Lou Lans had completely ignored the outside world.

The mass of sand on the ground had become a lump of rock, remaining stationary.

The overly suspicious Tian Kuan scanned through his surroundings many times but ended up empty-handed.

Had the sand puppet left?

He was unsure and hesitant. He felt uneasy knowing that there was a sand puppet hiding out there in the dark. He did not know whether or not the sand puppet would launch a sudden attack on

him.

However, Tian Kuan made up his mind very quickly and decided to give it another try. After this next attempt, whether he succeeded or not, he would retreat.

He felt danger from that cold-blooded youth. Yet, was it worth it for him to take such a huge risk and gamble his life against Ai Hui?

Of course not!

After making his decision, Tian Kuan clenched his teeth and cut off another piece of flesh from his other arm.

Symmetry was also a form of beauty. He consoled himself while holding back the tears in his eyes.

This time around, he used stronger blood spiritual force to wrap the flesh so that he could throw it through the air. Previously, the sand puppet had disappeared into the ground. As such, he was unsure whether the sand puppet was hiding in the ground or not.

By using stronger spiritual force to channel the [Shadowless] ability, he could make sure that the piece of flesh would not be snatched by the nine-traced blood falcons before reaching the sword-wielding youth.

Without any hesitation, Tian Kuan flung his arm and hurled the piece of flesh, which traveled in an arc through the air. The piece

of flesh blended in with the sky that was filled with flying rubble and smoke as it flew toward Ai Hui.

After throwing the piece of flesh, Tian Kuan immediately turned around and escaped like a slippery mudfish.

At this moment, Ai Hui was extremely exhausted. The elemental energy in his body kept on diminishing, so he was in a precarious situation now. Before his elemental energy was completely depleted, his rising momentum had already begun to fall. As more and more elemental energy was expended, his situation became increasingly dangerous.

Fortunately, he did not break away from the mental zone he was currently in before his momentum had completely fallen. He continued to maintain his focus, focusing on his sword. He was still immersed in the multitude of fine details of his surroundings. Even though he was very familiar with the sword embryo, this was the first time that he encountered so many minute details regarding it.

Ai Hui, who was already abnormally focused, was further captivated by this brand new experience.

He greatly benefitted from this experience.

Other than his swordsmanship becoming more proficient, his movements had become much smoother and the perceptive range of his sword also increased significantly.

Previously, his sword would only react if his opponent came within half a meter. Now, as his swordsmanship improved, this range had extended to exactly one meter.

Unlike the perceptive range of the sword embryo, the perceptive range of the sword was a few hundred times more sensitive to fine details regarding his surroundings. Of course, from a fighting standpoint, the perceptive range of the sword had greatly increased Ai Hui's combat capabilities. Otherwise, he would not have survived the flood of blood fiends. However, from another perspective, the perceptive range of sword also imposed a huge burden on Ai Hui's body. Ai Hui need to stay focused in order to deal with the immense amount of minute details.

If Ai Hui lost even the slightest bit of focus, he would break out of this special mental zone.

At this moment, Ai Hui sensed that something entered within the perceptive range of his sword. He used the blade of his sword as a bat and swatted the thing with lightning speed.

When his sword made contact with the object, Ai Hui immediately that felt something was wrong. The thing was covered with a layer of unique blood spiritual force.

Just as Ai Hui's swing was about to land on the target and break the layer of blood spiritual force, the sword in his hands seemed to come alive and made an strange maneuver, flitting across the surface of the layer of blood spiritual force.

Numerous fine details appeared in Ai Hui's mind as his sword vibrated silently.

This was exciting!

The sudden appearance of a tremendous amount of tiny aspects that Ai Hui had never seen before exhilarated him. The body of the sword moved closely along the layer of blood spiritual force, while countless information flowed into his mind like a river.

Ai Hui displayed supreme swordsmanship. Strands of sparkling, glowing silk emerged from the radiance of his sword and entangled its target, but did not break it.

Tian Kuan, who was just about to leave the scene, discovered that there were sounds of commotion behind him. Involuntarily, he turned around to take a look.

The scene that he saw almost made him spit out blood.

The layer of blood spiritual force was not broken? What kind of godd*mn swordsmanship was this?

Everything that happened today was weird. Previously, the first piece of flesh disappeared into thin air. This time around, even though the piece of flesh he threw had landed on its target, the outer layer of blood spiritual force was not broken!

Tian Kuan felt that he was a patient individual since the

beginning, but at this moment, he felt an indescribable irritation arising in his heart.

For the sake of killing this youth, he had already cut off two pieces of flesh from his body, paying a price that he felt was more than enough . Even after paying such a hefty price, he still could not get rid of Ai Hui. One could imagine the exasperation he felt.

If he knew from the start that things would turn out like this, he would definitely have kept a distance from that maniac and not cared whether or not he was dangerous.

Upon seeing that he lost two pieces of flesh for nothing, Tian Kuan was desperate and sullen. Suddenly, a ruthless glint flashed across his eyes. He channeled his blood spiritual force and one of his fingers exploded into a cloud of blood mist.

At almost the same time, the piece of flesh that Ai Hui's sword had entangled exploded into a cloud of blood mist as well.

All the blood fiends on the streets suddenly stopped moving. The gazes of the blood falcons in the sky froze as well. A dead silence swept across the street.

However, the dead silence lasted for merely a second before a loud wave of clamor suddenly erupted. All the blood fiends, including the soaring blood falcons in the sky, surged toward Ai Hui frantically.

Hahaha...

Tian Kuan laughed madly in his heart. Upon seeing that Ai Hui was being flooded by the berserk blood fiends and that the nine-traced blood falcons were swooping down from the sky toward Ai Hui like missiles, he chuckled sinisterly, turned his body around, and walked away.

You're dead!

No one can save you now!

You will be eaten by the blood fiends until there's nothing left!

All your fanciful tricks will not be useless now!

Tian Kian walked away from the scene satisfied. Even though he had paid a hefty price, it was a good thing to kill such a dangerous youth while it was still early.

Right now, Central Pine City had become a playground to him.

He did not stop to admire his art piece. Numerous past experiences had taught him to leave the scene as soon as his objective was achieved.

Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks and his eyes widened. The expression on his face froze.

Chapter 223: The Rupture Of The Sword Embryo

The piece of flesh entangled by the sword glow suddenly exploded. Ai Hui's sword was able to react instantly. The sword glow was like a wall, blocking the flying shrapnel from the exploded piece of flesh.

The ground within one meter of Ai Hui was sparkling clean. Outside this one meter range, there were fragmentary pieces of flesh and blood all over the ground.

If Ai Hui was lucid, he would have immediately sensed that there was a conspiracy. However, at this moment, Ai Hui's mind was completely focused on his sword and he had lost the ability to think clearly.

In fact, he did not have the luxury of time to think.

The blood fiends suddenly became berserk, causing everyone's facial expression to change drastically. Previously, the momentum of the blood fiends' attacks were already terrifying. Now, the blood fiends had completely lost all their rationality and they looked as if they had been provoked to insanity by some intense stimulus.

The berserk blood fiends' attacking power rose sharply, making them more terrifying than usual.

This unforeseen event happened too suddenly. The rest of the

group were unable to react in time. They could only look on blankly at the berserk blood fiends surging toward Ai Hui. The blood fiends completely lost their sanity, trampling over each other as they surged forward. In the blink of an eye, nearly half of the blood fiends were injured. Even so, this did not stop them from rushing toward Ai Hui recklessly.

Ai Hui...

The previous joy of victory disappeared in an instant. Everyone's face turned unsightly, filled with terror.

The hovering nine-traced blood falcons in the sky let out loud screeches. Spreading their wings, they streaked toward Ai Hui like a bunch of furious red arrows. Their terrifyingly fast speed made their screeches abnormally sharp.

Ai Hui's surroundings were flooded with blood fiends.

Previously, as his elemental energy depleted by a huge amount, the number of blood fiends decreased as well. As such, the threat of the blood fiends was lowered, causing his sword embryo's pulsation to decrease gradually. When these berserk blood fiends flooded toward him, however, there were a few blood fiends that came within one meter of Ai Hui's body, causing the sword embryo to feel threatened and pulsate frantically.

As the sword embryo pulsated faster and faster, Ai Hui's sword moved faster and faster as well.

Any blood fiend that traveled within one meter of him was met with a fatal streak of sword light. Like his sword, Ai Hui was emotionless and did not have the slightest bit of fear.

In the blink of an eye, the surrounding blood fiends became corpses that piled up like mountains.

Instead of decreasing, the number of blood fiends kept on increasing. The pulsating rate of the sword embryo continued to escalate, getting faster and faster.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Ai Hui was like a machine. The speed at which he executed his sword moves was increasing rapidly. The sword beams he created were like streaks of lightning, zigzagging through the air. The speed at which the sword beams faded could not even keep up with the speed at which Ai Hui executed his sword moves. The sword beams streaking around Ai Hui were becoming concentrated and brighter, materializing into darting lights and shadows.

Nevertheless, the blood fiends were still able to close in on Ai Hui.

Within 10 seconds, the Dragonspine Inferno's range of motion had been compressed to half a meter. Within these 10 seconds, countless blood fiends had fallen. Ai Hui was like a highly efficient harvester, wildly harvesting the lives of the blood fiends.

His range of motion, or rather the sword's range of motion, or rather the sword embryo's range of motion was being compressed bit by bit.

The surging ice-cold sword beams could not stop these berserk blood fiends. They had completely lost their fear of death.

The pulsating rate of the sword embryo continued to rise. Like a wild beast that had been pushed to the brink of death, it erupted with astonishing power. The sword beams produced by Ai Hui intensified abruptly, pushing his range of motion back to a meter.

Almost instantly, however, his range of motion was compressed inward again.

At a visible rate, his range of motion was compressed bit by bit. Half a meter, 40 centimeters, 30 centimeters...

When his range of motion was reduced to merely 30 centimeters, the rapidly beating sword embryo suddenly ruptured!

Boom!

When the sword embryo suddenly ruptured, an invisible storm gushed through every single part of Ai Hui's body.

Ai Hui's absolute focus on his sword had been withdrawn.

He felt as if he had woken up from a long and bizarre dream.

His face was blank…

The gaping bloody mouth of a blood fiend was merely inches away from his face. He could clearly see the bloodstains on those ghastly white teeth and the disgusting saliva that dripped down from the corner of its mouth. Ai Hui's face was blasted by a whiff of the stench.

There was another unknown blood fiend behind him. Its heavy breaths puffed over his neck like mini tornadoes, causing his hair to stand on end.

The sharp screeches above Ai Hui's head sent a shiver down his spine. Did someone up there throw a javelin at him?

Ai Hui quivered in fear as he cursed in his heart. How could a mere dream make things turn out like this?

However, he had no path of retreat at the moment. He did not even have the time to curse and hesitate. At this critical junction, Ai Hui was unusually calm.

His body had been emptied of elemental energy. The only thing that put him at ease was the indescribable confidence that he felt from the Dragonspine Inferno in his hand.

The only thing he could do now…

Before he could make any moves, an invisible energy wave suddenly flooded through every section of his body.

Boom!

Ai Hui's eyes became abnormally bright all of a sudden. He did not know that his pupils had become the shape of a biting cold blade. The razor-sharp aura enhanced his vision, making it as keen as his sword. His scalp tingled, as if there was a pair of invisible hands that was forcefully pulling his hair. Traces of sword aura exuded from the pores on his skin.

Numerous pin-sized holes appeared on Ai Hui's clothes in an instant.

What was going on?

An intense burst of aura blasted toward the sky. It looked as if a legendary sword had been unsheathed.

The blood fiends that were near Ai Hui froze. They felt as if there was a sword being pressed against their throat, head, and eyes.

Boom! Rolling thunder roared in the sky. Tumultuous, ragged, dark clouds gathered from all directions and loomed over the city. Dazzling lightning danced in the thick and boundless sea of dark clouds. The sky above Central Pine City dimmed immediately, as if it was already night time.

These unforeseen events all happened in one moment.

The abnormal weather startled all of Central Pine City. Everyone gazed blankly at the rolling dark clouds that looked as if they were going to crash down on the city at any moment. No one had ever seen an apocalyptic scene like this before. At this point, the rampaging blood fiends in Central Pine City had their limbs soften in terror and sat down blankly on the ground.

What was happening now?

Shi Xueman and the rest were looking at the sky in a daze. This grandeur seemed... to be coming from Ai Hui...

The frenzied look in Duanmu Huanghun's eyes became even more intense. He muttered to himself incoherently, "Abnormal natural phenomenon! There must be an evildoer! It turns out you're so powerful! Hahaha, good, good, good... Only an evildoer like you is fit to be the rival of I, Duanmu Huanghun! Hahahaha..."

Everyone disregarded him.

Shi Xueman and the others were dumbstruck, but everyone had a premonition that something amazing was going to happen.

Swordsmanship? Was there such a powerful swordsmanship in this world?

Tian Kuan, who had already escaped from the streets, froze for two seconds before raising his head up slowly. The rolling dark clouds above his head were so low that they looked as if they could be touched with his hand. The thick lightning bolts streaked to and fro through the dark clouds, resembling dancing silver dragons. The destructive aura of the lightning made him shiver in fear.

The might of the lightning struck fear in all living things.

Those weaker blood fiends were lying flat on the ground, pissing and sh*tting involuntarily out of fear.

Why...

How could this be...

Similarly, Tian Kuan was trembling. His gaze was filled with fear and disbelief. What level of opponent he was dealing with right now?

Ai Hui had never experienced this before.

He felt like he was a sword. Every part of his body corresponded to a part of a sword's body. He felt that his mind was as pure and concise as a sword, so sharp that nothing could block it. He felt that anything he grabbed—the wind in the air, the light from the sun, or even the lightning bolts in the dark clouds—could become a sword.

Yet, he was not happy since his sword embryo had exploded.

The sword embryo was formed using essence-breath-spirit. He had spent so much effort and time, and had even risked his life to nurture the sword embryo to this stage.

Now, everything was gone.

The energy wave that flooded his body was made of the essence-breath-spirit that he had been nurturing.

At this moment, the level of his essence-breath-spirit were at its top form, displaying an unprecedented might. Even though his body was emptied of elemental energy, it did not pose too much of a problem for him. Previously, while he was focused on the sword, the deluge of intricate data he received had propelled his understanding of swordsmanship and elemental energy to a whole new level.

Ai Hui raised his head and looked at the rolling dark clouds and looming lightning. This abnormal phenomenon only appeared when the sword embryo was destroyed.

Perhaps this phenomena arose because the sword embryo was having its most dazzling moment right now.

Ai Hui carefully perceived his surroundings and all the minute details. This was the last blessing that the sword embryo had given him. The ruptured sword embryo had released all of his essence-

breath-spirit. Looking at it from a different perspective, the essence-breath-spirit had evolved, which also meant that the sword embryo had ascended into a higher realm.

Even though the current situation would not last very long, it was long enough for Ai Hui to glimpse the splendor of the sword embryo. Every bit of comprehension would help Ai Hui greatly.

Ai Hui noticed a huge amount of specific aspects that he had never come across before.

For example, he noticed that there was a subtle bond between his Dragonspine Inferno and the lightning in the dark clouds.

Knowing that the time was going to be up soon, Ai Hui sighed in his heart. His feelings were very complicated. He had nurtured the sword embryo for the sake of surviving in the Wilderness. During his three years in the Wilderness, the sword embryo was of utmost importance to him. Without the sword embryo, he would not have survived.

Was it finally time to say goodbye?

Ai Hui felt an indescribable sadness in his heart. The Dragonspine Inferno let out a sorrowful lament as if it had sensed the anguish in Ai Hui.

When Ai Hui heard it, he could not help but laugh. He did not expect himself to be so emotional.

Since it’s time to bid farewell, I might as well do it in the most majestic way!

Ai Hui suddenly raised his Dragonspine Inferno and pointed it toward the sky.

Rumble!

A dazzling lightning bolt struck down from the sky and hit the Dragonspine Inferno.

The Dragonspine Inferno could not endure such a powerful lightning bolt and its surface started to melt like a burned candle. The only things that remained imposing and unwavered were the seven prismatic crystals. Numerous streaks of lightning were twisting and winding around them. It appeared as if Ai Hui was holding a sword of lightning.

He took a huge step forward and flew up in the sky.

The surging lightning passed through Ai Hui’s sword and into his body. Then, the lightning was directed to the two palaces in his hands and his earth palace. His breathing became clear and smooth. Like a well-maintained machine, every part of his body operated efficiently after being injected with lightning. Master definitely would not expect him to use lightning to channel the third move from the sword pill…

As he swung his sword down, numerous lightning bolts suddenly struck down from the sky at the same time.

Dust to dust, earth to earth.

[Dust Fall]!

Chapter 224: The Lightning Blade

By the time Ai Hui woke up, three days had already passed.

Lou Lan, who had been guarding beside his bed, happily yelled, "Ai Hui is awake!"

Upon seeing Lou Lan first after opening his eyes, Ai Hui smiled too. "Hello Lou Lan!"

"Hello Ai Hui!" Lou Lan was extremely happy. "Ai Hui, how are you feeling? The condition of your body is very complicated now. Lou Lan does not know what is going on in many areas."

"I'm alright."

Ai Hui smiled.

The first thing he did when he woke up was to check on his sword embryo; however, he could only confirm that his sword embryo had completely disappeared. He could not sense the slightest bit of the sword embryo's aura.

Even though he was somewhat disappointed, he remained calm and collected. After going through such a devastating life-and-death battle, all his so-called heroism and fighting spirit had disappeared completely. Whatever world-shaking event that had happened had nothing to do with him. He did not even care about his gains and losses in the battle. He only had one thought when he

woke up.

It felt good to have survived the ordeal.

He did not feel the same way towards the sword embryo. The sword embryo had been like a companion to him.

No matter what, he still survived.

It was a very lucky thing for him to have been able to survive the blood catastrophe until today.

"Ai Hui, you have just woken up and your body is still very weak. You need to replenish your elemental energy urgently," Lou Lan said strictly. However, he quickly became joyful again and continued, "We have collected many blood crystals. They will be very helpful for your recovery process."

"Thank you, Lou Lan." Ai Hui looked around and asked, "Where's Fatty? Where's everybody?"

"They are still fighting the blood fiends," Lou Lan replied. "Ai Hui has been in a coma for three days. The broken city gate has been sealed up; however, the blood fiends on the streets have not been cleared up yet. Everyone is very powerful now. Ai Hui will be very surprised when you see them later.

"That's great." Ai Hui sat up and got down from the bed. His legs were somewhat wobbly, however, they still felt good and not too

weak.

"Everyone is back!" Lou Lan cheered. "Lou Lan will go and prepare some elemental soup for Ai Hui."

Ai Hui walked out of the room and happened to see everyone entering the training hall.

When Shi Xueman saw Ai Hui, her eyes lit up and her ice-cold face brightened up with radiance. Just as she was about to say something, a massive figure dashed past her.

"Hahaha! I knew you would be alright! If I could survive and live well, how could you have possibly died?"

Like a gust of wind, Fatty rushed forward and gave Ai Hui a forceful hug.

Ai Hui's eyes widened. He felt as if he was being hugged by a grizzly bear. Fatty's arms were like thick steel bars, suffocating him. He could even hear his bones cracking.

"Are you trying strangle your good brother to death?" Shi Xueman asked coldly.

It was at this moment that Fatty realized something was not right with Ai Hui and quickly let go of him. With an embarrassed look on his face, he said, "Oops, I almost forgot that you are still recovering from your injuries. Hahaha..."

"You haven’t recovered fully yet?" Shi Xueman cast a glance at Ai Hui and asked.

"I haven’t." Ai Hui shook his head and spread his arms. "My body feels like bean curd now."

"What did Lou Lan say?" With those words, Shi Xueman finally revealed her concern for Ai Hui. However, at this point of time, everyone was concerned with this question. No one felt that what Shi Xueman had asked was wrong.

Sang Zhijun, the only girl other than Shi Xueman, had a pensive look on her face as her gaze switched between Ai Hui and Shi Xueman for a little while.

"Lou Lan is preparing elemental soup for me now," Ai Hui replied upon noticing the concern and worry in everyone's eyes. He felt touched but was somewhat not used to this treatment.

He changed the topic and said, "I have been in a coma for three days. What’s the situation outside now? Tell me about it."

"You stunned everyone that day." Shi Xueman took a look at Ai Hui and said, "We did not expect you to have so many powerful moves. Do you know what everyone outside is calling you now?"

"What are they calling me?" Ai Hui was shocked.

"The Lightning Blade." A hint of a smile appeared in Shi Xueman's eyes, however, it soon disappeared and she returned to her usual ice-cold self. "You're worthy of this nickname since you brought down so many lightning bolts from the sky. That one huge lightning bolt you brought down made all the blood fiends lose their resistance. The mayor and his counterparts took advantage of the opportunity to seal up the city gate."

"The Lightning Blade..." Ai Hui could not help but laugh. He did not expect to get his first nickname in such a situation.

"It feels good, right?" Shi Xueman saw the smug look on Ai Hui's face and felt somewhat unhappy. "However, it appears that the condition of your body is still very weak. They will be very disappointed."

"What does their disappointment have to do with me? They aren't paying me money or anything." Ai Hui spoke as if it was a matter of course.

The previously unhappy Shi Xueman was stumped by Ai Hui's sudden, irksome words. The change in his temperament was too fast...

"Hasn't the city gate been sealed up already?" Ai Hui asked, puzzled. "Why are there still so many blood fiends in the city? And why do they need you all to fight them?"

Shi Xueman returned to her senses and replied, "The number of blood fiends that poured into city is far too many. Even though the

city gate is sealed up, there are still so many blood fiends left in the city. Our unit is the most powerful student unit in Central Pine City right now. As such, we have to step forward bravely to take on the blood fiends."

"The most powerful student unit in Central Pine City?" Ai Hui was stunned. It was only at this moment that he re-evaluated everyone.

Upon taking a closer look, he discovered that there was an immense transformation in everyone's fighting capabilities.

Everyone had attained Initial Completion...

"Did you guys eat some sort of elixir?" Ai Hui was dumbstruck.

Unexpectedly, Shi Xueman nodded as if nothing strange had happened and replied, "Yes, we did!"

"Eh?" Ai Hui was shocked again.

Upon seeing Ai Hui's blank look, Shi Xueman gave a bashful smile. It was as if the spring had arrived, melting the iceberg called Shi Xueman and releasing a myriad of colors that were indescribably beautiful.

Ai Hui was shocked once more.

In his mind, Shi Xueman was made up of ice-cold steel. Her entire body was constructed out of steel beams and she had a heart that was more cold-blooded than any man's. Ai Hui was frightened when he saw Iron Lady suddenly reveal such a lovely facial expression.

"Blood crystals." Shi Xueman withdrew her smile and returned to her usual iceberg-like self. "Thanks to you, we were able to obtain many blood crystals from the battles on the streets. The number of blood crystals we collected far exceeded other units'. We have used a large number of blood crystals to elevate everyone's fighting capabilities and base level, and that is why we have the most powerful student unit in Central Pine City. Sorry, I let everyone consume the blood crystals without your permission. Don't worry, I have recorded down the number of blood crystals used. I can deduct it from the debt of eighty... Oh, nothing. I will send a bill to you once we are out of this situation."

She almost leaked out the incident of the eighty million yuan. For some reason, she did not want to expose her identity as the noodle house girl. Humph, she once again thought of the label 'skank' that Ai Hui had given her.

"No need." Ai Hui shook his head.

"No need?" This time around, it was Shi Xueman who was shocked. With a doubtful look on her face, she asked, "What are you up to?"

"I am just being kind. Iron lady, how can you have such a reaction?" Ai Hui was in between laughter and tears.

"Since when are you ever kind? To you, nothing can be compared to money," Shi Xueman retorted bluntly. Ai Hui was at a loss for words. After a while, she suddenly realized what Ai Hui had called her and asked angrily with knitted eyebrows, "Did you just call me Iron Lady?"

"Hahaha..." Ai Hui could only laugh and quickly changed the topic. "So how have our unit's battle results been these past few days?"

Shi Xueman's face suddenly darkened and she replied, "We have lost nine men. It's my fault, I committed many mistakes..."

"Big Sister, it's not your fault!"

"Yes, how are the casualties Big Sister's fault? How can there be no casualties on the battlefield?"

"Big Sister, the sacrificed brothers will not blame you! It's nobody's fault! Everyone tried their best!"

"That's right. Without Big Sister our losses might be even greater."

...

Everyone consoled Shi Xueman at once. Shi Xueman saw with

her own eyes how everyone helped her. There were many areas that she lacked in, however, even the blind could see that she had given them her all. She was always the one taking the lead. She was always the one who appeared at the most dangerous places. She was always the one that took the most difficult missions.

Even if there were casualties in the unit, no one had ever felt that it was Shi Xueman’s fault.

"I know." Shi Xueman unexpectedly nodded, then looked straight at Ai Hui. "However, if you’re there, our performance will be even better."

Everyone did not say anything and looked at Ai Hui.

Everyone agreed with Shi Xueman.

If one described Shi Xueman as diligent, courageous, and responsible, then Ai Hui could be described as cool-headed, reliable, and experienced. Ai Hui had never directly led them before, but his presence made everyone felt at ease.

Ai Hui always made the right decision at the critical moment. He was irreplaceable.

During the battle on the streets, everyone saw with their own eyes the terrifying scene of thousands of lightning bolts striking from the sky when Ai Hui swung down his sword of lightning. Right now, everyone treated him with even more respect. Even

though their fighting capabilities had risen sharply and they were capable of becoming legitimate elementalists, Ai Hui still held an unwavering position in their hearts.

That fearsome scene was deeply engraved in their minds. They would remember that scene for their entire lives.

No one saw Ai Hui as their equal, other than Duanmu Huanghun.

Duanmu Huanghun was looking at Ai Hui with blazing fire in his eyes. He was filled with eagerness and had decided that once Ai Hui recovered, he would be the first person that he would challenge!

Such a formidable strike.,. When everyone thought back about it now, their blood could not help but boil!

Duanmu Huanghun licked his lips involuntarily. His gaze looked as if they were staring at a prey.

"Ai Hui, the elemental soup is coming!"

Lou Lan rushed over happily. In his hands there was a basin of glittering, silvery soup, resembling liquid steel.

"I have used a lot of blood crystals. This soup can help Ai Hui to replenish his elemental energy quickly. Ai Hui, Lou Lan has become stronger and I have understood more about the blood crystals. This basin of elemental soup has maximized the power of

the blood crystals. You have to finish this basin of elemental soup. Don’t waste it. Ai Hui, come on!"

Ai Hui did not notice Lou Lan saying that he had become stronger. All his attention was on the basin of elemental soup.

A basin…

A basin had to be used to hold elemental soup now?

He suddenly thought of the fire oil-like elemental soup that Fatty had drunk and how he’d spouted fire after doing so.

Would he become something weird like that as well…

A premonition arose in Ai Hui’s mind.

Chapter 225: Various Remnants

"What will happen to Ai Hui? Will he become more powerful?"

Fatty looked at Ai Hui, who had just finished the basin of elemental soup, and asked Lou Lan involuntarily.

"Definitely," Lou Lan replied with certainty. "Ai Hui has always been evolving, no matter what happens."

Shi Xueman did not say anything. Her gaze was fixed on Ai Hui. It wasn't only her, everyone was looking at Ai Hui, who was seated cross-legged on the ground. They were holding their breaths for the fear of disturbing Ai Hui. Ai Hui's health was intimately related to theirs. Right now, Ai Hui was the core of their unit. His health would have a direct impact on their future.

It wasn't at all an exaggeration. A slight mistake on the battlefield would result in death.

They had seen too many deaths. It was unknown whether or not even half of the students in Central Pine Academy had survived. Among all the units, the A-1 unit had the highest survival rating; however, if Ai Hui hadn't held the pass by himself against the flood of blood fiends during the battle on the streets, the A-1 unit would have been wiped out.

Even those students who had previously hated Ai Hui wholeheartedly pledged their allegiance to him now.

Ai Hui remained silent.

The elemental soup that filled his stomach had materialized into elemental energy which flowed through every single part of his body.

He… did not feel good at all!

Traces of metal elemental energy were flowing throughout his body and the unique, sharp aura of the metal elemental energy caused him waves of pain. As the traces of metal elemental energy travelled through his body, they slowly transformed into sword-shaped elemental energy and their aura became significantly sharper. Ai Hui came to understand what it felt like to be pierced through by a sword.

Since there was a huge number of metal elemental energy traces, the number of elemental energy swords forming was similarly huge. Currently, Ai Hui felt as if there were numerous mini swords travelling throughout his body.

His body trembled involuntarily. His face had turned pale-white and pea-sized beads of sweat flowed down his forehead.

"Lou Lan, what’s going on?" Fatty asked anxiously.

Lou Lan was also very surprised. His glowing yellow eyes flickered non-stop. If one took a closer look, he or she would

realize that the yellow glow in Lou Lan's eyes was brighter than before.

"There is a unique aura in Ai Hui's body. This aura is able to transform the metal elemental energy into a specially shaped energy. Other than this unique aura, there are also a lot of electric currents in his body. Right now, the condition of Ai Hui's body is very complicated. Lou Lan has not thought of any good ideas yet. Come on Ai Hui!"

If Ai Hui could hear what Lou Lan had said, he would praise the latter to high heaven.

Lou Lan's diagnosis was completely correct. Even though the sword embryo in Ai Hui's body had ruptured and was destroyed, the essence-breath-spirit that it had released still remained in his body. The invisible energy waves from the sword embryo's remnants were what was transforming the flowing metal elemental energy into the streaks of sword-shaped glints.

This was not a good thing for Ai Hui.

Ai Hui could easily absorb and store pure metal elemental energy in the eight palaces; however, when the metal elemental energy traces transformed into elemental energy swords, they became more stable, making it hard for Ai Hui to absorb and store them.

The more troublesome issue was the huge amount of leftover lightning in Ai Hui's body.

His last move, the lightning version of [Dust Fall] that had given Ai Hui the nickname "The Lightning Blade," had caused severe damage to his body. A large amount of electric currents had filled Ai Hui's flesh and blood. Every time these electric currents burst forth, Ai Hui's muscles would become numb.

This created huge difficulties for Ai Hui when he tried to control his body.

Fortunately, Ai Hui was mentally prepared. A price definitely had to be paid if one experienced an outburst of power that far exceeded the limit of their base level. For Ai Hui, the price he'd paid was both the destruction of his sword embryo and the induction of electric currents into his body. This price, however, was nothing compared to death.

Even though the current situation seemed terrible, Ai Hui felt that it was much better than what he had expected.

At least his body remained intact. He had not lost his limbs and his five residences and eight palaces were undamaged and could still work perfectly. As long as these body parts were fine, the other problems could slowly and eventually be worked out.

As the elemental energy swords continued to flow through Ai Hui's body, the sharp aura from the elemental energy swords caused the lightning remnants to zap. The piercing pain from the elemental energy swords and the numbing effect of the lightning remnants became inextricably intertwined.

There were more and more elemental energy swords. The effect of Lou Lan's elemental soup was indeed astonishing. The replenished metal elemental energy continued to transform into elemental energy swords that were scattered all over Ai Hui's body.

What should he do?

Ai Hui pondered deeply.

Very soon, Ai Hui decided on a plan. First, he could not let the elemental energy swords run amok in his body. The sharp and destructive aura of the elemental energy swords was not the reason why his body was damaged; the main reason for the damage was his letting the elemental energy swords run amok in his body.

How could he contain them?

Ai Hui thought for a while. Since they were elemental energy swords, he could deal with them the same way he dealt with a sword. Before, when he'd still had the sword embryo, the sword embryo had automatically taken care of all the sword-related elemental energy for him. Even though he did not have the sword embryo anymore, that did not mean that he could not do anything about the sword-related elemental energy.

After Ai Hui had received a huge volume of sword-related fine details during the battle on the streets, his understanding towards swordsmanship had reached a completely new level. After absorbing the essence-breath-spirit from the sword embryo's

rupture, his base level had temporarily reached an unimaginable altitude.

He was like a disciple who had been temporarily possessed by his master and got to feel what it was like to be a high-level individual.

This experience would not immediately improve his fighting capabilities, but it would definitely have a long-lasting effect on them. He could see what the higher realms of swordsmanship would look like in the future. This would play an important role in his future developments.

According to his understanding of swordsmanship, Ai Hui felt that the elemental energy swords could be controlled.

Ai Hui, who had been trembling non-stop and had his face turned pale-white, suddenly opened his mouth and, with a hoarse voice that was filled with anguish, yelled, "Sword!"

Sword?

Everyone was stunned. Shi Xueman’s reaction was the fastest. Her right hand flashed across her waist and a cold glint flew towards Ai Hui. She then yelled coldly, "Catch it!"

With a distorted facial expression, Ai Hui raised his hand. He still felt more or less alright as long as he did not move, but once he started moving, his body felt as if it was being pierced through by a sword. His eyes were closed but his hand still managed to catch the

sword that Shi Xueman had thrown him.

A faintly discernible smile appeared on Sang Zhijun's face. Even though Shi Xueman specialized in the spear and did not have the habit of carrying a sword, there was actually a sword hanging on her waist.

At the very moment Ai Hui's palm made contact with the hilt of the sword, his previously distorted and anguished face suddenly calmed down.

Everyone was shocked by this bizarre scene.

Shi Xueman's face was ice-cold like an iceberg, remaining emotionless; however, one could see that her eyes had lit up slightly.

This was the unique part about Ai Hui.

He was always hiding something special in him that he would not normally reveal. Sometimes he was a rascal, sometimes he was a miser, sometimes he was a loner, and most of the time he was an individual who ignored things that were of no concern to him. However, if a dangerous situation was to arise, he would become a completely changed man, revealing imposing fighting capabilities and captivating everyone's attention.

This might be an insignificant move but it contained a mysterious power to it.

When Ai Hui grabbed hold of the sword, his mind became tranquil and the agitated elemental energy swords in his body calmed down as well.

The sword's numerous fine details gushed through his mind like a flash flood. The sword's texture, its weight, the sharpness of the blade, etc. All these little details were clearly displayed in his mind.

Ai Hui noticed this ability that he hadn't had in the past and became somewhat happy. It seemed that he had not only made losses, but gains as well.

It was a pity that it was not the Dragonspine Inferno...

Sorrow involuntarily arose in his mind. The Dragonspine Inferno was the sword that he was the most comfortable with and had used for the longest period of time. It was a pity that it had been completely destroyed when he'd executed [Dust Fall]. The powerful lightning bolt had destroyed the sword body, leaving only the seven prismatic crystals.

The sword currently in his hand seemed very ordinary. It had been picked up by Shi Xueman from a dead elementalist.

However, it was still a sword.

Ai Hui focused his attention on the sword. Even though he could not enter the miraculous mental state he'd been in during the

battle on the streets, he could still feel the elemental energy swords in his body become slightly sluggish.

It was working!

Ai Hui restrained his joy and started slowly brandishing the sword.

His movements were very slow as he could not yet control his muscles, making him look like an awkward-moving wooden puppet. His movements were indescribably rigid and unsightly.

Ai Hui did not care about it and focused on brandishing the sword.

The elemental energy swords involuntarily transformed according to the sword moves Ai Hui executed. Very soon, more and more elemental energy swords were beginning to move along with how Ai Hui brandished the sword.

He was right!

Ai Hui felt more confident and began to brandish the sword more seriously.

Ai Hui had a deep understanding of the sword embryo. The elemental energy swords formed when the elemental energy was affected by the remnant energy waves of the sword embryo. The sword embryo had a direct reaction to anything that was related to

swords. Ai Hui was wondering whether or not the elemental energy swords preserved this unique characteristic of the sword embryo.

The reality had confirmed Ai Hui's conjecture.

As Ai Hui continued brandishing the sword, more and more elemental energy swords continued to gather, resembling densely-packed fish. Even though they were crowded together, they were very orderly. The pain Ai Hui felt in his body relieved significantly.

Very soon, Ai Hui came across a new problem. How was he to direct these elemental energy swords into his eight palaces?

The elemental energy swords flowed endlessly. They did not stop at all when passing by the eight palaces.

Generally speaking, the eight palaces had a powerful attractive force over elemental energy, causing it to stay in the eight palaces involuntarily. Only by using certain special channelling techniques could the elemental energy be directed out of the palaces to form moves.

In Ai Hui's situation, it was the complete opposite.

A terrifying amount of elemental energy was flowing through his body, and yet, it wasn't stopping at the eight palaces. The eight palaces were completely empty. If the elemental energy was not stored in the palaces, it would dissipate very quickly.

Ai Hui knew that this was because the elemental energy in his body had transformed into elemental energy swords. The eight palaces had a strong attractive force over pure elemental energy, but for elemental energy that had changed form, the eight palaces would have zero attractive force.

The thing was, as long as the remnant energy waves of the sword embryo were still in his body, the elemental energy would immediately transform into elemental energy swords.

Without elemental energy to fill them up, the eight palaces would shrink and close as time passed. This would cause his base level to drop sharply.

What should he do?

Ai Hui racked his brain as he brandished his sword.

He thought of a daring plan, but did not know if it would work.

This time around, he was slightly hesitant and did not immediately begin carrying out the plan.

This plan was slightly risky...

Chapter 226: Sword Pill

Even though the plan Ai Hui thought of was slightly risky, it was not at all complicated.

Under the effect of the remnant energy waves of the sword embryo, the elemental energy in his body had transformed into elemental energy swords. However, these elemental energy swords had not actually completed their transformation yet.

Ai Hui was not unfamiliar with this kind of elemental energy sword. In the past, the elemental energy he developed was of this kind. The only difference was that he used to have the sword embryo in the past. The palpitating sword embryo was like a heart, directing these elemental energy swords.

With the sword embryo around, these elemental energy swords were extremely tame and could meticulously complete various operations without creating any negative effects on his body.

In terms of managing his elemental energy, Ai Hui was overly dependent on the sword embryo. Especially toward the end, when the sword embryo became increasingly powerful, he relied completely on the sword embryo to manage his elemental energy.

Given that the sword embryo had now been destroyed, he was able to control these elemental energy swords, but this was also the biggest problem he encountered so far. The sword embryo was the key to managing the elemental energy swords. Without the key, the elemental energy swords ran amok.

It was impossible to recreate the sword embryo.

He obtained the technique of developing a sword embryo by luck. Then, by coincidence, he successfully planted the sword embryo's seed. Until now, he still did not exactly understand what had happened.

From a different perspective, this might not be a bad thing. It was unexpected that the sword embryo would develop to such a stage. He was perplexed on how to train from today onward.

The rupture of the sword embryo had temporarily raised his base level to a higher level while giving him experience that would last forever.

Even though the remnant energy waves from the sword embryo could affect his elemental energy, the effect was minimal. Only a small portion of his metal elemental energy was sword-attributed.

Since they had not completed their transformation into elemental energy swords, why not intentionally completed the process? This was Ai Hui's plan.

Right now, which aspects of Ai Hui were better than before? His understanding of swords.

His comprehension toward swords covered a wide range of sword-related topics, which included types of swords,

swordsmanship, how he channeled his elemental energy through his sword moves, etc. In other words, Ai Hui was acting as the role of sword embryo now.

Of course, Ai Hui was still not on the sword embryo's level at the moment, which had been abnormally sensitive and instinctive to any sword-related matters. This was also why he could not do anything with the elemental energy swords.

However, what if he made these elemental energy swords larger? And made them look like an actual sword? With a more complete form?

Would it make it easier for him to control them?

Ai Hui felt this plan was dangerous since no one had done it before.

The elemental energy in the eight palaces were pure in nature and were without form. This type of elemental energy was easy to manage and not harmful to one's body. As the elemental energy continued to seep into one's flesh and blood, his or her body would become stronger. The theory of body-tempering was exactly based on this logic.

The more complete the form of the elemental energy swords was, the sharper they would become, making it easier for them to damage one's body. Everyone wanted the flow of elemental energy in their bodies to be as smooth as a river, not as painful as getting pierced by numerous swords.

Ai Hui was precisely worried about this. Would this plan damage his body severely before it actually worked?

All along, his five residences and eight palaces were not firm and solid. Once a palace or a residence was damaged, he would be essentially handicapped.

As for the problem of having difficulty or not being able to control the completely formed elemental energy swords, Ai Hui felt that the problem was not necessarily unsolvable.

As long as he could wield a sword in his hand, he had a way of controlling the sword energy. Ai Hui had the most confidence with regard to this issue.

No one had ever thought of this plan before, hence, no one could give him directions.

After hesitating for two minutes, Ai Hui made his decision.

If this had happened before the blood catastrophe, he definitely would not take this risk. He would seek help from Master, Mistress, the dean, or anyone else who was extremely knowledgeable and could give him pointers. Asking for advice was safer than taking the risk himself.

Training was not child's play. A failure might result in an irreversible loss. It was not surprising for one to damage his

residence or palace, become disabled, have a change in his temperament, or even die.

If Ai Hui had enough time, he definitely would not take such a huge risk.

However, the problem was that he did not have enough time now.

He was not in a peaceful and safe Central Pine City, but was rather in the midst of the blood catastrophe and could die at anytime. If his body did not recover soon, he would be in a precarious situation.

Now was not the time for him to relax and explore different options. There might be a chance that in the next moment a blood fiend would barge into the training hall and kill him on the spot.

Ai Hui, who had been through the Wilderness, clearly understood the cruel reality of life. The more dangerous it was, the more everyone needed to display their usefulness. One could only survived if he or she was capable.

A king that lost power would soon be banished by his subjects.

If a king could end up like that, why would an insignificant individual like him not end up the same?

He knew that Lou Lan, Fatty, and Shi Xueman would definitely

protect him, but everyone else was powerless to even defend themselves. A powerful blood fiend would wipe them out completely.

Life was like a game of poker. Those with more chips at hand could afford to go slow and steady. Losing a round would not harm them. Those with fewer chips, however, lacked the luxury of time. Their only option was to bet their own lives at the gambling table.

Fortunately, Ai Hui was used to having no chips. The so-called choice that he had to make was merely an illusion.

He never had a choice in the first place.

If life was this way, then so be it. Whining and crying would only make one look weak. No one would pity him or help him. Life was like a battlefield, everyone had to brace themselves for the rain of arrows and the clash of swords. Cowards would always die first while the brave would advance by climbing over heaps of corpses.

Anyway, it could not be worse than this.

Ai Hui could only console himself like this. For now, he had not thought of any better plans. There might be some problems or repercussions in the future, but he did not care because he needed to have some self-defense capabilities first.

Ai Hui felt absolutely naked without a sense of security.

Without any hesitation, he started to brandish his sword. The elemental energy in his body began to flow as well. Just like how he developed his elemental energy in the past, he directed the energy from his body into the sword and then back to his body again, making a Circulatory Circle Revolution.

He used to do this with ease in the past, but now, without the sword embryo, the difficulty of this operation suddenly increased.

The process was not really smooth. Ai Hui had to keep brandishing the sword in his hand to direct the elemental energy swords in his body.

He put all his concentration on channeling the elemental energy and was extremely focused. The sword he wielded began to jerk nonstop. Yet, he stubbornly brandished his sword through all the jerking, as if he could not feel them at all.

The elemental energy swords slowly flowed back from the sword in his hand to his body. They then continued through the eight palaces and made a Circulatory Circle Revolution.

After a Circulatory Circle Revolution was completed, Ai Hui could feel that the degree of sharpness of the element energy swords slightly increased. Even though it was just a slight increase, Ai Hui was greatly encouraged by this since it happened like what he had predicted.

The amount of elemental energy swords in his body was truly too tremendous. Only a miniscule portion of these elemental energy

swords took part in the Circulatory Circle Revolution.

However, to Ai Hui, it was no doubt a good start.

By the ninth Circulatory Circle Revolution, Ai Hui finally felt a significant change in these elemental energy swords. They had become more nimble and smooth. The sword in Ai Hui's hand was like a magnet, having a mysterious attractive force over them.

Ai Hui also discovered that sharper elemental energy swords were easier to manage. With a jolt of his mind, the elemental energy swords would quickly enter the Circulatory Circle Revolution. Their speed was much faster than his elemental energy in the past.

However, he soon discovered a problem. These elemental energy swords were too thin and small. At the same time, the amount of elemental energy swords that he needed to control was far too copious. This had created a huge burden on his mind.

Perhaps he needed to gather them and make larger elemental energy swords? Could this reduce the number of elemental energy swords?

Ai Hui, who had already gone all-out, made his decision without any hesitation.

The hair-like elemental energy swords kept on gathering and fusing together, forming larger and thicker elemental energy

swords. Such elemental energy swords looked like actual swords. Ai Hui tried to make them look like the daggers in the bronze sword box, causing them to appear abnormally graceful.

Oh, the bronze sword box had been destroyed during the battle on the streets as well.

Ai Hui did not dare to slack off at all. The more powerful and bigger the elemental energy swords were, the more dangerous they became. Ai Hui wondered, if he was to suddenly stop moving, would a bloody hole suddenly appear on his body?

Next, a new problem arose in his mind. How could he store the elemental energy swords in the eight palaces?

The highly tense Ai Hui did not have time to sigh as he racked his brain for a solution. He had tried a few methods, but they did not really work. The elemental energy swords were abnormally smooth and exceptionally sensitive to the sword in his hand. A slight movement of Ai Hui's sword would cause them to make half a Circulatory Circle Revolution.

Ai Hui's method of using the sword to control the elemental energy swords in his body was far less efficient than the sword embryo's.

The absolutely empty eight palaces could not store the elemental energy swords at all.

Ai Hui suddenly thought of the sword pill that Master had given him.

The two moves, [Crescent Moon] and [Dust Fall], originated from it.

Ai Hui had read many swordplay manuals before and knew a thing or two about sword pills.

The earliest swords pills were made by Cultivators by rolling up paper-thin, soft swords into a lump, resembling the size of mothballs. They could be hidden in the user's clothes or body, making them difficult to be detected. This was why they were called sword pills.

Since these elemental energy swords were not easy to control, could he make them into sword pills?

At this point of time, Ai Hui did not care about anything else and just carried on with his plan.

Swordsmanship had been irrelevant for many years and a lot of people had never even heard of sword pills, let alone making sword pills.

Ai Hui needed to figure out everything by himself. He could only find the technique of making sword pills from the swordplay manuals he had read before, but it was not possible for him to follow the manuals step-by-step. He could only get a rough idea of

how to make sword pills from them.

When he rolled an elemental energy sword into a sword pill, he quickly realized that its size was too small, making it very light and hard to control. Furthermore, the process of rolling an elemental energy sword into a sword pill was very unstable.

Ai Hui now had a much deeper understanding toward swords when compared to the past. Within a short period of time, he was able to identify the reason.

He was not discouraged and started from the beginning again.

He started forming thicker and bigger elemental energy swords again. He also created a huge amount of elemental energy swords again.

Then, he controlled these elemental energy swords and formed a whirlpool with them. By swirling these elemental energy swords at a high speed and then compressing them, he eventually formed a perfectly round sword pill.

The sword pill levitated silently in Ai Hui’s left hand palace, spinning continuously.

The left hand palace was desolate and the sword pill was pathetically small, but the corners of his mouth involuntarily curled into a bright smile.

He felt that he had chosen the right plan.

Chapter 227: Bad News and Good News

Ai Hui’s confidence increased tremendously after he managed to successfully seal the sword pill into his left hand palace.

Now he needed to follow the same steps to "roll" the remaining elemental energy swords into sword pills.

It was a big project that required a long span of focused attention and was as dry as dust.

Due to the amount of time Ai Hui had spent roaming around the edges of death, concentration was now second nature to him, almost like breathing. Dull and repetitive content could easily make people lose their patience, but not for Ai Hui. He could concentrate for long periods of time.

When he was concentrating, he did not care about others and would be fully immersed in his own world.

As he was usually concentrating, in other people’s eyes, it always seemed like he was disregarding them and paying no attention to their opinions.

Indeed, he has never taken other people’s viewpoints into account. When he is caught within a wild beast’s teeth and sharp claws, other people’s opinions would not increase his likelihood of survival.

As such, why not spend more time on improving himself? No one would be able to easily strip him of his personal improvements. He could change his fate by improving himself.

Having his fate in his own hands gave him a sense of security.

Ai Hui took pleasure in his task.

He made many discoveries. For example, he realized that the remnants of the sword embryo's energy waves were the strongest in the sky palace. Thinking back to the sword embryo's former location, he realized that this fact was not strange. He also found that within both his hand palaces and his earth palace, there was an abundance of electric currents. This was the result of using [Dust Fall] to draw lightning into both hand palaces and the earth palace.

He also discovered that within both his left and right hand palaces, if the sword pills were rotated faster than a specific speed, the surplus electric rays would be stimulated.

What an interesting phenomenon. Ai Hui mentally noted it down and continued to "roll" the sword pills.

After scanning the remaining amount of elemental energy, he assessed the number of sword pills he'd created. He felt that he could become a grand pastry chef in the future.

He'd also considered forming eight whirlpools within the Eight

Palaces to absorb the elemental energy automatically. After all, whirlpools were steady structures; however, Ai Hui gave up the thought after recalling how the elemental energy ball in his body had previously been hard to absorb.

If he managed to form whirlpools within his elemental energy palaces, it would be easy for elemental energy to enter the elemental energy palaces. It would, however, be difficult to extract the elemental energy from the palaces afterwards.

While the sword pills were not as effective or stable as whirlpools, they were easier to control. To Ai Hui, who no longer had the aid of the sword embryo, it was more important for him to be able to gain control.

Shi Xueman and the rest had been waiting for a long time, but there were no indications that Ai Hui was going to stop. Everyone started to take breaks after hearing Lou Lan say that Ai Hui would still need a long time to recover. After going through an ardent battle, all of them were battered and tired. Nevertheless, Shi Xueman still sent someone to pass on the message that Ai Hui had woken up.

Many were still waiting for the news.

The battle on the streets had solidified Ai Hui's status and prestige in Central Pine City. The scene where thunder had filled the entire sky was unforgettable to all the survivors.

Such a grand performance took everyone's breath away.

Since the beginning of the blood catastrophe, Ai Hui was the one who rose to fame during the battle on the streets. He was the first person in Central Pine City to rely on his own strength to save everyone from the desperate crisis.

Everyone was looking forward to having their own Ye Baiyi in Central Pine City to bring them out of the Induction Ground alive. Furthermore, after learning that their mayor was a survivor of the Battle of the Dawn, the comparison stuck in their heads; It had spread throughout the city overnight.

Ye Baiyi had not initially been known as Icy Flames Ye.

At the time of the Battle of the Dawn, Ye Baiyi had just been an ordinary team leader from the Icy Flames Division.

The cruel Battle of the Dawn had allowed Ye Baiyi to step onto a stage belonging only to him.

The survivors in Central Pine City strongly believed that Ai Hui, who had participated in the battle on the streets, had the calibre to walk the same route.

Ai Hui's hard laborer background, the fact that he was still a first-year student in Central Pine City, and that he has yet to achieve the Initial Completion all pointed to him being a genius.

But after the battle on the streets, Ai Hui had slipped into coma

and this tugged at many of the people's heartstrings. Some of them were worried that Ai Hui had sustained serious injuries, while others were optimistic and felt that it was a sign that Ai Hui was going to have a breakthrough.

Everyone was closely following Ai Hui's condition. That thin youth was shouldering their hopes of survival.

"Our Ai Baiyi has awakened," teasingly said the mayor. He was in a good mood. After hearing too many comparisons between Ai Hui and Ye Baiyi, he decided to jokingly call Ai Hui as Ai Baiyi.

Ai Hui's rise had reversed the situation. The city gates were once again sealed and the blood fiends had been utterly defeated. How could he not be in a good mood? If Ai Hui hadn't been around, what would it have been like that day? The mayor had previously prepared himself mentally to sacrifice half of the troops who were going to seal the door.

The dean smiled, but then frowned while saying, "Such publicity would not be beneficial to his growth."

He was also proud of Ai Hui. When he had given the original [Big Dipper] to Ai Hui, he had still had some reservations on doing so; however, everyone now praised him saying that he has good perception.

"Let's focus on what's going on in the present." Wang Zhen passed a cup of water to the dean. "Everyone needs Ai Baiyi now. The higher authorities are considering Ai Hui's rewards. The

number of Heaven Merit Points should be quite substantial."

The dean took the cup and took a sip. He stayed quiet; he knew what Wang Zhen meant.

Everyone needed a hero. Even if that hero might not create a miracle immediately, at least that hero could give them hope.

He was unable to rebut and changed the topic. "How's the situation in the city?"

"Pretty good." Wang Zhen's expression regained its usual stern composure. "While the number of casualties is still increasing, the trend is now going down. Most of them are the weaker students and citizens. Also, the appearance of the blood crystals allows us to increase the number of elites we have while raising our standard. If this trend continues, our situation will be better than before."

"That's good to hear." The dean heaved a happy sigh of relief.

"But there's bad news."

The dean's heart skipped a beat and his smile froze on his face.

"The support teams were attacked by the blood fiends." Wang Zhen continued, "They have suffered huge losses. Three support teams were fully destroyed and more than three troops lost half their members. One assistant leader has died and they've lost contact with two others, including Sir Yu Mingqiu."

"What?" The dean cried out in alarm and his expression changed drastically.

Wang Zhen's could relate to the dean's reaction. When he'd first received the news, he too had reacted in the same way.

He did not continue immediately, but gave the dean some time to digest the information. The dean looked dazed. After a long while, he looked up and asked blankly, "How did this happen?"

Wang Zhen replied with a sigh, "We got lucky."

The dean looked at Wang Zhen blankly.

Wang Zhen quickly explained, "The blood fiends near Central Pine City were transforming at a slower speed compared to those around the other cities. Those troops that were sent as support were attacked by a large number of blood fiends. The highest level that they encountered was a seven-trace blood fiend."

"Seven traces?" The dean's eyes almost popped out.

After dealing with so many blood fiends, they had developed a better understanding towards the blood fiends' capabilities. The fewer the blood traces, the stronger the blood-traced fiend.

Most of the blood fiends in Central Pine City had yet to show any

signs of having blood traces. Nine-trace blood fiends were the next highest in number. They had yet to see any eight-trace blood fiends and there were already sightings of seven-trace blood fiends in other cities.

The nine-trace blood fiends were already difficult to deal with. How much more difficult would it be to deal with a seven-trace blood fiend? It was no wonder all of the support troops met with destruction and huge losses.

"We do not yet know the reason, but I believe that this is our luck. The rest of the cities are in a far worse situation than we are. Ninety percent of the cities in the Induction Ground have already been invaded by the blood fiends." Wang Zhen's tone was grave.

The dean was at a loss for words before stammering, "Then... How are they now?"

"The higher authorities did not release any information, but you can imagine." Wang Zhen continued dully, "There will be even more casualties. They might have to await support while defeating blood fiends in the ruins of the city, or they might meet with a complete wipeout."

The dean trembled, his face as white as a sheet.

Seeing the dean's fearful gaze, Wang Zhen continued, "As such, we need to endure for a longer period of time than we'd expected, which is why we need Ai Baiyi."

He felt grateful. If they'd heard this news before the break out of the long war, he too would have fallen into despair. Now that the situation had stabilized, it also increased his confidence in pressing on.

"The good news is that the progress of the development of the golden needles has been smooth. Given the current speed, I reckon we still require two more days before the completion of the golden needles. Master Han sent Mingxiu to hasten the progress. She is in her optimal state now and can start on it at any moment. According to Mister Wang's plan, if we are able to complete it, Central Pine City will become as sturdy as iron."

The dean regained some color in his face. "What instructions have the higher authorities given?"

"They hope that we can endure and press on." Wang Zhen glanced at him before replying, "They have already sent a new troop to give us support, but it will require some time to arrive. The support force will be stronger this time around."

In another corner in Central Pine City, the news that Ai Hui had awakened also woke up others.

"He has awoken?" A hoarse voice sounded from behind the shadows in a secret corner.

"Yes!" Yan Hai replied carefully, "He has just woken up. The rest of the details have not been passed down yet."

"The Lightning Blade..." The person in the shadows walked out; it was Tian Kuan. He was fuming with rage and his gaze was filled with hatred, but also with a thread of fear. His face was pale. As the situation in the city stabilized, he became unable to take advantage of the crisis for his own benefit. The situation would be even worse if he had not found Yan Hai.

Yan Hai did not dare to breathe. He knew how scary Tian Kuan was.

Because of Tian Kuan, he dared not have any thoughts of resisting and listened to orders without any protests. Furthermore, he felt that this was a good opportunity for himself. Tian Kuan's identity was destined to be extraordinary within the group. To an outside member like himself, it would pave many roads for him in the future.

"You have yet to bear any blood traces?" Tian Kuan shook his head, displeased.

Yan Hai's expression changed in a flash. He knew how temperamental these people could be.

At that moment, a blood crystal was thrown in front of him. The sparkling and translucent blood crystal captured Yan Hai's attention.

An indifferent voice sounded over his head.

"Hurry up and bear the blood traces. I have a mission for you."

Chapter 228: Tian Kuan's Operation

In the darkness, Tian Kuan moved like a ghost in the shadows of the ruins.

After being defeated by Ai Hui, he realized that he had underestimated his enemy. That juvenile, oh, he's called Ai Hui, was stronger than he'd imagined. It would be hard to defeat such an opponent using simple and violent moves.

Tian Kuan never avoided confronting his own mistakes. He believed that having a resolution to his mistakes was nothing shameful, rather, was worth celebrating. The dead did not have the chance to do so.

He had survived such bitter battles and combat encounters. How could he be considered brainless?

Fighting in close quarters required courage, capability, and knowledge. As one survived more battles, these traits became more apparent.

Tian Kuan had been constantly reflecting and pondering upon his mistakes for the past two days.

Through Yan Hai, he knew what was happening in Central Pine City like the back of his hand. He also held Ai Hui in higher regard.

Even talents like Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun were

under Ai Hui's shadow, so much that they willingly complied to Ai Hui orders. Tian Kuan had been surprised when he'd heard that. Even more so when he learned Ai Hui's background, being that he had been a hard laborer and was also still a first-year student at the Induction Ground.

Being a nemesis of the Avalon of Five Elements, the Blood of God had researched the Avalon of Five Elements intensively.

The conflicting views between the new citizens and the members of the aristocratic families had long seeped into the Avalon of Five Elements; the Thirteen Divisions was no exception. Some of the troops complied with tradition by only appointing disciples from aristocratic families as leaders, while on the other hand, the leaders of some other troops were all new citizens.

For a new citizen without any background to be able to command influential figures like Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun was to go against all the norms. The arrogance of the aristocratic families allowed them to treat capable new citizens as their right-hand men, but they would never accept them as their superiors.

Tian Kuan held Ai Hui in higher regards. This incident emphasized Ai Hui's capability and that he was indeed a genius youth.

After Tian Kuan calmed down, he quickly found a solution. There was no need for him to engage in direct combat with Ai Hui, this would only put himself in danger. It was hard to predict the moves of genius opponents. They would always perform outstandingly in perceived dire situations and reverse the

outcome.

To have a direct battle with a genius like Ai Hui was the ultimate last resort.

Tian Kuan had sufficient manpower to help him.

In his eyes, there were many loopholes in Central Pine City's defense system. Unlike Yan Hai and the others who were peripheral members, he had been painstakingly groomed by many of the elders from within Blood of God. These elders had summarised many aspects of the Avalon of Five Elements. Compared to the number of Elders who researched the new citizens and the conflicts between the aristocratic families, there were more Elders researching the training system in the Five Residences and Eight Palaces as well as the defense mechanisms in the cities. After all, these findings would be used directly in battle.

The fruits of those Elders' labor had all been imparted to them.

The Avalon of Five Elements' traditions were regulated by the Elders. As nature would have it, they were also used against the Avalon of Five Elements as a kind of weapon by the Blood of God.

Tian Kuan was proficient in the city's defense system. The city gate which Wang Zhen viewed as indestructible was as weak as tofu in Tian Kuan's eyes. It would be very easy for him to break through their defense system; however, the cautious Tian Kuan did not do so. There was a high possibility that his previous break-in through the city gates had raised suspicions. If traces of man-

made destruction were found within the city again, Wang Zhen would definitely know that there was an enemy hiding within the city.

Tian Kuan knew that the veterans of the Battle of the Dawn were not to be taken lightly.

Compared to before, the strength within the city had also improved. After killing off the blood fiends that had entered into the city, a large amount of blood crystals had been obtained by the elementalists. As a result, the elite elementalists in Central Pine City's strengths improved tremendously.

It had never occurred to Tian Kuan that the blood crystals could actually be used to increase the elementalists' capabilities and that the effect would be so obvious. It was said that the efficiency of the blood crystals was one of the A-1 unit's contributions. He wondered what role Ai Hui had played being the leader of the A-1 unit.

After continuous investigations, Tian Kuan realized that it was due to the influence of Ai Hui that Central Pine City was still in a rather good condition. Ai Hui had played both direct and indirect parts.

Tian Kuan became extra cautious.

It was fortunate that there were many loopholes in Central Pine City. Tian Kuan soon found a new target underground. Central Pine City's underground had long been destroyed. The first wave

of attacks was by the blood ants, followed by the blood-traced worms. The rocks underground had been utterly destroyed and there were many holes left behind by the attacks.

Tian Kuan's target was these holes that were connected to outside the city.

He arrived at a ruin without a soul in sight. A huge tunnel could be clearly seen. This was the huge hole that had been left behind after Ai Hui and his team had defeated the nine-trace blood worm.

Immediately, Tian Kuan noticed the recumbent parasol bell next to the tunnel's entrance.

The recumbent parasol bell was a type of plant used for security purposes. It was short in height and was shaped like an open parasol, prostrate on the floor. The tip of the parasol had an unassuming warning bell flower. The ash-grey color of the recumbent parasol bell was similar to that of the stones. It does not stand out amongst the ruins, but Tian Kuan recognised it with a single glance.

The recumbent parasol bell could release an invisible ultrasonic wave similar to a bat's ultrasonic sound. It was very weak and other living things would find it hard to detect. When a living being enters the waves' boundary, it would alert the alarm. The warning bell flower on the tip of the parasol would then produce an urgent ring.

Tian Kuan restrained his vital energy and his face became ghastly

white, with the exception of his pupils which were like drops of blood. His body became ice-cold and his heartbeat came close to halting. Any signs of life coming from his body vanished without a trace.

He landed next to the recumbent parasol bell and the bell did not ring. This was the recumbent parasol bell's weakness. The invisible ultrasonic waves were only effective on living organisms and could not be used to defend against beings that did not produce signs of life.

He looked around cautiously and did not see anyone around.

Nowadays, no one in the city guarded the tunnels. There were simply too many tunnels. Most of them made use of plants similar to the recumbent parasol bell or sand puppets that had modified strength to guard around the clock. Sand puppets did not know what it was like to be tired and were more than suitable to conduct such a mission.

While the continuation of the battles led to an increase in the injured and casualties, the lucky surviving elementalists were improving constantly.

The continuous loss of lives had a tremendous impact on them.

The sounds of battle could be heard from far away. The blood fiends in the city had not been purged completely and the battles were still taking place.

Tian Kuan took out a bag of bait that he had prepared beforehand. It had been created with the utmost care. He took out a blood crystal. Pain flashed through his eyes, but he put the blood crystal into the bag of bait and threw it into the deep tunnel.

He looked at the sunflower on his wrist. There were twelve petals. Two were yellow and the remaining were green.

It was two in the morning.

Tian Kuan was not repulsed by using items from the Avalon of Five Elements. Traces of the Avalon of Five Elements could be seen in many aspects of their lives. Also, there were many useful items which had been created by them. Items that could be used to tell time like the jade green sunflower were cheap, light, and easy to use. The minute sand from the Yellow Sand Corner gave precise timing as well. Also, the volcano at the Sparking Plains would erupt with a variety of beautiful illusions at every hour. The concealed cloud paper from Palette Cloud Village could not only be absorbed by any parts of the body, it could also display time and be used to record knowledge among other things.

Including the elders from the organization, they were used to using various items from the Avalon of Five Elements.

Tian Kuan felt that the actions of the Avalon of Five Elements were rather contradictory. As much as the items were elaborate, they were meant for daily use. As long as you had enough power, you could easily snatch them over.

When the sun was up, people in Central Pine City would enjoy a hearty meal.

Tian Kuan did not halt his steps and disappeared into the darkness.

Vanguard Training Hall.

A full twelve hours had passed and Ai Hui had yet to show any signs of stopping. He was like a sand puppet that did not know the meaning of ‘tired’.

The students who were done with their break looked at Ai Hui as he trained from afar. Their gazes were filled with curiosity and admiration. After twelve consecutive hours, Ai Hui did not pause for a break.

‘The Lighting Blade’ and ‘Ai Baiyi’ were the current hot topics within the team. All of them resonated deeply with them and were honored.

After more experiences with combat in battles and the increase in their strength, the previously delicate students were more mature now. They observed Ai Hui while continuing their discussion in low tones, exchanging their insights from the battle.

"He is improving, and at a very fast rate."

A voice came from behind Shi Xueman. It was Duanmu

Huanghun.

Shi Xueman did not bother to turn her head and replied, "You are also not too bad."

She no longer treated Duanmu Huanghun as someone she had to take care of. He had surpassed everyone’s expectation after achieving the Initial Completion. Besides Ai Hui, Duanmu Huanghun had also improved drastically. Even Shi Xueman was pressured by the vast improvement from Duanmu Huanghun.

Duanmu Huanghun was now ranked number three in the troops, after Ai Hui and Shi Xueman.

There was a reason why the Eight Palaces Completion was a watershed point to being an elementalist. Once the Eight Palaces Initial Completion was formed, the barrier between the elementalist and the sky and earth elemental energy would be broken. Huge amounts of sky and earth elemental energy would enter the body and refine it. As a result, the body of the elementalist would improve by a large margin.

However, the largest change did not occur in their physical bodies; rather, it was the effectiveness of the elemental energy training. The efficiency was tremendously improved.

The elementalist and the elemental energy from heaven and earth would be more closely connected. The efficiency of elemental energy absorption would also increase tremendously.

As such, elementalists achieving the elemental internalization, commonly referred to as Supporting the Eight Palaces. In this phase, the main task of the elementalist was to constantly expand the eight palaces using the large amount of elemental energy. This in turn would also allow them to store more elemental energy.

Following the expansion of the eight palaces, they would gradually merge into one and the elementalist's body would mostly run on elemental energy. This was also the time to refine their palaces and transform their residences in order to enter the next phase: elemental externalization.

Duanmu Huanghun's eight palaces were expanding at an astonishing speed. He was also more sensitive towards elemental energy. It was extremely useful to Duanmu Huanghun's [Viridescent Flower]. He was practically improving everyday.

Compared to Duanmu Huanghun, Shi Xueman's improvement was slower; however, she was not worried as she knew the reason why.

She was the first to recover among the group. From the start, she had closely followed Ai Hui's situation. Ai Hui's standing in their team was important enough for her to pay such close attention.

Shi Xueman suddenly became fixated. Duanmu Huanghun, who was standing next to her, also stood up straight unconsciously. The rest of the students also soon realized the situation.

After brandishing his sword for more than twelve consecutive

hours, there were finally some changes to Ai Hui's sword moves.

Chapter 229: Opening the Palace Door

For the past 20 hours, Ai Hui had been immersed in his training, but his sword moves were clumsy. At times, he did not complete his moves or lost control of his strength and committed all kinds of mistakes. He could practically write a book < A Complete Collection of Swordplay Mistakes >.

Ai Hui’s movements were awkward and full of errors. It was difficult for people to associate him with his nickname "The Lightning Blade."

Shi Xueman and the rest were used to it however. There were always all sorts of quirks when it came to Ai Hui.

This was not the first time and would not be the last.

While everyone was fully aware of Ai Hui’s abilities and valor, it was a little difficult for them to endure seeing such a clumsy swordplay as time went by. Even if they knew that a main course would definitely be delicious, it would be an unpleasant experience if they had to first eat terrible tasting appetizers one after another.

Everyone became alert when a faint light ray started to gather on the longsword in Ai Hui’s hand.

They were filled with anticipation since Ai Hui’s swordplay was outstanding and often breathtaking.

What no one expected was for Ai Hui’s sword moves to remain disjointed in spite of the flickering sword ray. It was a tragic sight.

"What is he trying to do?" Duanmu snorted.

Even if the person executing such clumsy swordplay was the person he wanted to defeat, wasting so much time watching it was unacceptable!

Even without looking at Duanmu Huanghun, Shi Xueman remarked, "You can’t beat him anyway."

Duanmu Huanghun’s body stiffened, as if an immobilization spell had been casted on him.

A few minutes passed before he gradually turned his head around, his facial muscles twitching and eyes shooting flames.

"Wanna fight?"

Shi Xueman’s icy words woke Duanmu Huanghun up, as if he’d been hit by a basin of ice cold water. Fighting with Ai Hui did not scare him at all. Instead, he looked forward to it very much.

But to fight with Shi Xueman...

Duanmu Huanghun trembled at that thought, and his childhood trauma returned to him instantly like an enveloping black cloud.

He had seen with his own eyes how Shi Xueman made the bigger brothers and sisters wail and howl. This had also fueled his determination to succeed.

This childhood trauma was really a bit too overwhelming...

Duanmu Huanghun groaned a little before turning his head back.

Don’t be fooled by his recent progress. He was still meek when it came to confronting Shi Xueman. Losing to Ai Hui was not a big deal because it would just feed his fighting spirit.

But losing to Shi Xueman...

That nightmarish scene would trigger his childhood trauma. It would be too terrifying.

Ai Hui’s nickname for her, "Violent Iron Lady," was simply an understatement!

Humph, I shall not bother with women!

Duanmu Huanghun looked down, half-embarrassed and half-ashamed.

Ai Hui’s eight palaces were incessantly being filled with "sword pills." Elemental energy pills shaped like sword pills continued spinning at high speeds and were suspended within the elemental

energy palaces. Plus, Ai Hui found another benefit of the elemental energy pills–they were more precise compared to the wisps and threads of elemental energy he used in the past. This was a huge advantage in battles and was especially suited for Ai Hui's [Big Dipper].

[Big Dipper] required seven identical amount of elemental energy, which was why it was a very challenging skill. Ai Hui had to simultaneously control seven palaces and accurately guide seven identical amount of elemental energy within an extremely short period of time and while in combat. This was a very demanding task for elementalists.

It was much easier now since Ai Hui only needed his seven palaces to control one elemental energy pill.

Ai Hui paid even more attention when he was "rolling the sword pill," ensuring that each elemental energy pills was identical.

This caused Ai Hui's rolling speed to reduce, but he felt it was very much worth it. Preparation work that could help in battle ought to be done no matter how complicated and tedious.

A short battle determined life and death, and preparation work consumed time and energy, but one must survive to have time and energy.

It took Ai Hui a whole 12 hours to get sufficient elemental energy, roll them into elemental energy pills and place them within his eight palaces. As the amount of uncontrollable elemental energy

within his body decreased, Ai Hui's sword ray became brighter and clearer.

When the last elemental energy pill entered his sky palace, Ai Hui's body jerked.

Eight palaces shook at the same time and the high-speed spinning elemental energy pills suddenly froze. The next moment, a violent surge of elemental energy current flowed backward from between Ai Hui's brows.

Something rumbled in Ai Hui's head, causing his mind to blank out.

Just then, everyone saw a ray of light lighting up from between Ai Hui's brows. The dazzling light transformed into a whirlpool of light as countless wisps and threads of brightly-colored rays seemed to get sucked into it from thin air.

"Sky palace?"

Shi Xueman was stunned.

Not just her, but Duanmu Huanghun, who was about to leave, was stunned too.

When eight palaces advanced from Initial Completion stage and attaining elemental internalization, elementalists would be able to sense the elemental energy of heaven and earth as well as guide it

into the body. This process was known as [Opening of Palace Door], and each palace opened a different kind of palace door.

Generally speaking, opening palace doors were for elementalists' strongest palaces since the most tempered elemental energy palace had the keenest reaction to heaven and earth elemental energy. Furthermore, this was directly related to the inherited training methods.

For example, Shi Xueman opened the sea palace's palace door because she practiced the [Cloud Whale] techinque and mainly trained her sea palace. As such, her spear skills were powerful, while her elemental energy was mild and soft.

Duanmu Huanghun practiced the [Viridescent Flower], but trained mainly his gate palace. The gate palace linked everything between heaven and earth. As such, the [Viridescent Flower] technique was named after its flexibility.

Ai Hui opened the sky palace's place door.

Opening the sky palace was not that bizarre. A lot of inherited absolute arts, such as the famous [Eyebrow Heart Knife], focused on training the sky palace.

But Ai Hui practiced the [Big Dipper].

At the moment, people were still clicking their tongues in wonder since the [Big Dipper] demanded a lot from the

practitioner. Seven strong palaces were required, and it was only now that they realized Ai Hui had seven strong palaces. Other than his sky palace, the rest were strong. They felt that while Ai Hui had low affinity with elemental energy, he had a rather rare constitution for possessing seven strong palaces.

In Ai Hui's hands, the [Big Dipper] was a formidable power that lived up to its fame and glory.

If Ai Hui had opened a palace door from one of his strong palaces, it would not be surprising or strange, yet it happened to be his sky palace that opened.

Could it be that Ai Hui's sky palace had undergone more tempering than the rest?

Everyone was confused, but not many were surprised when Ai Hui broke through Initial Completion to elemental internalization. The astonishing lightning version of [Dust Fall] displayed during the battle on the long street had already convinced everybody that Ai Hui was beyond ordinary elementalists, so it would not be surprising for him to also open his palace door.

The light whirlpool between Ai Hui's brows continued swallowing the elemental energy that surged out from the air. Simultaneously, there were wisps of brightly-colored elemental energy dispersing from Ai Hui's surroundings. These were elemental energies that Ai Hui was unable to absorb.

Ai Hui gradually recovered himself.

The steady flow of elemental energy was heterogeneous, so it was very uncomfortable for him when all of it entered his body. Just by willing it in his mind, the elemental energy from his eight palaces automatically started the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

The elemental energy pills, lustrous as pearl and jade, circulated within his body.

It felt different from before. Elemental energy used to feel like flowing liquid, but after becoming elemental energy pills, they became more agile. This required Ai Hui to have better control so he had to be even more alert. Previously, he did not have to worry about the fluid elemental energy getting clogged when he was performing the Circulatory Cycle Revolution, but now, if the elemental energy pills moved in a swarm, blockages were very possible.

Ai Hui did not mind in the least. Placed alongside its benefits, the costs were not worth mentioning.

As the Circulatory Cycle Revolution continued, wisps of elemental energy were absorbed by the operating elemental energy pills. They followed the pills in the circulation, as if they had smelled a similar odor.

Ai Hui quickly took this opportunity to roll this elemental energy into pills since he needed them.

Those that he did not require were dispersed from around his

body.

Ai Hui's Circulatory Cycle Revolution was different from anyone else's. Not only was his circulation for eight palaces, it was also for the sword in his hand.

Wholeheartedly rolling elemental energy pills, Ai Hui did not notice that following the circulation, the elemental energy pills entered his sword before flowing back into his body.

Each elemental energy pill contained sword aura. Ai Hui used the sword pill method to roll the elemental energy into pills, but the sword aura did not weaken because of this. Instead, it was more controlled than that of the original elemental energy swords.

The elemental energy pills passed through the longsword during the revolution, causing it to tremble very slightly.

The longsword was quietly undergoing changes.

Ai Hui sensed the longsword's change 10 minutes later. The sword aura within the elemental energy pills agitated the longsword nonstop. Now, Ai Hui had a keen comprehension of the sword, achieving unprecedented progress.

Perhaps the elemental energy pills were beneficial to the longsword?

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. Wanting to inspect the changes, he turned

his attention to the longsword in his hand.

The sword aura in the elemental energy pills kept stimulating the longsword, and Ai Hui felt the sword becoming increasingly sharp, so sharp that it could cut open anything. Yet, there was an indescribable, incorporeal obstruction.

Ai Hui instinctively disliked this layer of obstruction. He knew not what it was, but felt that it restricted the sword.

What to do?

Suddenly it clicked. Since the elemental energy pills could stimulate the longsword, just increase the intensity!

He sped up the circulation of the elemental energy pills within his body.

Ai Hui was pleasantly surprised to discover that following an increase in speed of circulation of the elemental energy pills, the obstructive layer became thinner.

All of a sudden, Ai Hui felt his hands becoming light as that invisible obstruction disappeared.

Boom, Ai Hui’s mind shook.

While those present were still processing the strange fact that Ai

Hui was opening his sky palace's palace door, a brilliant ray lit up and suddenly caught their eyes once again.

They raised their head automatically and were dumbfounded upon digesting the situation.

The light ray from Ai Hui's longsword continued to grow as the bright silver light transformed into a light whirlpool.

Everyone felt a great sense of familiarity toward the next scene.

The wisps of brightly-colored lights surged up from thin air and incessantly entered the silver light whirlpool.

Duanmu Huanghun's eyes were about to drop onto the floor.

A longsword... opening a palace door?

Seeing that the light whirlpool on the longsword was the same as the one between Ai Hui's brows and that both were absorbing the heaven and earth elemental energy simultaneously, everyone was struck dumb.

When it came to opening a palace door, no one had even heard of simultaneously opening two of them. Needless to say, no one knew that a sword could open a palace door as well...

The silver light from the longsword and from between Ai Hui's

brows shone so brightly that it illuminated each and every stunned face of those present.

Even Lou Lan revealed a lifeless gaze, which was rare.

Not a single voice could be heard in the training hall.

Chapter 230: The Remaining Problems

It had not occurred to Ai Hui that the longsword in his hand could actually absorb heaven and earth elemental energy.

However, he had no time to care about this now. He was engrossed in the thrill of reaching the Inner Element level. That enveloping, incorporeal barrier had suddenly disappeared, and he felt indescribably relaxed.

A whole new world presented itself in front of him.

The dark, ice-cold elemental energy world was now fresh and lively. Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. Agile, warm, lively, ever-changing, and full of vitality. They were so richly colorful and brought endless changes,

Ai Hui was like an ignorant youth who had just barged his way into a multi-colored, multi-faceted forest and saw the sunlight, dewdrops, and countless lifeforms.

He was moved beyond words.

The brightly-colored elemental energy was incomparably attractive and had firmly captured Ai Hui's heart.

At that moment, he had forgotten about battling and killing. He was like a curious young man, lingering and losing himself amid these five mutable elemental energies.

It was hard to mull things over because the changes were too rapid.

What attracted Ai Hui the most were the five delicate elemental rings. Each was connected head to tail, like perfect color rings. Each elemental ring was different, yet equally captivating. Their circulatory changes were endless.

The heaven and earth elemental energy was like a vast, boundless ocean. It rippled and drifted. Breathtakingly dazzling, these fine circulations were like pearls spread throughout the ocean.

Ai Hui relished this moment, feeling the energy so clearly for the first time

It was a completely different experience from that of the sword embryo. The latter was a state of absolute calm and free from emotions, as if in his eyes, there was no life and death in heaven or on earth. Now, he was like a wistful fellow, able to deeply feel the exquisite changes occurring within the elemental energy and sense the faintly discernable, yet omnipresent breath of life.

With a pensive look on his face, Ai Hui figured that it was probably this breath of life that produced the diverse Avalon of Five Elements.

Amid the vast ocean of elemental energy, Ai Hui also noticed a familiar odor. The specks of silver light were like fragmented and

scattered stars. They were metal elemental energies.

He could feel the metal elemental energy-rich ground beneath his feet, but this elemental energy was so substantial and heavy that stepping on top made him feel so small and insignificant.

The elemental energy cleansed his body without interruption as he felt his body change. The metal elemental energy poured into his lungs and they became like strong and tough bellows made from metal membranes. Each expansion and contraction brought abundant vitality and powerful breaths. The wood elemental energy entered his liver and thriving life force flooded every single part of his body. The fire elemental energy filled his his heart, making each heartbeat warm and powerful like a smelting furnace as well as providing it with limitless force. Voluminous water elemental energy permeated his kidneys like a sudden convergence of cloud-mist from all different directions, producing quiet raindrops that nourished all living things.

Change was so magical! Ai Hui exclaimed in admiration, deeply moved by the mystical creator of it all.

The influx of heaven and earth elemental energy would not cause immediate changes to his body, but with consistent nourishment and time, his body would undergo an all-around improvement.

It was also at this time that Ai Hui finally understood why few would engage in body tempering before achieving Initial Completion.

After Initial Completion, the nourishment brought by the heaven and earth elemental energy into an elementalist's body was holistic. Tempering on this basis would then produce twice the result with half the work. Plus, the elementalist would be more sensitive to elemental energy after Initial Completion, enhancing the effect of tempering.

Ai Hui was engrossed in the beauty of it all when he suddenly sensed that something was amiss.

The longsword in his hand.

The fact that it could absorb the heaven and earth elemental energy was shocking, but he had not had time to notice since he was too absorbed in the moment. He immediately roused when the longsword started to show precarious signs.

When Ai Hui placed his attention back on the longsword, he instantly sensed trouble.

This longsword was thrown to him by Shi Xueman. It was the most ordinary and standard kind of longsword. Heaven and earth elemental energy poured into the longsword violently and incessantly, quickly exceeding the sword's endurance level. A crack started to appear on the sword surface and the clear, bright light ray penetrated through it.

More and more cracks surfaced.

Ai Hui's heart sank. This was the crucial moment of advancement. During a breakthrough, one could feel many subtle, wonderful things that were usually difficult to detect. It was a rare opportunity.

Who knew that the longsword would not be able to handle the energy flow at this critical juncture.

Damn it!

Even Ai Hui, who was usually a calm fellow, felt like cursing now. He had thought that it was a good thing for the longsword to open the palace door but who would have thought...

The number of cracks increased, and in the blink of an eye, the sword body was filled with dense fissures.

Not good!

The longsword in Ai Hui's hand exploded before he could even cry out in alarm.

In a flash, the longsword was ripped apart by the violent surge of elemental energy. The burst of elemental energy swallowed the shattered pieces, turning them into fine powder before they could even disperse.

Ai Hui's body jerked. The light whirlpool in between his brows dimmed, but carried an indescribable familiarity, causing him to

stare blankly.

It was as if his mind had sprinted over a vast area of light, flown far away in the blink of an eye, withdrawn, and disappeared like lightning before fully experiencing everything.

Ai Hui's eyes opened wide as he realized that that indescribable familiarity felt a little like the sword embryo's explosion, just much lighter and shorter.

So short that he could not even react in time.

He did not know why, but during that short moment, his mind felt something. Unfortunately, that scene flashed past his head like lightning and left only fuzziness.

It was as if underground...

Ai Hui snapped out of it. Perhaps blood fiends wanted to infiltrate Central Pine city from underground, but he did not worry too much about it. While Central Pine City was not able to prevent blood fiends from encroaching from underground, the tight security would still be able to detect the first signs of danger.

He was only concerned about himself right now.

Only a bare sword hilt remained in his hand. The worst thing was that his moment of enlightenment had been disrupted.

Everyone, not just Ai Hui, was startled by this sudden change of events. They were still shaken by the fact that Ai Hui's sword could open a palace door, but in the next moment, it exploded.

For a moment, all were in a daze.

Ai Hui reacted the fastest. Although he was annoyed, he checked his body immediately. This was partly due to his experience, since his training had always been rough and situations always emerged. Many things, such as the sword embryo, had been created carelessly and by chance.

To him, having all kinds of situations surface from training were common occurrences.

He was still able to keep calm in the face of problems.

Shi Xueman and the rest were nervous. Being disrupted when undergoing a breakthrough had consequences. If lucky, there would simply be no breakthrough, but if unfortunate, one could get severely injured. Right now, having placed all their faith in Ai Hui, everyone wished that they were the ones who failed instead of Ai Hui.

Ai Hui's role was not replaceable. What they really hoped for was an intact and unharmed Ai Hui.

No one dared to even exhale, for fear of disturbing Ai Hui.

The atmosphere turned heavy and stifling.

Ai Hui opened his eyes after a while.

"How is it?" Shi Xueman could not help but ask, her eyes filled with concern.

Ai Hui noticed the worry in Shi Xueman’s eyes and his heart warmed up a little. Iron lady was being petty for not paying him the money, but she was actually a decent person. He nodded his head. "Still okay."

Still okay?

Shi Xueman stared blankly for a little while before expressing her discontentment. "What does that mean?"

"Still okay, meaning the result isn’t too bad." Ai Hui noticed that Shi Xueman’s eye was twitching. As if he had seen her steely muscles throbbing under the armor, Ai Hui was startled and added quickly, "It’s more complicated. Simply speaking, Initial Completion was a success. There is an increase in elemental energy and it is mostly all sorted out, but there are many remaining problems with my body."

Shi Xueman felt a little more at ease, but was still curious. "Remaining problems?"

Just then, Ai Hui’s right arm spasmed uncontrollably. This sudden change shocked everyone present, including Shi Xueman.

"Look," Ai Hui didn’t seem to mind as he said with a calm expression, "the remaining lightning within my body flares up intermittently."

In response for scaring him with her twitching eyes, Ai Hui decided to return the favor. "I am "The Lightning Blade," how can I not carry electricity? You’d better stay far away from me, Iron Lady. Steel conducts electricity so don’t blame me if you get electrocuted."

Shi Xueman’s eye started twitching again. Steel... but she endured. Focus on the greater situation!

She continued, "Any methods to remove it? Any other issues?"

"As for the remaining lightning, so far no. No big issues." Ai Hui saw Shi Xueman’s face darken and quickly added, "There’s something wrong with my sky palace, hand palaces, sea palace, and elemental energy."

"You call that ‘no big issues?’" Shi Xueman glared at him, as if she saw a ghost. "There’s something wrong with four out of eight palaces and you’re telling me there’s no big issues? Something also went wrong with your elemental energy. Is there anything worse than this? Body as well. Any other parts of your body with no issue?"

She simply could not understand. Each problem seemed extremely serious to her. This fellow was usually exceptionally calm and cautious, so why was he acting so thoughtlessly right now?

Everyone was dumbstruck. They did not expect Ai Hui’s body to be hit with so many problems. He was badly damaged.

"Now that you mention it, it does seem pretty serious." Ai Hui smiled meekly. "Actually it’s not that severe."

He really did think that it was not serious. For example, his hand palaces, sea palace, and body problems were related to the remnant lightning. The problem with his elemental energy was that the elemental energy pills had not been tested, so the result was unknown. Finally, the sky palace’s issue was related to the sword embryo’s remaining motions.

As compared to when he just woke up, his battle strength had recovered significantly. Things were taking a turn for the better.

Throughout his training journey and experience, he had had to deal with even more challenging issues, so this was not a big deal to him.

Things were really much better now that he was more knowledgeable. Plus, he was starting to understand a rough idea of the ongoing events.

Just then, a mournful-sounding alarm went off from far away.

The flash of fuzziness from before came back to him.

The blood fiends were indeed invading the city. He felt slightly at ease since the alarms sounded.

Soon, however, his pupils constricted. A bright red signal rocketed up and across the black sky.

Someone was asking for assistance!

Chapter 231: Sandworms

The sudden distress signal surprised everyone.

As the fighting continued, people in Central Pine City began to know more about the blood fiends and became more tactful when fighting with them. The ferocious and dangerous blood fiends were gradually losing their advantages. People now knew how to separate the blood fiends, how to cooperate with each other, and how to identify weaknesses.

Human beings were good at learning and summarizing, a feature that was fully displayed in Central Pine City. As long as they found the weakness of a kind of blood fiends, the Mayor’s residence would announce it to the whole city. Meanwhile, the method to deal with the blood poison spatter was also found, which had saved many lives.

The blood crystals of the blood fiends were gifts of the war. Many elementalists had largely improved their ability after using the blood crystal. Whether clever or stupid, everyone knew that only stronger people were likely to survive.

The situation in Central Pine City became more and more steady.

The quick increase of the elementalists’ fighting skills made it easier for them to deal with blood fiends. Therefore, it was now rare to see urgent distress signals. Even if an elementalist met with a relatively ferocious blood fiend, he would call the companions nearby for help and carry out the tactics of a "wolf pack."

Now, some bold elementalists were even beginning to set baits and traps to obtain blood crystals.

On the other hand, there was a big difference between a distress signal and an urgent distress signal. The latter only appeared in times of emergency. The issuance of an urgent distress signal meant that the fight was out of control and every second counted.

Without hesitation, Shi Xueman grabbed her spear and asked calmly, "Who still has the strength?" There was firmness in her starry eyes.

Many students stepped forward. Shi Xueman was prestigious in the team, and almost everyone else in the team had been helped or saved by her. When she asked, all students responded.

"Me!"

"And me!"

...

Shi Xueman did not hesitate. She chose more than 10 people and said, "Follow me. Everyone else, please stay on guard and be alert."

Those who were chosen walked to the side of Shi Xueman. They were very calm. None of them panicked.

Jiang Wei immediately started to arrange sentries and lookout posts.

Shi Xueman turned to Ai Hui and said coldly, "Take care of yourself."

She gave Ai Hui a deep glance, then left with the students. Moving quickly, she soon disappeared in the darkness.

Ai Hui dumbly watched Shi Xueman’s back. The capability and skillfulness Shi Xueman had shown was out of his expectation. Compared with what she was like at the beginning of the blood disaster, she was now a totally different person.

Then, Ai Hui realized something, and could not help laughing at himself: who wasn’t?

Even Fatty’s attitude toward training was far more serious than before.

Duanmu Huanghun was also with Shi Xueman, which made Ai Hui more relieved. They were both talents. While their level was not high enough, their fighting skills were already on par with the average elementalists. Furthermore, their levels had been largely improved in battle.

In the Avalon of the Five Elements, a really powerful and experienced fighter could not be replaced by a dozen average

fighters. Likewise, in Central Pine City, the capability of all the elementalists added up together could not be compared to that of a single master in a real battle.

That was why people had high hopes for Ai Hui.

In addition to Ai Hui, all the other students were relieved too. They were busy with their own matters. Some were engaged in training, some were lost in thought, and the rest were discussing and learning from each other in groups. They were already used to fighting like veterans.

Ai Hui contemplated how to solve his own "problem."

When Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun arrived, many elementalists were already there.

"This is where we killed the blood-traced earthworm," one student said, but no one seemed to hear what he said.

Their eyes were fixed on the scene, and all of them were dumbstruck by what they saw.

The solid ground was now like quicksand, with a huge vortex slowly rotating in the middle. In the sand, something seemed to be moving. The debris of the nearby ruins was continuously drawn into the vortex and ground into sand.

The diameter of the vortex was more than 100 meters. Such a

large vortex visual impacted everyone present.

What was more shocking was that it kept growing larger by devouring the ground adjacent to the area.

The other elementalists were also stunned and frightened.

Shi Xueman was the first to react. She asked loudly, "Who sent the signal?"

"It was us."

Some elementalists recognized Shi Xueman and they all came forward.

Currently, the A-1 Unit was the most powerful team in Central Pine City, so the main members were well known to everyone.

Shi Xueman breathed deeply to calm down, then asked, "How did you find it?"

"We heard the alarm of the recumbent parasol bell. When we arrived, we found that there seemed to be something in the hole, so we immediately attacked the hole, but it didn’t help. Then, the ground became as soft as a dough, and a small vortex appeared..."

Shi Xueman interrupted without hesitation, "How large was it?"

"The diameter was only about 20 meters." There was still fear on these elementalists' faces. "We attacked the vortex, but it was of no use either. The vortex kept growing at a fast speed. There was nothing we could do but ask for help."

"How long did it take to grow from 20 meters to what it is now?" Shi Xueman asked.

"About 10 minutes."

Shi Xueman was calm. Within only 10 minutes, it grew from 20 meters to 100 meters with no sign of stopping. Her gaze was fixed on the rotating sand vortex, as if she wanted to see what on earth was in it.

Suddenly, she noticed something moving in the sand, something small.

She turned to Duanmu Huanghun and asked, "Can you get one out?"

Duanmu Huanghun nodded without saying a word. His face was solemn. He could feel strong earth elemental energy from the sand vortex and also wondered what the tiny things in it were.

His fingers stretched like blooming flowers. The others could only see a blurred streak in the air that had an unspeakable rhythm.

Above the vortex, a green twined vine abruptly appeared out of nowhere and pierced into the vortex.

Then, it stretched taut under the strain. Just when everyone worried that the vine would snap, it contracted and pulled a struggling, tightly tied up worm out of the sand and into the air.

When they saw clearly what it was, everyone’s expression changed.

"Sandworm!"

The sandworm was as large as a palm. Its flat body consisted of many segmented limbs that allowed it to twist freely. Sandworms were horrible social creatures. Their flat bodies were rigid like an iron spring leaf and could vibrate at a certain frequency. When tens of thousands or more sandworms vibrated together, the ground would fragment and be ground down to sand and dust.

They could move easily in the sand.

Sandworms were horrible predators, but their method of hunting was different from other beasts. The desertification of the soil and stones could make everything in the area, including plants and beasts, their food.

These sandworms were dark red, a sign of blood poison infection.

Sandworms seldom appeared above ground, because they

disliked the light. Though there was less abundant food compared to above, their territory was usually underground where there was no light.

Shi Xueman looked morose. The time when sandworms were most likely to appear was the evening.

And it was now the evening.

The vortex continued growing. Its diameter currently exceeded 100 meters.

The sandworm tied up by the twined vine squeaked. Suddenly, a streak of sand shot out from the vortex like a speedy tongue and precisely struck the sandworm suspended in the air.

Duanmu Huanghun shivered as the twined vine broke. The sandworm disappeared.

Everyone was dumbstruck once more. Fear appeared on their faces.

The sandworms were experts on controlling the earth. They were large in quantity, and nothing in the quicksand could threaten them. That was why they were all worried when they saw the sandworm.

The vortex grew larger and larger, but no one had any idea how to deal with it.

The quicksand that slowly churned was the best protection for the worms. It would be extremely hard to strike through the thick sand and hit the sandworms hiding beneath.

Shi Xueman was worried. The appearance of the sandworms was very odd. They typically lived more than 2,000 meters under the ground and seldom surfaced.

Now, however, they appeared in Central Pine City. She did not believe it was only a coincidence.

She did not know why, but she was worried.

The sandworms had to be stopped, otherwise all of Central Pine City would be turned into quicksand. By then, they would have nowhere to hide.

Sandworms had almost no natural enemies, but this excludedhuman beings of course. Human beings had already studied these horrible creatures. There were many useful resources underground, but sandworms could devour them all. Therefore, in the eyes of elementalists, they were undoubtedly pests.

The Shi family also had relevant records, which Shi Xueman still remembered.

The Cirrus in her hand scattered and turned into a cloud of mist. It floated above the vortex and attracted the clouds in the sky from

all directions.

Shortly, the cloud above the quicksand became very heavy, like a ball of cotton that was saturated with water.

More and more mist merged into the cloud.

Whoosh.

Finally, liquid poured from the cloud like a waterfall.

The water flowed into the sand, and the ground immediately turned into sludge, slowing the rotational speed of the vortex.

The sandworms sensed danger and moved in a frenzy, but no matter how they moved, they could only cause the mud to ripple without stopping the flow of water. Instead, it accelerated the permeation of the water into the sand.

Shi Xueman clearly remembered that sand worms loved dryness and disliked wet environments.

The water from the cloud continued to flow into the sand vortex which had now become a quagmire.

The sandworms could move flexibly in the quicksand, but in the sludge, they currently could hardly move or breathe. Soon, many sandworms suffocated to death, and the rest hastily burrowed

their way deep under the ground, but the water flowed into the routes they drilled and permeated deeper.

The dry sand soon turned to sludge and became softer and muddier.

People around the mire began to cheer delightfully. No one thought the horrible sandworms could be killed so easily.

Everyone looked at Shi Xueman in admiration.

To their surprise, they found Shi Xueman’s face was extremely pale, and her eyes were filled with fear.

Chapter 232: Fatty's Confidence

Ai Hui had some ideas about his own body.

Previously, his sky palace always went astray because of the existence of the sword embryo. As a result, although it had absorbed abundant elemental energy, he could not reach Initial Completion. After the sword embryo exploded, although the sky palace was still left with fluctuations, there were no obstacles any more, and Ai Hui naturally achieved the breakthrough.

As for the elemental energy pills, it was more a problem of habit.

The rotation of the elemental pills was very smooth, which meant that this procedure was feasible. Ai Hui did not know if anyone had ever derived the essence of how the sword pills functioned, but he knew that it was a common form. For example, the elemental energy bead was also in this form.

An inheritance named the [Starry Sky] required the practitioner to coagulate his or her elemental energy into the form of a bead.

After the formation of Ai Hui's elemental energy pillls, the traces of sword energy contained in the elemental energy were restrained, and its stimulation of the palaces sharply weakened. The pills were more effective than he expected because the elemental energy was milder, or to be more accurate, more stable than spiritual force.

Previously, he thought that spiritual force was far more powerful

than elemental energy, but now he had some new understandings. In some aspects, elemental energy was indeed inferior to spiritual force, but it also had its own advantages that spiritual force could not provide.

For example, the changes of the five residences and eight palaces were not as flexible and varied as the cultivators' meridians system, but it was simpler, stabler, and sturdy.

Compared with spiritual force training, which was dangerous and unpredictable, elemental energy training was much safer. So far, due to the existence of the sword embryo, the elemental energy within Ai Hui's body had changed many times, but he was still in perfect condition.

Taking a look at the swordplay manuals and spells from the Cultivation Era, even for the cultivators from big sects that were known for their purity and righteousness, any carelessness in training was likely to lead them astray and cause to go crazy. The training of the sword embryo was even more dangerous. As for blood arts training, it was simply seeking life in the midst of death.

Everyone in the Avalon of the Five Elements was training. Even though resources were limited, as long as they were persistent, their ability could gradually increase.

In comparison to spiritual force, elemental energy was simple, safe, and easy to train or use. Everyone could train with a very slim chance of deviating.

The Avalon of the Five Elements was created in a hopeless situation. Maybe such simple and safe energy was what they needed at that time.

The reason why the elemental energy system was inferior to the spiritual force system was not because of its outdated ideology, but due to its lack of accumulation. Elemental energy was like fertile soil. After a certain period of time, it could also produce fruitful harvests.

For no particular reason, Ai Hui thought of the Old Territory. It was a pity that few people in the Old Territory practiced elemental energy.

"Fatty, let’s practice fighting." Ai Hui waved to Fatty.

Hearing Ai Hui’s words, Fatty ran to him without hesitation. He had a heavy shield in his hand that was taller than him. The shield was colorful, as if it had been patched up many times. The shield he used to use was destroyed, and this one was scrapped together with a shield he picked up somewhere.

Lou Lan’s skill was always trustworthy. Although it did not look appealing, it was secure enough.

Heavy shield, heavy armor, heavy Fatty. When he ran, he was like a mobile mountain and the ground rumbled.

"A Hui, no problem," Fatty agreed as he rolled his eyeballs, "but

as a saying goes: financial matters should be settled clearly even between brothers. I can’t do this for free. I’ll be your training partner, and the debt between us is cancelled, okay?"

Ai Hui looked Fatty up and down in surprise. Then, he smiled and said, "As long as you can stop me."

"No problem!" Fatty laughed. He thumped his chest and said confidently, "How can I ask you for money if I cannot stop you! You know I always remember the rules!"

He was of course confident. The rewards for the blood crystals included inheritances. When Ai Hui was unconscious, everyone else had just reached the Initial Completion stage and went to the mayor’s residence to select inheritances that were suitable for them.

A heavy shield bearer who had attained elemental internalization was an important role in the team. To accelerate Fatty’s progress, Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun specially chose an inheritance that best suited Fatty and gave it to him.

Both of them had family inheritances, so these extra inheritances were unnecessary for them, but they could help Fatty progress faster.

Now Fatty owned three inheritances, the [Eternal Crucible], [Spinning Carapax Shield], and [Red River Belt]. They were all selected by Shi Xueman.

Shi Xueman was experienced and well-informed in this aspect. No one knew which inheritances suited Fatty better than she did.

The magistrate court was very generous this time. The inheritances were all refined arts which could be sold for a good price on the market.

There were various kinds of inheritances on the market which could be roughly classified into four categories. The most powerful one was undoubtedly the absolute art type, while the next level were called the extraordinary arts, which referred to an inheritance that had the potential to become an absolute art. The third level were the refined arts. In this level, the inheritances were unique with a degree of excellence. Lastly, the fourth level were the most common inheritances and named as ordinary arts.

In each level, the inheritances were further classified into two classes, A or B.

The classification of each inheritance had to be evaluated by professionals in each and every aspect. The extraordinary and absolute arts would be sent to the specialized ministry of the Elders Guild for further evaluation and authentication.

To raise the level of one’s inheritances was another important way to gain Heaven Merit Points.

Whoever was able to develop an extraordinary skill to an absolute art would obtain a lot of Heaven Merit Points from the Elders Guild, even though the new absolute art would not be

disclosed to the Elders Guild. The Elders hoped to encourage the continuous development of all kinds of inheritances in this way.

If the developers were willing to sell such arts, they would receive an amazing fortune. The Elders Guild and each major family were all more than willing to purchase a brand new absolute art.

Every year, many people became famous and wealthy by augmenting inheritances into absolute arts. From this process, many talented elementalists were attracted to and engaged in arts development.

Ai Hui's [Big Dipper], for example, was a B-class extraordinary art. If he could develop it into an absolute art, even if it was still B-class, the money he would earn would be enough for him to spend for the rest of his life.

The gap between an extraordinary art and an absolute art seemed small, but was in fact similar to an unbridgeable chasm.

The three inheritances Fatty received were all refined arts.

The [Eternal Crucible] was a body-tempering inheritance. Once one began to practice it, his or her body became like a crucible, with elemental energy like fire as well as blood and flesh like iron that underwent tempering day and night. Even without special training, the fire elemental energy within would continuously temper the body.

The [Eternal Crucible] could enhance the physique of a fire elementalist in an all-round way. It was simple, but also riddled with many weaknesses. For example, it would take a very long time to see its effects due to its slow process.

Just because of this weakness, it was only evaluated as a B-class refined art.

[Spinning Carapax Shield] was a shield-based inheritance that all elementalists could practice. It enabled one to stand as firm as a rock when attacked by eliminating the force of the attack through spinning power.

Few elementalists preferred shield-based inheritances. Those who did were usually known for their physical strength, but the [Spinning Carapax Shield] required high technical skill.

It was also a B-class refined art.

Among the three inheritances, only the [Red River Belt] was a A-class refined art. With this art, fire elementalists could form a belt of fire like a floating red river that surrounded them, which was how it got its name. As an A-class refined art, it had its unique aspects. Apart from the damage it could inflict on its enemies, the flame could also absorb the scattered elemental energy from the enemies to strengthen itself.

The [Red River Belt] was a good weapon in protracted wars, especially for shield bearers. Its value was more than the total price of the [Eternal Crucible] and [Spinning Carapax Shield]

combined.

If Fatty was left to his own devices, he would definitely have selected the most expensive arts, but Shi Xueman chose these three inheritances after careful consideration. She believed her selections would instantly improve his fighting skills.

This was why Fatty was currently so confident.

The others heard the conversation and crowded around the pair. This was Ai Hui’s first actual-combat training since he woke up, so they were all very curious.

Fatty grabbed his heavy shield tightly and squared away. A light red belt of fire floated around him. He shouted loudly, "Come on!"

Sang Zhijun’s eyes lit up. Her family was important, although not as well renowned as Shi Xueman’s family, and her horizons were much broader than most.

It was not easy for Fatty to make so much progress within such a limited period of time.

Ai hui borrowed a long sword from a student, tested it in his hand, then stood in front of Fatty.

Although Fatty looked very confident just now and pretended not to care at all, he was in fact treating the situation as if confronted with a formidable enemy and totally hid himself behind the shield.

Facing the human-shaped target, Ai Hui was not lenient at all. His sword hit the heavy shield hard.

A spinning force came from the shield that twisted his sword. Ai Hui murmured in surprise, "Really better than before!"

Fatty exclaimed lightly and did not dare to feel proud. Instead, he focused harder.

With no more nonsense, Ai Hui stabbed out with the long sword again and again.

They were all the simplest sword moves, such as the [Oblique Slash] and [Misty Strike], but the speed was very swift. Bright sword rays flashed through the air. In Ai Hui's hand, these simple sword moves sped up as the sword light strengthened..

The unspeakable familiarity granted Ai Hui a feeling that each stab was within his control. He knew this was because of his deepened understanding of the sword. Still, he could not help being intoxicated with this enjoyable feeling.

Ai Hui continuously adjusted each strike, and the power kept elevating. While others could hardly detect it, Ai Hui could clearly sense it himself.

The onlooking students were attracted by his sword moves. They were simple, but natural and smooth.

Fatty could feel the difference. He felt the force on the shield grow more and more difficult to offset. The force from each stab was not powerful, but was extremely sharp, as if it was about to pierce the shield.

Suddenly, Ai Hui'a arm tingled. With a weird convulsion, the sword move became slack.

Ai Hui smiled bitterly. It was the lightning left in his body that stimulated his blood and flesh, which led to his deformed move. Fortunately, it was not a real battle, or he would be in great danger.

The numbness lasted only a minute, and Ai Hui soon recovered.

After the warm-up, he had already become excited and decided to try to use his elemental energy.

Ai Hui stabbed out again as before, but this time he wanted to use the [Big Dipper]. He then concurrently activated his elemental energy pills, and the seven pills set out simultaneously.

His sword move suddenly slackened.

It turned out that he miscalculated the speed of the elemental pills, which were much faster than that of the elemental energy before.

Ai Hui tried again, but it was still slack. Again, the elemental energy pills failed to synchronize.

Ai Hui stabbed more than 30 times and had consumed a lot of elemental energy, but never once did he succeed. The elemental pills rotated rapidly in his body, so even a small deviation would lead to synchronization failure.

Fatty remained cautious. He knew he could never be too careful in front of Ai Hui because he was fully aware of Ai Hui's ability.

The next instant Ai Hui stabbed out, his eyes lit up.

This was the first time that the elemental energy pills had synchronized. Like seven shooting stars from seven directions, they merged into the long sword in his hand at precisely the same time.

Chapter 233: Take My Sword Attack

The instant the elemental energy pills merged into the long sword, they suddenly stretched and transformed into sword rays.

Ai Hui’s expression changed a little as he knew something had gone wrong. Without any time to react, the long sword in his hand exploded into pieces.

The others were scared by the sudden explosion. After a while, Ai Hui remained standing still and had not moved at all.

"Are you okay, Ai Hui?" Jiang Wei asked.

"Yes," Ai Hui smiled bitterly, "I just can’t feel my body."

The explosion of the sword stimulated the lightning in his body, which paralyzed his muscles. After tens of seconds, he finally recovered from the numbness and could not help but wonder why the sword exploded.

He borrowed another sword and tried again. Just like before, the sword once again exploded into pieces.

Watching the swords explode one by one in Ai Hui’s hand, the others were amazed.

"Ai Hui is not a sword user, he is sword eater!"

"What a sword-holic!"

"Sword-holic? ... What do you mean?"

"We call those who like to eat sugar ‘sugar-holic’ and those who love to drink alcohol ‘alco-holic’. Since Ai Hui loves to eat swords, he should be called ‘sword-holic.’"

"Hahaha, okay then he is really a real ‘sword-holic.’"

"I’m really worried about the other swordsmen who will confront Ai Hui one day."

"Why? Will they be defeated by Ai Hui?"

"No, just think. The swordsman will shout ‘take my sword attack’ and then... Ai Hui really ‘takes’ his sword—He eats it up!"

"Hahaha..."

Hearing what they were talking about, Lou Lan was inspired. He transformed into many tiny swords flying in the sky and shouted, "Take my sword attack!"

Ai Hui was embarrassed to hear their jokes and Lou Lan’s shout, but he still cleared his throat and asked, "Who else has a sword?"

The others burst into laughter.

A student took the sword from his waist and threw it to Ai Hui. He laughed and said, "Ai Hui, this is the last sword left. If you eat this one, then there will be no more."

Ai Hui touched his nose embarrassedly. He had not expected this either. The elemental energy pills were so difficult to control that as long as they merged into the sword, the sword would explode.

He knew this was because he had not really understood the properties of the elemental energy pills, Additionally, the swords he used just now were all ordinary ones that could not bear the strong elemental energy.

It was indeed a problem. With the last sword in hand, Ai Hui felt a bit awkward. Suddenly the stimulation to the lightning in his body flared, and with a flash of inspiration,, he said, "Fatty, this time you attack me, and I'll defend."

"Me attack you?" Fatty was confused "With what?"

None of his inheritances were offensive. Hearing Ai Hui's request, Fatty did not know what to do.

"You can hit me with whatever you have." Ai Hui encouraged him.

"Then let’s make it clear first. You cannot take revenge on me if I really hit you." Fatty’s voice came from behind the shield.

"I won’t!" Ai Hui said solemnly.

"Really?" Fatty still hesitated.

"Of course!" Ai Hui became impatient. "Will you attack me or not?"

"Of course!" Fatty laughed. This was an aboveboard chance to beat Ai Hui. How could he miss it? He breathed deeply, grabbed the shield and smashed it hard at Ai Hui. Meanwhile, he shouted, "Ai Hui, take my shield attack!"

Ai Hui narrowed his eyes. Fatty’s attack was not skillful, but it was amazingly powerful with a ponderous whistle of wind.

The shield seemed heavier than before.

Ai Hui’s judgment was correct. Although the shield was ugly, it was as heavy as 360 kilograms, which was twice the weight of the destroyed shield Fatty used to use. After reaching the Initial Completion stage, Fatty had advanced rapidly in physical strength. He felt the new shield was even lighter than the old one.

The heavy equipment they had could not satisfy Fatty now. Plus, the [Eternal Crucible] would further enhance his strength.

Ai Hui, on the contrary, had not seen obvious improvement to his physical quality after achieving Initial Completion. He was now more like a real elementalist, as the influence of elemental energy on his fighting capacity was greater than before.

Ai Hui believed it was a good thing. As the elemental energy system matured, it would make his training smoother. Although the sword embryo was marvelous, by nature it was not fully grounded. Ai Hui could barely attain higher accomplishments, especially in an era when elemental energy was dominant.

Once the strength reached a certain level, the power would be beyond expectation.

Ai Hui had planned to withstand Fatty with the sword, but he realized that a direct collision would definitely break the sword.

Fatty's heavy shield was like a wall that blocked almost all the directions Ai Hui could move. As a result, he had to lie down and roll away awkwardly, narrowly dodging Fatty's attack.

Fatty immediately became excited!

Never once had he been able to make it so difficult for Ai Hui!

He was greatly invigorated and waved the heavy shield crazily like a provoked ox. Sand and gravel were sent flying in the air during the intense situation.

The onlookers had never seen Fatty so vigorous before and were all dumbfounded.

Hearing the whistle of the wind, Sang Zhijun's face turned pale. Anyone who was hit, or even scaped by Fatty's shield would be severely injured, if not killed.

Ai Hui continued awkwardly dodging Fatty's attacks.

Bang!

The ground quaked. Fatty's heavy shield smashed against the ground. Stones and bricks from the ground shattered into pieces like biscuits and splashed like heavy rain.

Ai Hui knew he had nowhere to hide, so he waved the sword flexibly like a snake to protect himself.

The sword rays exploded in front of him, each ray accurately hitting an airborne stone.

Tink, tink, tink!

Sparks flew about, and the sound of clashes could be heard here and there.

Shrouded by sand and gravel, Ai Hui was as fast as wind. Sparks

veiled his figure like a waterfall.

Everyone was stunned. Ai Hui did not even use his elemental energy. How could he be so strong with his sword?

Ai Hui stayed focused. The sword in his hand was like a part of his body, and together they created a comfortable scene. As his suppressed fighting intent finally broke out, he did not retreat, but rushed forward as the sword rays lit up like stars. For the onlooking students, it was really a feast for the eyes.

Fatty growled in fury and suddenly lifted the heavy shield that was stuck on the ground.

Ai Hui directly rushed at the shield that was coming toward him with huge force. The students could not help but cry out in shock. If Ai Hui really hit the shield, even if he did not die, he would be severely wounded.

The shield came closer and closer, darkening Ai Hui's vision. He also knew how powerful the collision would be.

If Ai Hui was in his previous condition, he would undoubtedly try to avoid the clash, but now that he was extremely eager to fight, he did not try to dodge. Instead, his rushing speed soared unexpectedly.

The instant that he was about to contact the shield, a cold light flashed in his eyes, and the sword suddenly stabbed out.

A bright sword beam shot toward the shield at a weird angle. When it was about five inches away from the shield, it exploded silently and transformed into a soft and mild sword shower.

艾辉身体一震,强大的冲击力让他的手掌几乎一麻,但是他依然咬牙控制长剑.

The strong impact numbed his palm and agitated his body, but he still held the sword tightly.

With the abstruse angle, the sword shower overcame the hardness with its softness. Like ducks and drakes, Ai Hui flew out near the surface of the shield.

When Ai Hui landed on the ground, screams and cheers resounded behind. Fatty was dumbfounded and still did not know what happened.

Ai Hui was also excited by the sword move.

He found himself unspeakably familiar with the sword now. The move was just a flash of inspiration, but it turned out to be perfect. Although the sword embryo had already disappeared, the familiarity and comprehension of the sword had been permanently left within him. This made it easier and faster for him to study sword inheritances or practice sword moves.

More surprisingly, the impact of the collision still made his palm

numb, but a tiny current of electricity was absorbed by his right hand palace.

The lightning that remained in his body was the most urgent problem to deal with. If he could not use his elemental energy, at least he could run away, but muscular paralysis was too dangerous. No matter he if was in a battle or running away, if his muscles locked up, he would definitely be killed.

The lightning within his body was what caused this muscular paralysis. If the lightning could not be eliminated, then it seemed to be a good idea to lead it into his hand palaces and earth palace.

This was because the lightning in these three palaces was very stable.

Ai Hui was excited that there was finally a feasible solution. He tried to calm himself down and carefully reflected on the whole sequence that had just occurred. Collision. Powerful collision. After the collision, his muscles lost control of the lightning, which was liberated and absorbed by the right hand palace.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. He grasped the sword with his left hand and jumped toward Fatty.

"Come on Fatty. Once again!"

The quicksand vortex had already become a sludge vortex. As the water kept pouring in, it almost became a muddy water pool.

There were dead sandworms surfacing and floating on the water from time to time. The elementalists cheered in excitement.

Duanmu Huanghun was the first to notice Shi Xueman's pale face. Realizing that something went wrong, he asked, "What happened?"

Shi Xueman was about to say something when the water level suddenly began to decline. The water and suspended sediment flushed down along the tunnel.

Muddy water flowed faster than quicksand, so the water level of the pool was declining at a rapid rate. The rumbling sound of water flowing into the tunnel could be heard from above the ground.

As the water level kept declining, a giant sinkhole appeared.

Without support, the edge of the sinkhole collapsed and fell down, making the sinkhole larger and larger.

Everyone was stunned and frightened by the appearance of a sinkhole which was more than 150 meters in diameter. The sinkhole seemed bottomless, as if it led to hell.

Duanmu Huanghun's expression changed. He finally knew why Shi Xueman was so pale.

The faint collapsing sound from outside the city seemed to verify

his speculation.

Compared to this broad underground corridor, the tunnels they previously found were all negligible. This corridor was as broad as 150 meters, and almost all blood fiends could easily pass through.

Shi Xueman’s pupils contracted when she smelled the fragrance in the air. Blood fiends!

No! The blood fiends must be stopped!

After the previous fight, Shi Xueman’s face was not as delicate and flawless as before, but was still firm and determined. Her thin and armored figure rushed out first. Ponytail swinging in the air, she held her white spear high like a flag, raised her arm, and shouted, "Follow me!"

Chapter 234: Flaming Ape

When Ai Hui and other students arrived, Shi Xueman was fighting fiercely with a flaming ape.

Ai Hui was stunned by the giant sinkhole, and he was even more shocked when he saw the flaming ape in it.

Obviously, this ape was different from other blood fiends.

Its hair was not the color of blood, but light grey. This was the first blood fiend Ai Hui had ever seen whose hair color was not blood-red. Its blood trace was not big either. There were altogether nine blood traces, and each one was about the size of a palm, which was not big to a six-meter-tall ape. The shape of the blood traces was exquisite, like a flame spreading all over its body. Ai Hui remembered that he saw similar spiritual traces related to flame in the swordplay manual before.

More shockingly, the nine traces were covered with thick hair, which was different from hair on other areas. It was hard and dense, like a bunch of steel needles.

Protective Armor!

The idea flashed in Ai Hui's mind. He was astonished at the unbelievable speed of their transformation; it was as if they were making progress every day.

The fighting was extremely fierce, and all the others had joined the battle as soon as they arrived. The archers led by Sang Zhijun and Jiang Wei had already shot out the first wave of arrows.

Ai Hui didn't join them hastily but was observing the ape carefully. His physical condition was complicated. Although he had just found a way to deal with it, the lightning in his body had not been fully eliminated. That meant that muscle paralysis might happen any time. He wouldn't risk his life like this.

Although the ape was six meters in height, it was not clumsy. Instead, it moved and jumped fast like it was flying.

And its arms were extremely flexible and powerful.

An elementalist failed to dodge and was hit by its punch. Hearing the crunch of the bones, everyone was filled with apprehension.

The rain of arrowed shot by Jiang Wei's team enveloped the ape.

It growled in fury and slapped up toward the sky. Red flames appeared in its palm and created a ripple of flames in the air above it.

The arrows hit the flames like straw being blown away in a storm.

Ai Hui's expression changed when he saw this.

The flaming slap of the ape...

Ai Hui felt very familiar, and an idea occurred to him: is this the blood spiritual force? Thinking of this possibility, Ai Hui's face was gloomier than ever. Previously, the transformation of the blood fiends was only physical. Now it had developed to a higher level.

From the Garden of Life to blood ants, and from blood-traced fiends to the nine-trace blood fiends. Even though this flaming ape had nine blood traces, it was more powerful than the other nine-trace blood fiends.

Ai Hui was frightened to see the transformation process of the blood fiends. Within such a short period of time, it had become so strong. What would happen if they were given more time?

Weren't they afraid that one day the blood fiends would become so strong that even human beings could not defeat them?

The flaming ape's courage mounted as the fighting progressed. Covered with its protective hair, it could hardly be injured by the weapons. Besides, it moved fast and had infinite strength, and therefore it seemed invincible. The elementalists in Central Pine City had been confident as most of them had just achieved breakthrough and improvement. Now the appearance of the ape was like a basin of cold water poured down over their heads, making them aware of their childishness and ignorance.

Shi Xueman looked very awkward.

The flaming ape was cunning. It jumped here and there, and the elementalists who were not that strong could not resist its attack at all. Several people died or got injured, and Shi Xueman had to spare time to provide help.

Her spearsmanship was formidable and forceful. Therefore, the ape could not take advantage of her in direct confrontation. But in this way, her elemental energy was consumed rapidly.

As the ape was under the impregnable protection, ordinary attacks could not hurt it at all, including Duanmu Huanghun's [Viridescent Flower]. The ape also knew that Shi Xueman was its biggest enemy, so it totally ignored Duanmu Huanghun and spared no effort in attacking Shi Xueman to deplete her energy.

No weakness!

Ai Hui felt more and more desperate. Fixing his eyes on the ape, Ai Hui anxiously wanted to find a solution.

The loud noise had already startled the whole Central Pine City. Rays of light kept rising into the sky. They were elementalists with azure wings coming from all directions.

On the other hand, Tian Kuan, who started everything, was hiding in the dark. A flash of fervidity flashed in his stare at the flaming ape.

It was a pity that he didn't learn the Beast Subjugation Technique, or the flaming ape could've definitely become his thug.

To make a tunnel with the sandworms was indeed his plan, but the flaming ape was a surprise. The flame-shaped blood traces contained the power of fire. This was an unique feature of having the ancestral characteristics stimulated.

Stimulating the ancestral characteristics was one of the special effects of blood spiritual force.

However, nowadays, most of the wild beasts had their ancestral characteristics removed through generations of breeding. Even if blood spiritual force could stimulate the ancestral characteristics of blood fiends and unleash their potential powers, it was still hard to find blood fiends that had their ancestral characteristics stimulated.

He remembered the crazy woman that had a mastiff whose ancestral characteristics were stimulated. The ancestors of this flaming ape must've possessed great power to control flames.

Blood fiends with stimulated ancestral characteristics had more potential. If they received specialized training, their fighting capacity could be amazing.

At this stage, the blood fiends began to show some features of the ancient spiritual beasts. For example, their hair became as hard as iron under the continuous tempering and nourishment of the blood spiritual force. The higher-level spiritual beasts in the

Cultivation Era could even block flying swords without getting hurt.

Tian Kuan held the organization in reverence. Those who created the blood spiritual force were nothing but great.

Spiritual force itself could easily scatter and disappear, but when combined with blood, it became very stable. Tian Kuan even thought that if the blood spiritual force continued to develop like this, in thousands of years, would the world go back to the Cultivation Era?

At the thought of this, he couldn’t help but feel excited.

It was such a great honor to be able to participate in the creation of a whole new world.

Elemental energy was doomed to be weeded out!

Just as the decayed Avalon of Five Elements was doomed to be destroyed!

Tian Kuan clenched his fists. Feeling an upsurge of emotions, he tried to calm himself down. The streak of metal elemental energy was extremely obstinate and could not be devoured by his blood spiritual force.

Then he remembered the brave man, and his face became gloomy.

He could tell from the streak of elemental energy that if that guy hadn't died, he would've achieved a breakthrough soon, and it was very likely to be the most formidable enemy.

But fortunately, his arms were already disabled. Thinking of this, Tian Kuan was less anxious.

Just at this point in time, the elementalists came to assist. Seeing the mayor and the dean, everyone was more or less relieved.

The dean's expression changed when he saw the flaming ape.

Wang Zhen was more experienced. He immediately joined the fight without any hesitation. Howling loud, Wang Zhen stretched his azure wings and abruptly rose up high in the sky. When he reached about one hundred meters from the ground, he suddenly turned around and dove sharply.

With the force of his dive, he slashed with his sword.

The dazzling light of the sword was like a silvery waterfall that fell sharply from the sky. The air was filled with his hostility.

Shi Xueman stepped back without the least bit of delay. She was astounded by the attack, as she had never heard of the name of Wang Zhen.

No one ever thought that such veteran could have such a thrilling attack.

Tian Kuan’s expression changed dramatically in the dark. His heart was filled with fear as he stared at the powerful sword gleam.

Thank God he had been cautious enough. There were so many undiscovered talents in such a small city. This attack, just like the elemental energy in his body, had already reached the edge of a higher level.

A survivor from the Battle of the Dawn could be so frightening!

How many more experts would there be in the Avalon of Five Elements?

This was the first time that he discovered that the Avalon of Five Elements was more powerful than he expected.

Fear appeared in the ape’s eyes for the first time. But as the sword gleam had already enveloped it, it had nowhere to escape to.

In this critical moment, the flaming ape was irritated. Thin flames suddenly appeared around its body, and its eyes became a sea of fire.

The air was filled with its fury.

The flaming ape roared and punched towards the sword gleam with its fist.

The huge flaming fist and the silvery sword gleam got closer and closer.

Boom!

The flames exploded, and silvery sword gleam was also blown into pieces that flew in all directions.

Flames scattered on the ground and set everything on fire. The ground was also damaged by the splashes of the sword gleams.

The flaming ape stood spiritedly even though it was severely wounded and its flames were dim. On the other hand, Wang Zhen's hair and eyebrows were burnt. The sword in his hand was burning as if it was just taken out from the stove. But Wang Zhen didn't feel anything, and he was still holding the hilt tightly.

The flaming ape suddenly stomped down on the ground and disappeared.

The next second, it abruptly appeared behind Wang Zhen and stretched out its palm toward him.

Fast as the ape was, his palm was powerful. Wang Zhen would definitely be crushed if grabbed by it.

Right at this moment, a colorful bubble appeared in front of the ape’s palm.

The ape punctured the bubble with his palm and fell into a trance. Although it immediately sobered up, just within this short period, Wang Zhen had backed up several meters away from it.

It turned out to be from the dean, who knew that Wang Zhen’s attack was drastic and needed a long time and space for preparation. Therefore, he was in disadvantage in such close combat.

Then the dean also joined the battle and fought against the ape together with the mayor.

Shi Xueman and others were kind of relieved. After fighting with the flaming ape, they clearly knew of its ferociousness.

But they had no time to rest, as someone cried out in panic, "Blood fiends!"

Everyone got nervous when they heard the cry.

Huge, booming sounds that scared everyone came from the bottom of the sinkhole. They were still dumbstruck by the ape.

Just at this moment, someone suddenly shouted, "Attack the

sinkhole from the sky!"

They couldn’t help but look at person who was shouting.

"It’s Ai Hui!"

"The Lightning Blade!"

"He is the Lightning Blade? He is young!"

...

Ai Hui was speechless. These guys were still gossiping at such a critical moment. Without thinking too much, he waved his arms and shouted again, "Diving attack! Diving attack! The sinkhole!"

He was inspired by the slash of the mayor.

When he was hunting dire beasts in the Wilderness, he witnessed the diving attack of the elementalists. It was amazingly powerful. When fighting against agile and moving targets, it was not of much use, but against fixed targets, it was extremely effective.

The sinkhole on the ground was like a cage to the blood fiends. Therefore, they were no different from fixed targets.

The elementalists realized what Ai Hui was saying. They looked

at each other and then began to regroup.

"He is a bit young, but he’s smart enough. No wonder he is called the Lightning Blade."

"That’s why he is named Ai Baiyi of Central Pine City."

"I think he might be more promising than Ye Baiyi."

"How shall we salute to the Lightning Blade?"

"How about Lightning?"

"Hahaha. Good enough!"

...

The light of the azure wings lit up the night.

Light spots with long tails came together from each direction. They flew higher and higher like great waves in the storm. As the wave consisting of light spots reached the highest point, it stopped and rushed down with a loud crashing sound.

"Lightning!" someone shouted out loudly.

Soon people began to respond, and the slogan of "lightning" could

be heard here and there.

Under the high diving speed, the wind blew so wildly that they could not open their eyes. But their morale was boosted, and the chaotic slogan gradually became one powerful and uniformed word.

"Lightning!" "Lightning!" "Lightning!"

Each furious shout was like a hammer smashing down heavily.

"Lightning, lightning, lightning!"

Like being bewitched, they no longer felt fear in their hearts. Fire was burning in their chests, and the suppressed fury and yearning for life were infused in their roars.

The sky was shivering in the angry roar and the whistle of the Cloud Wings.

With infinite hatred and hope, they came together as a light beam which instantly submerged the sinkhole.

Chapter 235: The Blood Snake Vertebrae

Huge amounts of elemental energy exploded within the limited space of the sinkhole. The scene was spectacular.

Boom!

It was as if the whole city had been struck heavily by a hammer deep underground. The earthquake knocked many people to the ground. From the sky, horrifying fissures could be seen stretching into the distance like old tree roots.

Flames and lights gushed out of the sinkhole like a volcanic eruption. They rushed into the night sky and lit up Central Pine City.

Everyone was stunned by the scene.

Even the flaming ape, mayor, and dean stopped fighting.

The ape suddenly looked afraid. It was not afraid of fire, but that soaring flame had awakened an instinctual fear.

It turned tail and ran.

The flaming ape's reaction was totally out of the mayor and dean's expectations. By the time they realized what had happened, they could only see the ape's receding back. Even though it was

escaping, its speed was no slower than their flying speed. Seeing its momentum, the elementalists along its escape route didn't dare to stop it.

In the blink of an eye, it had rushed to the city's defensive wall. Without slowing down even a little bit, it directly crashed into the wall.

Boom!

It knocked a big hole in the wall. Having rushed out of the city, the flaming ape looked back for a second and then disappeared into the darkness.

Most people gave a sigh of relief.

Elementalists of the earth and wood attributes hurriedly rushed to the big hole. They needed to repair it before the blood fiends attacked. The ape could break the wall so easily only because it had crashed into the wall from the inside. If it had been the other way around, then the wall would have been much more difficult to break.

The city defense had played an important role so far. Without it, the situation in Central Pine City would have been far more difficult.

Tian Kuan was dumbstruck. This was the first time that he had seen a battle that involved so many elementalists.

He looked at Ai Hui deeply. That guy was as outstanding as he'd expected.

Then Tian Kuan silently disappeared into the darkness.

Wang Zhen floated down from the sky and went to look for Ai Hui. He believed Ai Hui's reminder had been the key to the battle. If the blood fiends had rushed into the city on a large scale, then the city would have been in great danger.

He believed more and more that Ai Hui was like the Ye Baiyi of that time.

In such a chaotic and dangerous situation, it was not easy to find an opportunity within such a limited timeframe. Even Wang Zhen himself hadn't thought of using a diving attack, which had proven to be very effective.

As a veteran, Wang Zhen was sensitive to the tiny changes in the battlefield. The elementalists in the sky were all smiling proudly now.

He nodded and remarked on their status in his heart.

Morale was up!

So far, this was the most successful battle in Central Pine City.

None of the elementalists who had participated in the diving attack were hurt or dead. Such a brilliant result definitely boosted the elementalists' morale.

After the fight, Ai Hui, who had been the key to the whole battle, became well known throughout the city.

He was no longer an insignificant young student. The speed of his transformation was even higher and the process was even shorter than that of the blood fiends.

Heroes always emerged in trouble times. People would only show their startling brilliance at critical moments.

Each time he thought of this, Wang Zhen would feel his own age and weakness, but he was fortunate to be able to witness the splendid beginning of such a promising youth in this world.

As he had been looking for a long time without finding Ai Hui, he turned to someone nearby and asked curiously, "Where is Ai Hui?"

The elementalist looked jubilant. He answered, "He went to clean up the battlefield."

"Won't it be dangerous?" Wang Zhen was concerned.

"No." The dean also landed. He smiled and said, "It should be safe now. The sinkhole is like a huge stove; everything inside should have been roasted."

Hearing what he said, Wang Zhen also smiled.

Even iron and steel would have melted under such a terrifying attack.

It was a pity that such tactics could not always be used in the battle. If it were not in the special environment of the sinkhole, it would not be so powerful.

Ai Hui never fell behind the others when it came to battlefield cleanup.

While others were still worrying if there was still any danger, he had already jumped into the sinkhole with Lou Lan. Inside the sinkhole, it was sweltering hot. The earth was permeated with traces melted things and a burning smell.

Lou Lan was totally unaffected by the choking smells and smoke while Ai Hui didn't care about them. He had seen worse cases when cleaning up battlefields before. Compared to the possible spoils, this adverse environment was not worth mentioning.

Most of the sinkhole had collapsed, but luckily there were still passageways for them to walk through. The sinkhole that the sandworms had dug was large enough.

Ai Hui walked carefully. As both of them could see in the dark, they noticed the dead bodies of sandworms everywhere on the

walls of the passageways. The bodies were already scorched, but a tiny spot of red light like sand were left beside them.

"What is this red light sand?" Ai Hui asked.

Yellow light flickered in Lou Lan’s eyes. "They are the blood crystals of the sandworms. To be precise, they cannot be counted as blood crystals yet, but are something like a blood crystal that has just formed. Ai Hui, these sandworms must have blood-transformed not long ago."

"Not long ago?" Ai Hui was surprised. Confusion flashed across his eyes.

"Yes. Therefore, the blood crystal sand is not valuable," Lou Lan explained.

Ai Hui followed Lou Lan closely with the grass sword in his hand. The underground was Lou Lan’s world, where Lou Lan could move freely like a fish in water.

Soon, Ai Hui saw the body of a blood fiend whose hair and flesh were all burnt into ashes.

Lou Lan’s eyes lit up. He stretched his hand into the ashes and pulled out a blood crystal.

"Look Ai Hui! Blood crystal!"

Ai Hui was overjoyed. "Finally!"

As they went further in, there were more and more dead blood fiend bodies, many of which were not totally burnt into ashes but still looked frightening due to dehydration. To Ai Hui, however, it was just a piece of cake. He didn’t feel uncomfortable at all.

Not every blood fiend had blood crystals, and some blood crystals were buried underground. Nevertheless, Lou Lan found them all.

Ai Hui grinned from ear to ear. Lou Lan was the best. He would never miss any blood crystals even if they were buried deep in the earth.

Having seen too many miseries, Ai Hui was a bit apathetic, but the piles of bodies and ashes made him fearful. If these blood fiends had rushed into the city from the sinkhole, it would undoubtedly have caused severe casualties.

Luckily, he had been quick enough to think of those tactics. Thinking of this, Ai Hui became complacent. After all, so many elementalists had been present. He’d never thought he could take control before, but now he’d done it.

On the other hand, Ai Hui felt he totally had no need to come down here.

Lou Lan was the one who was crazy at battlefield cleanup, and he

was so careful that even Ai Hui felt ashamed for being inferior.

"Ai Hui, I got one!"

"Ai Hui, here here here!"

"Ai Hui, there’s one under your feet, about ten inches deep."

...

"Lou Lan, good job!"

"Lou Lan, you are so great!"

"Lou Lan, you are the best!"

...

Apart from "good" and "great", Ai Hui could not think of any other words to praise him.

A former professional could only be a visitor in the sinkhole because Lou Lan was here.

Ai Hui was bored. He looked around casually, and suddenly some faint light came into his sight. He was surprised and fixed his attention on a pile of ashes not far away. There

seemed to be something glowing there.

Curious, he walked towards it.

To be honest, except for the blood crystals, almost all the other parts of the blood fiends were useless.

This was the big difference between blood fiends and wild beasts. The essence of a blood fiend was its blood crystal. Although it could be strong and solid, once it was dead, its flesh and bones would be crispy like biscuits and could not be used at all.

It was really a shame for blood fiends. Wild beasts were also beasts, but they were of great value from head to toe.

Ai Hui walked up to the ashes and rummaged around.

Then he touched something solid.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. He grabbed it and pulled it out.

As he was familiar with beasts, Ai Hui could tell at a glance that it was the vertebrae of a blood snake. The blood snake had not been long and its spinal column was only about two meters in length. It was white in color with a texture like jade and porcelain. Its surface was covered with thin, crisscrossed blood streaks like a densely-woven net.

The spinal column was flexible and could be curved at any angle. Each of the joints were closely meshed. Ai Hui was surprised at its weight. He roughly weighed it in his hand and it was at least forty-five kilograms. It was so heavy even though it was less than two meters long and as thick as one’s wrist. Ai Hui wondered if it was made of metal.

"These vertebrae are unique." Yellow lights kept flickering in Lou Lan’s eyes. "They are almost as dense as thousand traces silverwood and brightlight iron. Bravo!"

Ai Hui was startled, as he knew both thousand traces silverwood and brightlight iron were rare and valuable materials.

Thousand traces silverwood was specially produced in Jadeite Forest. It was a kind of tree that grew slowly and needed wood elementalists to continuously infuse elemental energy into it. This material was white, bright, and very heavy. Before it grew to full size, each growth of one day and night would result in a silver ring in the horizontal cross section of the trunk. If the elemental energy infused into the tree was insufficient, then the silver ring would not form.

It reached its full size when the number of silver rings was one thousand, after which each attribute of the wood would be greatly improved. Even if the wood elementalist spared no effort to cultivate the tree without any negligence, it would still take three years to grow it into a useful timber. Besides, its consumption of elemental energy was far more than other plants. As a result, it was undoubtedly of high value and high price.

Brightlight iron was produced in the Brightlight City of the Silver Mist Sea. It could only be produced by an extraordinary craftsman using several materials. It was as light as a feather, but was extremely solid and shined with a saintly light.

That was why Ai Hui was so surprised to hear that the density of the vertebrae was similar to that of the thousand trace silverwood and brightlight iron.

He took a closer look at the vertebrae. The red blood traces on the white vertebrae were like a pattern; Ai Hui felt he must have seen it somewhere before.

Anyways, the blood snake must have been extraordinary when it had been alive, maybe similar to the blood ape.

The blood ape…

Ai Hui finally realized why he thought the pattern looked familiar; it reminded him of the flaming traces on the blood ape.

He observed the blood traces on the blood snake's vertebrae. They were similar to the thunder traces mentioned in the swordplay manuals.

Thunder traces?

An idea suddenly occurred to Ai Hui. Could the vertebrae be a natural sword?

Chapter 236: Run

This idea filled Ai Hui with excitement.

Ai Hui had experienced heartache at the loss of his most comfortable weapon, the Dragonspine Inferno. Its sturdiness had been its most commendable trait.

He had since turned into a sword consuming maniac, destroying sword after sword. Besides the difficulty he experienced in controlling his elemental energy, those swords weren't of exactly great quality either. Their inability to withstand his violent elemental energy was one of the main reasons why they were so easily broken.

After the decline of swordsmanship, the number of people practicing swordplay decreased as well. This naturally resulted in a small demand for swords. The Dragonspine Inferno's quality had been decent, but nobody had wanted to buy it.

Everyone else's swords were carried more for show. They were mostly longswords made out of ordinary materials and couldn't withstand elemental energy that was too powerful.

Ai Hui was left facing an awkward situation. There were no swords that he could effectively use.

The Dragonspine Inferno's blade had been destroyed, but the seven artifact remnants that had been embedded in the blade remained intact. Calling down lightning with the Dragonspine

Inferno had resulted in its seven artifact remnants being saturated with electricity. Ai Hui had thought of using these artifact remnants to create a new sword, but where would he find the time?

The blood snake vertebrae felt good in his hands.

Ai Hui managed to better understand the spinal column's unique properties after waving it for a while. To most people, controlling something as flexible as the blood snake vertebrae would be a challenging feat. For an expert in swordsmanship like Ai Hui however, their flexibility wasn't an issue. He was soon able to brandish them as he pleased.

It's just a flexible sword!

If one was able to overcome the difficulties associated with controlling them, the flexibility of the blood snake vertebrae was actually an advantage. It allowed the wielder to execute a greater range of unpredictable and unorthodox sword strokes, creating fatal opportunities that could easily be tapped on by expert swordsmen.

"Is Ai Hui thinking of using it as a longsword?" Lou Lan asked curiously.

"That's right, don't you think it's suitable?" Ai Hui replied.

He handled the blood snake vertebrae fondly, waving them about

as he pleased. With a single movement, Ai Hui made the blood snake vertebrae snap into place. He thrust the vertebrae, which were now as straight as a pencil, into the air in front of him. A whistling sound could be heard as small, deep holes appeared in the wall.

"It is indeed very suitable," Lou Lan replied, his eyes lighting up. "Lou Lan has never seen a material like this before. If Ai Hui gives me one small section of it, I can analyse it and then create a sword with it."

Astonished, Ai Hui asked in response, "Lou Lan knows how to craft swords?"

"I’m not particularly proficient at it," Lou Lan replied, a little embarrassed. "Lou Lan has only read "The Creation of Famous Swords", "Deconstructing Arms","A Treatise on Elemental Energy in Weapons","Dire Beasts and Grass-grade Weapons", "A Record of Heaven-grade Weapons"..."

Ai Hui dumbfoundedly listened to Lou Lan list out a small library’s worth of books.

After five minutes, Lou Lan finally finished reporting his reading list. Still a bit embarrassed, he stated, "Although my knowledge on the matter is limited, I’ll try my best to help you!"

Limited...

The first half of Lou Lan’s sentence left Ai Hui feeling weak in the knees. The second half however, moved him deeply. Clearly touched by Lou Lan’s offer, Ai Hui replied, "Thank you Lou Lan! Lou Lan’s standard is amazing! You’re the best!"

"Really?" Lou Lan asked, his eyes as round as a full moon.

"Absolutely!" Ai Hui answered resolutely.

Lou Lan cheered loudly. Scurrying about like a sandstorm, he then abruptly proceeded to clean up the battlefield.

Ai Hui decided it was time to split the spoils from their previous battle. Because Ai Hui had played an extremely crucial role, he took a share of five blood crystals.

Shi Xueman had also contributed a lot and as such, received three crystals as her reward. She had fearlessly pitted herself against the blood ape and had proven indispensable in the battle.

As more battles were fought against blood fiends, everyone began to get the hang of it. The latest official announcement had stated that only blood-traced fiends with nine traces or less would produce blood crystals. Regular blood-traced fiends and blood fiends were only able to produce a softer variant known as blood resin.

All of the elementalists that had participated in the battle were happy to receive a reward.

"It’d be great if all battles were just like today’s!"

"Quit dreaming, once is already a blessing."

"You never know, Central Pine City has Ai Hui."

…

Spoils of war were the most practical rewards since blood crystals could help them to swiftly increase their strength. With each increment came a greater chance of survival.

The five blood crystals that Ai Hui received were of excellent quality. Out of these five blood crystals, the best one probably came from the blood snake. The blood snake vertebrae were also given to him as a reward.

The blood snake vertebrae had attracted everyone’s attention after the dean posited that they came from a blood fiend that had been almost as strong as the blood ape.

The joy from receiving rewards was short lived.

A new variant of nine-traces blood fiend had appeared.

Everyone knew that the following battles would only become more intense.

The mayor had sent teams of earth elementalists and fire elementalists to investigate the sinkhole in hopes of finding a way to seal it. From the way things looked however, this seemed unlikely.

A line of students filed into the Vanguard Training Hall. Ai Hui noticed that spirits were low and after asking around, found out that three students had lost their lives. They were the first batch of students who had charged ahead with Shi Xueman. Although they were no longer afraid of fighting, seeing the constant sacrifice of their comrades' lives made them feel slightly depressed.

No one knew when this blood disaster would end, just like nobody knew when the reinforcements would finally arrive.

Seeing the blood fiends become stronger and their comrades falling one by one increased the students' stress levels.

Ai Hui kept quiet. He knew much more about the disaster but didn't dare to tell them about it.

He feared that they would lose their last shreds of bravery upon knowing that the entire disaster was part of a plot aimed at destroying the Avalon of Five Elements.

The reinforcements that had yet to come gave them a sense of hope.

The moment Shi Xueman returned to Vanguard Training Hall, she locked herself up in the room.

Ai Hui felt that he should console her, but didn't know how he should go about doing it.

—— It's not your fault? Casualties are unavoidable? Such words were meaningless at a time like this.

Ai Hui suddenly thought of his Master and Mistress.

How were they doing?

Ai Hui had been fighting everyday since the outbreak of the blood disaster. Every single day was a struggle to stay alive, and every moment of respite was like taking a long deep breath before plunging underwater again.

He hadn't had the time nor strength to worry about them.

He thought of Mistress and Senior Mingxiu's strength and felt at ease; surely they were fine.

Ai Hui never felt the need to worry about his Master and Mistress. Rather, he always thought that they were constantly worrying about him. For some reason however, he suddenly felt an overwhelming urge to visit them.

He passed a bag of snake bones to Lou Lan, waved goodbye to everyone, and promptly left for the embroidery workshop.

Ai Hui believed that he had become accustomed to death. He'd thought that he had already tasted the deepest despair that he could experience. He had been under the impression that he could look death in the face and leave this world calmly.

But as the people around him fell one after the other, he couldn't help but wonder what the next day would bring.

So what if he knew that the blood disaster was a ploy executed by the Blood of God? Would that knowledge save him from the ever-changing blood fiends? When will the reinforcements arrive? Ai Hui thought it likely that the reinforcements had been ambushed by the Blood of God.

If this disaster was all part of a plan, an ambush would be extremely likely. If Ai Hui could think of this himself, surely the Blood of God would have thought of it.

Nobody would expect the calm, optimistic Ai Hui to be so pessimistic on the inside.

He knew much more than everyone else.

Sometimes, ignorance really is bliss.

Ai Hui sped off under the night sky. He had a stuffy feeling in his

chest that he badly wanted to release. He had no idea how he could vent his feelings, so he ran with all his might.

The wind blew across his face as the scenery on both sides of the street quickly disappeared behind him.

Ai Hui rushed over to the embroidery workshop in one breath. By the time he reached his destination, his mood had lightened up a bit and his emotions had calmed down. What he saw however, gave him a surprise.

The embroidery workshop's entrance was heavily guarded; sentries were positioned all over the place.

Although he had expected his Master and Mistress to be guarded, this amount of protection made him feel very uneasy. Central Pine City was low on manpower, yet the mayor's residence was willing to deploy so many guards here. Something was not right!

Someone suddenly charged towards the entrance, giving the elementalists on guard duty a scare.

The guards heaved a sigh of relief upon getting a clearer look at the intruder. Ai Hui was well known throughout Central Pine City, everyone could recognize him.

"Ai Hui, you did an awesome job today!"

One of the guards praised him loudly, initiating a series of

agreements.

"Simply awesome!"

"I was tempted to join in myself!"

...

Ai Hui plastered a smile on his face, maintaining an exceptional calmness beneath his cheerful appearance. The strange circumstances had put him on high alert.

Mingxiu came out of the workshop upon hearing the commotion outside. Seeing Ai Hui, she smiled and called out, "Junior!"

Ai Hui was shocked to see Senior Mingxiu so haggard. To him, Senior Mingxiu was someone who was always gentle, graceful, and humble. Haggard was one of the last things he would use to describe her.

"Senior, why do you look so wan?" Ai Hui asked out of concern.

While he remained expressionless, Ai Hui was already preparing himself for a fight. Was the mayor's residence trying to make use of his Master and Mistress? Were they forcing his Master and Mistress to do things against their will?

A killing intent began to manifest within Ai Hui. Darkness and

despair had long pushed Ai Hui to the edge. The strange situation that he was currently in had triggered an anger that dwelled deep inside him.

Ai Hui held his Master and Mistress very dear and would go all out against anyone who dared to lay a finger on them.

He didn’t think his life was worth much anyway, so be it if he died.

Mingxiu’s eyes revealed complex, conflicting emotions. She didn’t know how to reply to him. Although her junior appeared to be extremely calm, she could see the despair and murderous intent in his eyes.

She immediately knew that her junior had misinterpreted the situation. While she had been instructed by Uncle not to tell Ai Hui what was happening, her heart ached at the thought of her Master.

"They have nothing to do with this," Mingxiu said while she struggled to control her emotions. "Master Han is in seclusion. You should go and visit Uncle instead."

She had decided to disobey him in the end. Mingxiu knew Uncle didn’t want Junior to worry, but she felt that it was too cruel to let Junior figure it all out only at the end.

Besides, she secretly harbored a small hope that Junior could come up with something.

Junior was no longer that youth who needed her protection. He was now the Lightning Blade, the embodiment of Central Pine City's hope!

Upon receiving his master's address, Ai Hui immediately took off at the speed of light.

Chapter 237: Calm

Ai Hui walked out of Master's residence.

On the pitch-black streets, the pumpkin street lights in Central Pine City had long been destroyed. There was neither starlight nor moonlight, only occasional bright flashes caused by elementalists on patrol as they flitted across the street. The ground beneath his feet was bumpy. Stepping on the crushed rocks and surface dust, all he saw were broken walls and ruins. All he heard was the echo of his footsteps.

Master's haggard look appeared before his eyes. At first glance, Ai Hui could not believe what he saw and was angry, but when he knew the truth, all his anger disappeared into thin air. Master had become more long-winded, constantly dragging out and repeating his words. He could hear the guilt in Master's voice. Master felt he did not impart anything to Ai Hui and always said that he was unfit to be Ai Hui's teacher.

Ai Hui listened carefully with a smile on his face.

There was no fear of death in Master's hoarse voice. There was no annoyance and regret, only calmness and proudness.

A withered life was like a faint ember left from a raging flame, its brightness and warmth gradually dispersing.

Ai Hui was very calm, so calm that even he, himself, was shocked. He felt no regret and sadness, only respect for his teacher.

Perhaps it was because he had witnessed death too many times, so he viewed life and death differently from most people. Living was very important, but at times, it was not the most important.

If Master could go back in time, he would have made the same decision again.

Why did Master reject Mistress's earnest request?

Ai Hui listened as Master prattled on, trying to explain himself. His wrinkled face radiated a dazzling spirit, an expression of his pride toward his achievement. Master declared that Mistress would most definitely be astonished by his result, and also mentioned that in her younger days, she used to look for him whenever she ran into problems.

Master said he was telling the truth, repeating this a few times.

Being able to exist in life's afterglow and feel that his life was not a waste... How perfect was this ending?

Ai Hui did not blame Mistress either. Her decision was worthy of respect as well.

Ai Hui felt he would not have been able to do the same. He was not as selfless as Mistress, but at the same time, he felt that her choice was worthy of feeling deep veneration.

No matter how sad and painful this was for the younger generation, it was these two elders who endured death and anguish.

I must help Mistress complete her "treating the city as a piece of cloth" strategy!

He was determined.

Going back to the training hall, Ai Hui looked no different from usual.

Shi Xueman came out from the room and looked at Ai Hui. "How are they?"

"Not bad," Ai Hui answered naturally, looking her up and down. "You look pretty good yourself."

Instead of replying, Shi Xueman continued, "I hear you need a training partner?"

"That’s right!" Ai Hui nodded. "Do you want to come along?"

"Why? Are you afraid?" Shi Xueman provoked.

Ai Hui touched his nose. Did Iron Lady eat gunpowder today? He laughed, saying, "I’m afraid that I can’t afford to pay you!"

"It’s okay, I’ll pay you!"

Shi Xueman snorted. Even before she finished speaking, a snow-white spear ray appeared before Ai Hui’s eyes.

The spearhead was so sharp that the space between Ai Hui’s brows hurt. He quivered. This lady was being serious!

He reacted quickly. With a flip of his palm, he lashed his grass sword out like a whip to defend against the attack.

While he did not block Iron Lady’s attack directly from the front, the elemental energy within the spear body numbed his palm.

He did not dare to operate his elemental energy. He really would not have any swords left to use if this grass one exploded.

"It’s ‘The Lightning Blade’ indeed... Fly!"

Shi Xueman’s voice carried a tinge of ridicule. She turned her body and thrusted her Cirrus from the other side of her body, firmly trapping Ai Hui.

With a light hum, ripples surfaced in the air. The spear ray was definitely at least a meter away from him, but the air was so heavy and oppressing.

Ai Hui’s breaths stopped slightly as his eyes shone brightly. The

grass sword in his hands lit up and a faint glimmer pierced the left side of the air in an oblique slash.

Pzzt!

As if a sharp blade had ripped a cloth, the agitated spear ray seemed to have punctured a water bag, its strength leaking out.

Ai Hui took this chance to struggle free. He jolted his body and escaped like a swimming fish, saying, "Then shouldn't you pay a little more? As humans, we can't be too petty. I've saved your life a few times!"

Shi Xueman could feel Ai Hui's slyness and mercilessness. It was her first time meeting such an opponent. His fighting style and sword moves were entirely different from other elementalists, but it was in her nature to brave through such situations.

She smiled cooly. "No problem, I'll tip you if you fight a good fight!"

Their battle was intense and caught everyone's attention.

When compared to the duel with Fatty, there was much more pressure battling Shi Xueman. Other than gaining a slight advantage by starting with moves Shi Xueman was unfamiliar with, Ai Hui quickly fell into a disadvantageous position.

Shi Xueman's spear move was called [Cloud Whale]. She changed

her strategy upon noticing that Ai Hui's swordplay was unusual. As if in water, each hit became increasingly slow-moving and congealed. The white spear ray congregated around her body like a white fog. It was strangely heavy and when struck by Ai Hui's grass sword, it sounded like grinding stone, with sparks flying in all directions.

While the spear ray cloud-mist was airy and looked graceful, it was actually extremely powerful. Each block numbed Ai Hui's arms and gripping his sword became challenging.

Ai Hui's stress level skyrocketed to the point where he was almost out of breath.

The spear ray produced by the [Cloud Whale] technique looked like clouds, but actually contained a dreadful force. Once drawn within and trapped, the victim would be crushed into bits by this extremely heavy ray.

Shi Xueman was initially a little worried about hurting Ai Hui, but upon realizing how cunning he was, her anxiety vanished as her moves became more merciless.

Iron lady was even more steely than before!

Ai Hui barely dodged the spear body when a fog as thick as an arm rose suddenly, transformed into a cloud-spear, and rushed toward Ai Hui.

In mid-air and unable to avoid it, Ai Hui could only clash against the cloud spear with his grass sword.

Clang!

Ai Hui’s arm shook, as if struck by a solid hammer. The blood and qi in his body became sluggish as he flew backward.

Worse, this blow agitated the remaining electricity in his flesh. His whole body turned rigid and fell toward the ground like a scallion stalk.

Boom!

His head planted into the ground.

Fortunately, he was trained in body tempering. Grief and indignation filled his heart.

Pleased, Shi Xueman withdrew her spear. Seeing Ai Hui’s unique posture, she could not control her laughter. The gloom from earlier disappeared into thin air.

"Remember to add the fees to the bill. Fill the tip section as you please."

Shi Xueman’s tone was livelier now, feeling a sudden sense of fulfillment. It was just like a scene from the legendary brothels.

After the deed was done, the visitor would wave his hand in a domineering manner, doubling the brothel's earnings for the night!

This was especially the case when her opponent was Ai Hui. She had been itching with irriation, but was unable to do anything about it. This rare experience was definitely therapeutic for her mind and soul!

Hoots of laughter filled the air. Seldomly able to witness Ai Hui in such an embarrassing state, everyone enjoyed what they saw.

Ten seconds passed before the leftover electricity was finally and completely absorbed by his hand and ground palaces. Ai Hui's numbed body started to recover, and like a straightened carp, he pulled his head out from the ground. If not for the fact that he cherished this grass sword... he promised himself to write an astronomical figure on that bill. To hit her with a ruthless blow!

As he was stabilizing himself, Duanmu Huanghun appeared before him.

"I heard you need a training partner?"

In his room, Lou Lan was pouring his heart into researching the blood snake vertebrae.

Outstanding ingredient!

Lou Lan kept a record of the attributes of many ingredients, but the vertebrae of this blood snake were still very remarkable.

Their firmness and hardness were as predicted. Although not outstanding to the point where they could be used to fashion Heaven-grade arms, but they were decent enough to be made into an Earth-grade weapon, the second best type. In fact, thousand traced silverwood and brightlight iron were some of the ingredients required to make Earth-grade equipment.

Besides being fine ingredients, these blood snake vertebrae were also unique in many other aspects.

For example, the blood traces on top were thunder traces, which contained the force of thunder and lightning. Lou Lan did not know how these thunder traces appeared on the blood snake, but thinking about the flame traces on the blood ape's body compelled him to speculate that the blood spiritual force could induce the spiritual traces from the Cultivation Era. This could possibly be related to the blood spiritual force's operating method, but there were too few samples for Lou Lan to analyze further.

Thunder traces were the key to understanding why the blood snake vertebrae were so outstanding. Going through the thunder traces converted spiritual force into thunder and lightning force, which then coagulated within the vertebrae. The force of thunder and lightning tempered the vertebrae continuously, improving its quality.

Lou Lan hypothesized that the the flesh of the blood beasts from before were useless because they had no spiritual traces such as the

thunder or flame traces.

The force of thunder and lightning was alluring, but once used up, this blood snake vertebrae become like rotten wood, unable to take a single hit.

Either to lock the thunder and lightning force or to replenish it. For example, the seven artifact remnants on Ai Hui's Dragonspine Inferno contained shocking amounts of thunder and lightning force.

These blood snake vertebrae had no affinity at all with fire, wood, and earth elemental energy, but it had moderate affinity with water and metal elemental energy. This was good news.

There were many theories when it came to creating weapons. Some were complicated, while others were simple. Simple ones would be like Shi Xueman's Cirrus–whalebone as the spear body and firmament iron as its head. It was difficult for this weapon, which was made from supreme grade ingredients, not to be classified as a Heaven-grade arm. Although fashioning weapons was not Shi Xueman's father's forte, he sure made one hell of a Heaven-grade weapon.

With clever designs, weapons made from average ingredients could also be unique and formidable. In reality, this type of weapon was more mainstream. Superb ingredients such as the whalebone and firmament iron were and would remain unseen by most.

These blood snake vertebrae were good ingredients, but there was still a lot to consider. For example, they were shaped a whip and not a sword. They did not have a sharp edge, a relatively important component of a sword since it was needed to break armor and defenses. As a sharp weapon effective at breaking armor, only a little elemental energy was needed to split open solid and sturdy armors. Weapons without such a use meant that the elemental energy was usually slack and lacking in the ability to injure or kill.

Yet, the blood snake vertebrae could not be ground into shape. Once ground, the thunder traces on it would be destroyed.

How then, could he form the spinal column into a sword blade?

Forget about the sword blade? Lou Lan instantly negated this thought. He was going to make Ai Hui his first ever legitimate weapon so he had better do his best!

What about the sword hilt? What ingredient to use?

Lou lan’s Midnight sand core was operating at an alarming rate, the light in his eyes spinning nonstop.

Chapter 238: A New Sword

A sword shrouded by an ash-gray cloud levitated silently above the table.

The ash-gray cloud differed from the white cloud that engulfed the Cirrus in that it was much denser. Tiny streaks of lightning zigzagged through the cloud, resembling a small thunder cloud.

The strip-like dark cloud looked like a sword sheath, but was actually not.

Seven silver daggers meandered rapidly in the cloud like swimming fish. Each dagger was six centimetres in length. Their silver surfaces were so smooth that one could see his or her reflection in them. Each dagger was embedded with a lightning-based artifact remnant as well.

The occasional lightning sparks on the body of the sword were induced by the high-speed flight of the seven daggers.

"It’s so beautiful! Is this made of that snake vertebrae?" Shi Xueman could not believe her eyes and took a closer look. "Is this a sword? Does it need to be unsheathed?"

"No need, Xueman, that is a honing cloud," Lou Lan explained seriously. "It’s the blade of the sword."

The honing cloud was a special type of cloud. When one imbued

it with elemental energy, it would produce a sharpening effect. The honing cloud was a special local product of Palette Cloud Village. Palette Cloud Village produced various kinds of weird clouds, such as heavy and dense lead clouds, colourful and gorgeous rosy clouds, green poison clouds, flame-spouting fire clouds, etc.

Just like the Jadeite Forest, where there were countless species of plants, Palette Cloud Village had countless types of clouds. Only water elementalists could appreciate the spectacle of these clouds.

"Blade? Using the honing cloud to make the blade of the sword? That's a clever idea!" Shi Xueman's eyes lit up and praised, "Lou Lan is really fabulous!"

"Thank you, Xueman." Lou Lan's eyes were smiling brightly, but soon after, his tone was filled with regret. "The snake vertebrae is highly functional and was a top-grade material. Looking at it from the five elements' perspective, it is both metal-attributed and water-attributed. Metal collects water, which is why I used the honing cloud to make the blade of the sword. However, due to differences in the grade level of the materials used, the power of the snake vertebrae are not optimized. The sword tassel is made up of fire prairie stones, which are a low-grade material. Still, it's better than nothing. As for the seven daggers, they are made up of silver glow wood, which is strengthened by the water elemental energy in the honing cloud. The honing cloud and the silver glow wood are roughly the same grade, therefore, combining them provides a great boost to one's elemental energy. This sword can only be considered as a Mysterious-grade weapon. However, its unique lightning properties and the outstanding qualities of the snake vertebrae would make this sword a rather powerful

Mysterious-grade weapon.

"If the honing cloud was replaced by heavenly honing cloud, the silver glow wood was replaced by thousand-traced silvery wood, and the fire prairie stones were replaced by molten core stones, then this sword will be an exceptional Earth-grade weapon. With the lightning properties, it would be considered a rare Earth-grade weapon."

Everyone understood what Lou Lan was talking about. Even though they did not know how to specifically craft weapons, they still knew the fundamentals. The grading system for weapons was not as complicated as the classification of food ingredients. The highest and most powerful grade were the Heaven-grade weapons, followed by the Earth-grade weapons, then the Mysterious-grade weapons, and finally the most common grade, the Grass-grade weapons.

Other than unique materials, the grade of a weapon was usually dependent on its weight, sturdiness, and other physical attributes. However, the most important factor was still the availability of elemental enhancement in the weapon.

The elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth made up a complete cycle, growing and multiplying without an end. The enhancement between the five elements was one of the most important characteristics of the five elemental energies. Weapons were based on this theory as well. Some types of elemental energy could enhance each other while some could restrain each other.

If a weapon possessed all five elements and they enhanced each

other, that weapon was considered a Heaven-grade weapon. Heaven-grade weapons had very low elemental energy consumption requirements for elementalists. Furthermore, they could produce many wondrous effects during the process of elemental enhancement.

An Earth-grade weapon had one less element than a Heaven-grade weapon. There were only four elements in an Earth-grade weapon. This was why there was a huge disparity between a Heaven-grade weapon and an Earth-grade weapon. Having one less element, the elemental cycle was broken, disrupting the natural flow of the elements and differing in terms of quality.

The disparity between an Earth-grade weapon and a Mysterious-grade weapon was not too big. A Mysterious-grade weapon was composed of materials from three different elements. Hence, the power and variability of a Mysterious-grade weapon were inferior to an Earth-grade weapon.

As for Grass-grade weapons, most of them were roughly-made and crude. They were made up of materials that usually contained only one element or two poorly combined elements on occasion.

In theory, weapon crafting seemed very easy, but in reality, the process required immense and meticulous attention. For example, materials that were of the same grade were preferred so as to achieve a complete enhancement process. The grades of the honing cloud and silver glow wood were much lower than the blood snake vertebrae, causing the weapon to be unable to fully utilize the metal elemental attribute of the blood snake vertebrae.

Many wood materials actually contained more than one element. These kinds of material posed an extremely huge challenge to the weaponsmith, himself.

The suitability and availability of materials, together with outstanding crafting techniques, could produce a good weapon. Some unique materials possessed exceptional qualities and did not need to take elemental enhancement or restrainment into consideration. However, professional weaponsmiths despised such reckless weapon crafting technique as they felt it would be a waste of good materials.

Lou Lan was extremely unsatisfied with the sword, but Ai Hui's gaze had not left the sword for a second.

This sword had many outstanding qualities, displaying Lou Lan's skillfulness in crafting swords. For example, the use of the honing cloud as the blade of the sword had perfectly resolved the issue of the blood snake vertebrae's lack of a blade. Ai Hui would not have thought of this even if he racked his brain.

The honing cloud could bend and twist according to the form of the blood snake vertebrae. It could be firm and rigid or soft and flexible.

The design of the seven daggers was even more amazing. Their design was inspired by the bronze sword box and extremely marvellous.

Within a short period of time, Ai Hui had thought of several new

sword moves.

For example, he could hide the daggers within the cloud, and if his opponent was to block his attack, the daggers could launch a surprise attack to catch his opponent off guard. Furthermore, the seven prismatic crystals had a mysterious connection between each other, which meant that they could devise numerous complicated attacking combinations.

Such a good sword!

"Ai Hui, don’t you want to give the sword a try?" Lou Lan slanted his head and asked. "This sword doesn’t have a name yet."

Ai Hui held the hilt of the sword excitedly. The moment his hand made contact with the icy and sturdy blood snake vertebrae, his palpitating heart calmed down.

When Ai Hui picked up the sword, it appeared to everyone that he had become a completely different person. An indescribable aura silently extended outward from Ai Hui’s body.

He looked very serene, but dangerous at the same time.

Suddenly, Ai Hui grinned, revealing his white teeth and said, "I need a sparring partner. Who’s willing to be my sparring partner?"

Duanmu Huanghun’s eyes lit up immediately. He had witnessed the whole process of how Shi Xueman utterly defeated Ai Hui and

wanted to add insult to Ai Hui's injury. Ai Hui was not stupid either as he rejected Duanmu Huanghun without hesitation.

Ai Hui approached everyone except him.

Duanmu Huanghun had been itching to beat Ai Hui into a pulp. If just by watching Ai Hui get pummeled had already made him so happy, how happy would he be if he got to personally beat Ai Hui up?

Thinking about it, how much had he suffered in Ai Hui's hands so far?

Duanmu Huanghun began to become restless, but he did not have a chance. No matter how many times he volunteered, Ai Hui pretended not to see him. As such, he became increasingly furious.

When he heard Ai Hui say that he needed a sparring partner, Duanmu Huanghun volunteered himself without any hesitation. "Me!"

When Ai Hui passed Duanmu Huanghun, the latter purposely mocked the former by saying, "You already have a sword, what excuse do you have this time?"

"Since you insist, come on then," Ai Hui replied helplessly.

Fatty turned his face around, unable to bear watching what was going to happen. However, in the blink of an eye, he whistled and

yelled, "Everyone, come! It’s a rare opportunity! Let us gamble and have some fun! Ai Hui and Bangwan, who are you betting on to win the fight? You are born with nothing and will die with nothing. One has to take a gamble in his or her life. A small amount of gambling is entertaining, but excessive gambling is harmful. I, Fatty, shall be the banker and will treat everyone fairly. It’s okay if you don’t have money now, we can put it on a tab."

"I am betting on Bangwan! 500 yuan!"

"Ai Hui hasn’t recovered yet, I am betting on Bangwan! 800 yuan!"

"Ai Hui is too anxious, he should rest for another two days first. I am betting on Bangwan too! 1,000 yuan!"

"..."

Everyone was stressed out after so many days of continuous fighting. Therefore, they jumped in joy when there was a rare opportunity for recreation.

"I am betting on Ai Hui. 10,000 yuan!"

Shi Xueman’s cold voice rang across the air, catching everyone’s attention. No one had expected Shi Xueman, who utterly defeated Ai Hui previously, to bet on Ai Hui to win the fight.

Beads of cold sweat flowed down Fatty’s forehead as he replied,

"The maximum bet is 5,000 yuan."

"5,000 yuan then."

Shi Xueman’s firmness caused a lot of students to hesitate in making their bets. When Fatty saw this, he intentionally asked Shi Xueman, "Big Sister must have never played this before, right?"

"Never," Shi Xueman shook her head. She had been extremely self-disciplined since young, how could she have gambled before?

Upon hearing Shi Xueman’s reply, all the students suddenly realized what was going on.

So she was new to gambling, no wonder she bet on Ai Hui!

Without any hesitation, they bet on Bangwan.

Everyone’s gaze was directed toward the two figures in the arena.

Both Ai Hui and Duanmu had tremendous improvements in their fighting capabilities. From their auras, everyone had an inkling of what was going to happen. Both of them were abnormally calm.

However, the next moment, both of them surged forward at the same time.

Two shadows flashed across the arena as the two figures who were previously stationary disappeared.

Ai Hui’s attack hit nothing but air.

Duanmu Huanghun was hovering in the air while the lotus patterns slowly swirled under his feet. Ai Hui continuously rejected him in the past, so he could only watch the fights between Ai Hui and other students. As he watched the fights, he kept thinking: how would he deal with Ai Hui if he was the one fighting him?

Duanmu Huang did not underestimate Ai Hui at aall. Even though Ai Hui had poor fundamentals and was limited in terms of elemental energy, his swordsmanship had improved immensely and reached an extremely formidable level. To last so long against Shi Xueman without using any elemental energy was not an easy feat.Even Duanmu Huanghun had to admit that he could not have done so.

After watching so many of Ai Hui’s fights, Duanmu Huang made a big discovery.

Ai Hui had a fatal weakness, which was that he could not fly. On the contrary, Duanmu Huanghun could.

Duanmu Huanghun’s strategy was very simple. The first thing he would do was to fly up into the sky and then attack Ai Hui from there.

His [Viridescent Flower] was capable of making long-ranged attacks.

Upon seeing Ai Hui raise his head and look at him helplessly, Duanmu Huanghun could not help but smile wickedly and feel extremely happy.

Finally, it’s time for payback!

Today is the day to pay back Ai Hui for all the humiliating times!

The more Duanmu Huanghun thought about it, the more excited he got. The smile on his face involuntarily grew wider and wider. It was finally the day to slay his inner demon! Today shall be the day that he surpassed Ai Hui. His smile eventually exploded into a howling laughter. "Hahaha! Ai Hui, have a taste of my [Viridescent Flower]!"

His frenzy-filled eyes began to flicker. Surging elemental energy gushed through Duanmu Huanghun’s body. The slender fingers from both of his hands spread out like a blossoming flower. Numerous elegant shadows appeared momentarily and faded from his fingers.

Green ripples appeared under Ai Hui’s feet and extended outward. Ai Hui’s body froze as if there was an invisible power confining him. Numerous green branches and tendrils emerged from beneath his feet. They grew at a terrifying speed, as if they were alive.

The intertwining branches and tendrils eventually formed a cage around Ai Hui. Looking at it from the sky, it resembled a green openwork longevity lock.

[Viridescent Flower, Perennial Lock]!

Chapter 239: Perennial Lock and Elemental Energy Pills

Ai Hui was locked up in the green openwork cage, unable to move a single step.

The seemingly slender branches and tendrils that made up the cage were actually abnormally tough and durable. Within the cage, an invisible force was crushing Ai Hui from all directions.

The branches and tendrils that were nearer to the ground were abnormally thick and strong. The wrinkles on them looked as though they had been through hundreds of years of great changes.

"Perennial Lock!" Shi Xueman was slightly shocked.

"Is it very powerful?" Upon hearing how shocked Big Sister sounded, Fatty jumped up in surprise. Anything that had to do with getting rich would immediately energize him. "Is it a very well-known move?"

"It’s very powerful, but not really well-known because it’s very difficult to master." Shi Xueman replied without shifting her gaze.

Upon hearing this, Fatty became worried. He took a closer look and muttered, "I can’t really tell if it’s that powerful. It’s just a grass cage after all. If it was me locked inside, I would just break out with force."

"You would not be able to do it," Shi Xueman replied bluntly without shifting her gaze.

Fatty knew that Big Sister was a practical individual and he did not feel humiliated by her words. On the contrary, he was worried about his money-making plan and continued to argue. "I really see nothing terrific about it."

"The terrific parts are unobservable." Shi Xueman was candid as usual. "Those branches and tendrils are entrenched a few hundred meters deep into the ground and are absorbing an unending stream of water elemental energy from the surrounding earth, strengthening and nourishing their bodies. Water nourishes wood. The reason why this move is called Perennial Lock is because as time passes, the lock will become more secure and stable. A Perennial Lock planted by a Master-level wood elementalist can last for hundreds of thousands of years without rotting. In the past, they used this move to lock up individuals that were guilty of terrible crimes."

Shi Xueman was very familiar with various families' absolute arts, knowing everything about them.

Upon hearing this, Fatty was dumbstruck. After a long while, he then opened his mouth again. "I'm going to stay away from that pretty boy in the future. His family is indeed abnormal! No wonder his gaze is always that weird-looking."

Shi Xueman talked rather loudly. Upon hearing what she had said, everyone became restless.

"It turns out this move is so powerful!"

"Fortunately, I bet on Bangwan. Seems like I’m going to make a small profit on this bet!"

"This time around, Fatty is going to suffer a huge loss, so much so that he won’t even be left with his pants!"

...

Fatty was slightly flustered, but he continued to be in denial and snorted. "All of you don’t know Ai Hui well enough. He is the kind of person who wouldn’t give up even when facing death. It’s still too early to say that the pretty boy will defeat Ai Hui."

Everyone could see the panic on Fatty’s face and broke out into laughter.

Everyone was envious of Duanmu Huanghun’s invincible move.

As they had just attained elemental internalization, it was still a long while before they would be able to draw on and use the elemental energy in nature. Only those who had achieved elemental externalization could do so.

Upon achieving elemental internalization, the barrier between the elementalist and nature was broken, greatly increasing his or

her training efficiency. The main purpose of elemental internalization was to expand the eight palaces, allowing them to become stronger and the elemental energy internalized within their body to be in abundance.

After the eight palaces could no longer expand, the elemental energy in one's body would undergo saturation, which was also known as the Advanced Completion. After reaching the Advanced Completion, one could attempt to attain elemental externalization.

The so-called elemental externalization referred to the ability to draw on and use the elemental energy in nature.

Compared the elemental energy in nature, the elemental energy in a human body was insignificant. In order for an elementalist to draw on the elemental energy in nature, a conductor would be necessary. That conductor was the physical body of the elementalist.

The more robust the elemental energy in the body was, the easier it would be for him or her to establish a connection with nature.

Duanmu Huanghun's move was extremely high-level, so much so that Shi Xueman could not help but exclaim in admiration.

To be able to draw elemental energy from nature while only having attained elemental internalization, it was apparent how extraordinary Duanmu Huanghun's genius and his [Viridescent Flower] were.

Shi Xueman took a glance at the locked-up Ai Hui and pondered pensively. Even though Duanmu Huanghun was currently winning the fight, Fatty was right in the sense that giving up was not Ai Hui, that rascal's, style.

All the students had underestimated the degree of prudence with which Duanmu Huanghun faced Ai Hui.

Even though Ai Hui was being imprisoned and seemingly did not have the chance to make a comeback, Duanmu Huanghun did not loosen his vigilance at all. He had suffered under the hands of Ai Hui more than anyone else, and as such, he understood Ai Hui better than anyone else as well. There were several times in which he'd thought his victory was assured, but then was thwarted by Ai Hui towards the end.

Duanmu Huanghun might look crazy now, but he was not foolish.

He was not at all stingy with his elemental energy. Various species of vines and tendrils frantically grew out from the cage and engulfed it.

In the blink of an eye, the cage was completely devoured by densely-packed green flowers, vines, branches, and tendrils.

A fifteen-meter-tall green hill appeared in the arena. Everyone was dumbfounded as a shiver went down their spines.

How many grievances did they have between them...

Phew, phew, phew...

Duanmu Huanghun's heavy panting could be clearly heard. The elemental energy in his body had been completely depleted; however, he did not feel tired or empty. All he felt was extreme relief. The gloominess that had been bottled up within him was cleared.

"Hahahah..."

Wicked, wild laughter resounded throughout the arena.

Duanmu Huanghun did not intend to fight a deadlocked battle with Ai Hui. He understood his opponent and himself clearly. Even though the amount of his elemental energy was far more plentiful than Ai Hui's, he knew he would eventually lose to Ai Hui if they engaged in a battle of attrition.

This plan had been meticulously designed by him.

He'd made use of his aerial advantage and caught Ai Hui by surprise. Then he started off with the move he had just comprehended, the [Perennial Lock]. The enormous disparity in base level between Ai Hui and the [Perennial Lock] meant the latter was able to suppress the former completely. Following which, he would pour all his elemental energy into the battle, securing his victory.

All along, he had been secretly observing Ai Hui's fighting characteristics.

One of these characteristics had been locked onto by Duanmu Huanghun as he had witnessed it many times. Whenever one fought with Ai Hui, he or she should avoid pitting themselves against him using fighting tactics. This fellow was like a cockroach. If one could not defeat him with one blow and instead engaged in a deadlocked battle with him, the final victor would always be Ai Hui.

After howling with laughter for quite some time, Duanmu Huanghun finally stopped.

"There's nothing to be done about it now. My elemental energy has been completely depleted and there's no way I can save you. You can enjoy your time in there for now. You have to wait until my elemental energy has completely recovered before I can undo this huge cage."

Duanmu Huang's voice appeared to be filled with sympathy but he was laughing deep down in his heart.

It was too perfect!

How many seeds had he planted to form this cage? Not even Duanmu Huanghun knew. The green flowers on the cage would continue to attack Ai Hui, not even stopping for half a second. Even though Ai Hui's life would not be in any danger, he would

‘enjoy’ the entire process!

Duanmu Huanghun floated towards the ground slowly. All the students were looking at him in awe.

Having only achieved elemental internalization, he could already display a move used by elemental externalists. Duanmu Huanghun’s improvements had far exceeded their expectations.

Duanmu Huanghun had never been more smug than he was now. The darkness that had engulfed him was lifted. The inner demon that had been pestering him was slayed. The shadow that had been stalking him closely was ruthlessly destroyed by him.

He felt a sense of extreme relief, as if he had eaten a fruit of immortality.

He had to carefully savor this precious and beautiful moment.

He stood bolt straight and looked as though he had completed an insignificant task. His white clothes fluttered in the wind. Even though his elemental energy was completely depleted, his elegant and confident demeanor was not broken. A perfect performance must have a perfect curtain call!

He was fated to be a perfect man!

I’m going to enjoy this moment…

"No need."

A soft voice rang clearly through Duanmu Huanghun's ears, despite the thickness of the green hill.

Duanmu Huanghun was shocked, but then quickly laughed at himself. Such a stubborn inner demon... How can I be hearing such voices in my head even after I have obtained an absolute victory... How obstinate of me...

He flicked his long sleeves gracefully. Just as he was about to wave goodbye to his stubborn inner demon, a lingering voice rang into his ears as if a ghost was whispering to him.

"Are you ready?"

Duanmu Huanghun froze and almost fell down. His eyes widened as a blank look appeared on his face.

Ready?

Ready for what?

Wait a second... Shouldn't this fellow be in a coma, in agony, struggling for his life, and resisting the cage with all his might?

How come he couldn't hear a single hint of agony in his voice? It

was as if... as if he was completely fine?

Everyone had their eyes wide-open as they stared blankly at the fifteen-meters-tall green hill. Their faces were filled with incredulity as an unbelievable thought flashed across their minds. Could it be that... Ai Hui was still capable of striking back?

A planar beam of silver light shot out of the thick grass hill like a sharp blade and went right through the blue dome of the heavens.

Following which, another beam of silver light shot out of the green hill.

Another beam shot out again...

The sound of the green hill being pierced was very soft, however, at this moment, it resembled thunder in everyone’s ears.

Numerous streaks of light had shot out of the green hill.

In the midst of dead silence, Lou Lan’s cheerful voice suddenly rang through the air. "Ai Hui, come on!"

Just as Lou Lan finished speaking, the grass hill exploded with a loud boom. A burst of dazzling silver light erupted in everyone’s eyes.

Buzzzz!

The sound of lightning sparks approached like an incoming tidal wave. The silvery sword glints were like wind, propelling the tidal wave forward. The youth's figure was fuzzy amidst the intense, silver light.

Seven daggers flew and danced around Ai Hui's body rapidly, then eventually materialized into dazzling silver light orbs. The lightning sparks on the surfaces of these light orbs resembled wandering chains of lightning.

The green flower patterns around Ai Hui vanished into thin air. The only thing that was still stubbornly standing was the [Perennial Lock]; however, it was being pushed outward by the silver light orbs, inflating like a balloon.

The faster the daggers flew, the more intense the sword glints got.

Crack, crack, crack!

The green vines and tendrils that formed the [Perennial Lock] began to snap and collapse. The remaining sturdier ones frantically absorbed the water elemental energy from the ground. Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows as the sword in his hand trembled furiously. He had no choice but to hold the sword with both hands.

Duanmu Huanghun's cage was far stronger than what he had expected. Previously, with the use of the [Big Dipper], he'd blown up a grass sword with seven elemental energy pills. This time

around, the number of elemental energy pills that Ai Hui used had already exceeded two-thirds of the elemental energy in his body.

The cage had not exploded yet!

However, Ai Hui did not have the slightest bit of fear. He could sense that this new sword could endure far more elemental energy than the previous ones.

Let's see where your limit is!

Ai Hui silently spoke to his sword. Without any hesitation, he poured his elemental energy into the new sword.

One by one, the elemental energy pills unfolded, extended, and erupted. The sword was trembling furiously as its weight increased tremendously.

In that moment, Ai Hui could feel that he was telepathically connected with the sword. He felt as if something was going to erupt out of his body. Without any hesitation, he slowly raised his sword.

The next moment, a cold glint flashed across Ai Hui's mind as he furiously swung down his sword.

The silver light orbs suddenly exploded. The [Perennial Lock], which had been holding on strenuously, was devoured by the burst of silvery radiance and vanished in a puff of smoke.

Upon getting rid of the restriction that the lock had placed on him, Ai Hui felt as light as a feather.

The explosion of silvery radiance sent a terrifying sonic boom bursting in all directions.

Duanmu Huanghun, who was about to land on the ground, was unable to react in time. He could only blankly watch on as the burst of silvery radiance whizzed towards him

Boom! A shadow flew across the air.

A white-clothed figure was deeply embedded on the wall not far away, spread-eagled.

Chapter 240: The Deadly Weakness

The night sky seemed to be covered with a black veil while the gloominess in the air resembled an insoluble black ink.

All of Central Pine City was empty. The streets were filled with ruins and rubble. A few undestroyed pumpkin lamps were giving off a dusky yellow light, shining upon the dilapidated city.

Two indistinct dark figures were walking through the ruins.

Yan Hai was walking ahead of the other figure. He had lived in Central Pine City for many years. Even though the city had fallen to ruin, he still knew his way around.

Ever since the day he'd refined the blood crystal that Tian Kuan had given him, he had successfully developed blood traces and become a legitimate blood elementalist. Tian Kuan also taught him a thing or two about [Shadowless], sharply increasing his fighting capabilities.

The unprecedented abundance of power in his body had imbued him with absolute confidence. Furthermore, he had Sir behind him to provide support.

He was walking erratically and the environment surrounding him was distorted. It was as if a thin layer of shadow had covered his surroundings, merging with the night scene and making it difficult for him to be seen clearly.

They walked and stopped, walked and stopped, avoiding the patrolling elementalists along their way.

They had arrived.

Yan Hai stopped in his tracks, raised his head, and looked at the towering perimeter walls. The wall was covered with various species of densely-packed plants. Other than the mayor's residence, this was the most intact place in all of Central Pine City: the casualty barrack.

Yan Hai made a hand-signal behind his back. He remained prudent as usual.

With the recent formation of the blood traces, his powers had gotten a lot stronger than before; however, the surviving elementalists in Central Pine City had also been strengthened. The A-1 unit and the Lightning Blade had gotten rather popular these days. The previous scene of numerous lightning bolts surging down from the sky had struck fear in him as well, so much so that he'd almost collapsed onto the ground. After that incident, he was filled with anxiety and worry. One careless mistake could cost him his life.

He was not the only who was worrying. Initially, Sir was nonchalant towards the elementalists in the city; however, he had now also become fearful of them.

However, Sir was truly someone who had lived through

countless life-and-death battles. He'd identified Central Pine City's weakness with one glance.

If their plan was successful, the situation in Central Pine City would change immediately.

Yan Hai felt that the success rate of the plan was very high. When he thought of this, his heart burned with fervor.

The casualty barrack that was surrounded by towering walls was used to quarantine injured elementalists. A few thousand elementalists that had been infected by the blood poison were being locked up here. These infected elementalists gave the mayor a headache. Until now, he had yet to find a cure for the blood poison. He could not kill these inflicted elementalists or take a carefree attitude towards them. The only thing he could do was to quarantine them in order to prevent the blood poison from spreading.

There was no other way except to drag out the situation. Everyone could only hope that the Elders Guild would quickly find a cure to the blood poison.

The quarantine zone was heavily guarded; however, these walls were only used to keep the blood fiends out and prevent those severely inflicted elementalists within the facility from escaping. Central Pine City was low on manpower, hence, there was no extra manpower to guard the inflicted elementalists. To reduce the number of people taking care of the casualties, the casualty barrack was sealed off. The surrounding high walls and the thick, vine-made dome roof were used to cut off contact between the

casualties and the outside world.

Surveillance plants and vines that could shackled the casualties were grown all over the casualty barrack. They were the most loyal sentinels. Once they discovered that an inflicted elementalist's condition had worsened and turned aggressive, the nearby vines would quickly bind him or her.

With the surveillance plants and the restricting vines placed in every corner of the facility, only three wood elementalists were needed to manage the place. Casualties who went crazy could only act on their instincts and did not know how to use their powers. As such, they were not difficult to deal with.

On the contrary, there were a lot of elementalists patrolling the surroundings of the casualty barrack. The higher-ups were worried that blood fiends would suddenly appear and damage the high walls surrounding it.

For the past few days, Yan Hai's mission had been to observe and study the patrol schedule of the patrolling unit clearly. Other than this, he did not need to care about anything else.

Two green pills appeared in Tian Kuan's hand. He ate one himself and passed the other one to Yan Hai. Under Tian Kuan's watchful eyes, Yan Hai ate the pill.

"Use your spiritual force to dissolve it," Tian Kuan instructed Yan Hai in a low voice.

Yan Hai quickly channeled the blood spiritual force in his body. He was shocked to discover that the red-colored blood spiritual force in his body had turned green in color. The blood aura that engulfed his body had disappeared and was replaced by the fresh and clean aura of plants.

Yan Hai was startled. The organization was indeed unfathomable!

They actually had such good stuff!

"You will lead the way," Tian Kuan instructed in a low voice once again.

"Yes."

A shiver ran down Yan Hai’s spine. Not daring to hesitate any longer, he began to climb up the perimeter wall. The vine bells that could be found everywhere stayed quiet, looking as if they had fallen asleep.

Two dark figures silently climbed the high wall, then penetrated the thick, vine-made dome roof.

Yan Hai felt extremely amazed. Those highly dangerous and vigilant vines did not seem to have noticed them.

Sir must have prepared for them!

He could not help but become filled with expectations. What would Sir do next?

The loft where the three wood elementalists stood guard was located at the center of the casualty barrack. Thick, strong vines were packed in the areas surrounding the loft's windows. Being stationed at the highest point of the casualty barrack, the wood elementalists could monitor the wandering inflicted elementalists below. This position had the best view as they could clearly see everything in the courtyard of the facility.

The countless vines were drooping downward like keen-eyed venomous snakes, prepared to bind any casualties that lost control at any time.

Those elementalists who were inflicted with blood poison would show symptoms of beastification. As the blood poison got worse, the process of beastification would deepen. Eventually, those elementalists would lose control of themselves and turn into wild beasts.

Their lives would come to an end at that moment.

Everyday, someone's life was terminated. Initially, the three wood elementalists had felt depressed and disturbed. Eventually, they became numb to it.

What could they do about it? Human lives were just so insignificant in this blood catastrophe.

Outside of the perimeter walls, there were many people being killed by blood fiends everyday. Inside the perimeter walls, there were also many people being killed by them.

The harshest decisions were always made out of desperation.

Sun Ke watched on as a snake-like vine tied up a berserk elementalist while another pointed vine pierced through the back of his head like a sharp sword. The terrifying blood color in that elementalist's eyes gradually dimmed.

"We are probably the executioners among wood elementalists." Sun Ke laughed sarcastically at himself.

"We're doing this for their own good," mumbled Wang Tongan, who was beside him.

"I knew him personally. He was my neighbor and a good man." Sun Ke's tone got more sarcastic.

Wang Tongan did not know how to console him.

"You don't need to console me," Sun Ke muttered as he looked absent-mindedly at the courtyard. "I know what I'm doing. I just hope that this blood catastrophe will be over soon."

Wang Tongan felt that the atmosphere was getting tense and

tried to change the topic. "What do you want to do after you get out of here?"

"Start on my training again." Sun Ke turned his face around and replied, "I don't want to be a wood elementalist anymore. In the past, I chose to be a wood elementalist because I didn't want to kill people. I didn't expect that I would end up killing even more people."

A shiver went down Wang Tongan's spine. Then, he patted Sun Ke's shoulder and said, "That's what I thought too. Do you want to take a rest?"

"You go and have a rest first, I will try to stay awake for a while more. Anyway, Xiaozheng will be waking up soon." Sun Ke's facial expression returned to normal. "Don't worry, I'm not that weak."

"Alright then, I will go and take a break first. Yell for us if there's any situation." Wang Tongan nodded his head.

"Go ahead, go ahead." Sun Ke waved his hand.

Wang Tongan went to take a nap, leaving Sun Ke alone to observe the situation below. Even though there were so many vines around, it was still very exhausting for the three of them to oversee the enormous casualty barrack by themselves.

They had tried asking the higher ups for more manpower, but their request had been rejected. There were a lot of casualties

among the elementalists, causing a severe shortage of manpower. There was no way that the higher-ups could send reinforcements to the three of them.

Currently, everyone knew that there was no cure for blood poisoning. Hence, a lot of injured elementalists would choose to die together with the blood fiends. Eventually, the number of injured elementalists that were sent to the casualty barrack was reduced sharply, allowing the three wood elementalists to cope with the duty of overseeing the facility.

Sun Ke's attention was placed completely on the courtyard below, not noticing the danger that crept increasingly closer to him from above.

....

The mayor's residence.

Wang Zhen looked at Ai Hui. This was the first time Ai Hui had taken the initiative to come to the mayor's residence. Ai Hui had asked for details about the plan to 'treat the city as a piece of cloth', expressing his wish to help out in any possible way.

"Shouchuan has taken in a good disciple," Wang Zhen praised.

He was not saying this out of courtesy. His subordinates had long reported to him of Ai Hui's visit to Wang Shouchuan.

Wang Zhen's impression of Ai Hui was that the latter was a very capable and talented young man, although he was also a moody and melancholic individual. Rather than behaving like any of the usual youngsters, he behaved like an old veteran who had been through a lot. He was also not someone who liked to meddle in other people's business. Not only that, if one was to give him a task, he would haggle over the reward. He would only agree to the task until he felt that the reward was enough.

Wang Zhen was having a huge headache over this characteristic of Ai Hui.

The thing was that with Ai Hui's performance getting increasingly better and him gaining a reputation, Wang Zhen could not get tough with him.

Wang Zhen did not expect Ai Hui to take the initiative to offer his help. He knew that Ai Hui was doing it because of Wang Shouchuan; however, from this he could also tell that the relationship between Ai Hui and his master was very deep.

Ai Hui being willing to help was the best situation.

Shi Xueman, who was standing beside Ai Hui, could not help but take a glance at the latter. She now realized that there was actually so much inside information regarding Ai Hui.

"With your help, our rate of progress will increase," Wang Zhen said bluntly. "The golden needles are going to be completed soon. The next task is to nail the nine needles in specific positions. Those

positions are the nodes for the elemental energy surrounding Central Pine City. Once these nodes are activated, the elemental energy surrounding all of Central Pine City will transform. That means that the moment we nail the first golden needle, the subsequent needles have to be nailed into their respective positions within a day's time."

"So the mayor wants to start nailing from the most difficult position?" Ai Hui asked.

A look of admiration appeared on Wang Zhen's face as he replied, "You're indeed a quick-witted fellow. That's right, we will start with the most difficult one and then move on to the easier ones. This way we will reduce the risk. Therefore, we must nail the first golden needle at the most difficult position."

"I'm willing to take up this mission." Ai Hui volunteered without any hesitation.

"The A-1 unit is willing to take up this mission." Shi Xueman volunteered without any hesitation as well.

"Alright, then I will give all of you the most difficult mission." Wang Zhen walked to the map of Central Pine City and pointed to a dot. "You have to nail the golden needle at this location. On the day itself, specialized smiths will be following your unit. You all have to ensure their safety as well as your own. If the situation gets critical, it's okay to delay the mission by one or two days. If you all are injured, then it will be too dangerous for us to nail the remaining eight needles as well."

Shi Xueman’s gaze froze when she saw the point on the map.

That place was... Heaven Pit!

Ai Hui nodded his head emotionlessly and replied, "No problem."

Chapter 241: Dragonspine

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman walked out of the mayor residence side by side.

Ai Hui suddenly stopped in his tracks and looked at Shi Xueman with seriousness written all over his face.

Upon noticing Ai Hui’s weird behaviour, Shi Xueman stopped in her tracks and cast a puzzled look at him. She did not know if it was because Ai Hui had had a breakthrough, but his gaze was heart-piercing like a sword.

Seeing that Ai Hui looked somewhat unnatural, Shi Xueman put on a calm-looking face and asked, "Is there a problem? In such a devastating disaster, no one can escape unscathed. Everyone is fighting for their own lives."

"Thank you," Ai Hui suddenly opened his mouth and said.

"Ahh..." Shi Xueman was at a loss. She had never heard the phrase "thank you" coming out of Ai Hui’s mouth before. She had also never expected Ai Hui to thank her in such a situation.

Just when she was about to say something, Ai Hui had already walked past her.

At that moment, Shi Xueman felt really stupid. She nearly used her spear to stab that rascal’s back.

"Anyway, I might be grateful to you but don’t expect me to reduce the debt you owe me."

A string of awful words came from the guy that was strolling in front of her.

The usual ice-cold look returned to Shi Xueman’s face, and she remained silent as she followed behind him.

At this point in time, the night had passed and dawn was coming. The horizon was suffused with white. The darkest moment had passed and the rising sun would expel the shadows with its light and heat, marking the start of a new day.

It was time for the patrol unit to change shifts. Weariness could be found on the faces of the patrolling elementalists along the streets. Even though they were exhausted, they still greeted Ai Hui passionately.

This seemingly skinny youth was the most popular figure in Central Pine City right now.

"How do you intend to begin this mission?" Shi Xueman decided to break the silence between them.

She knew Ai Hui was not an impetuous fellow, so he must have certain plans.

"I will scout out the Heaven Pit first. The blood fiends that invaded the city recently came through the Heaven Pit. I have to determine exactly what is going on inside. I also need to find the blacksmiths to enquire about what to take note of when nailing the golden needle. We don’t have a second chance for this plan."

Ai Hui’s voice came from the front. Even though Shi Xueman could not see his face, she could imagine the serious look he had.

"Count me in," Shi Xueman blurted out.

The moment she blurted out these words, she felt embarrassed. Was she too straightforward?

"Okay," Ai Hui responded bluntly.

Shi Xueman’s embarrassment immediately disappeared as her mouth curled into a smile.

.....

The quarantine barracks.

When Yan Hai saw the three unconscious wood elementalists on the ground, his respect for Tian Kuan increased significantly. He had witnessed the entire process of how Tian Kuan finished off the three wood elementalists effortlessly.

Tian Kuan threw one of the wood elementalists at Yan Hai's feet and unquestionably gave a command, "Have you learned the soul-binding spell I taught you? Try it now."

"Yes!" Yan Hai replied obediently.

The blood traces that he formed were different from Sir's. According to Sir, this was due to the difference between their body aptitudes. He would have a different progression path from Sir's. Yan Hai was extremely envious of Sir's [Shadowless], but Sir would only teach him a few moves. The most important move that Sir taught him was the [Blood Soul-Binding Spell].

The soul-binding spell was profound and extremely hard to comprehend. Even after Sir's detailed explanation, he still did not quite comprehend it.

Yan Hai did not like learning the soul-binding spell at all, but he did not dare to disobey Sir's command.

A drop of brightly-colored fresh blood seeped out from his glabella. As it left Yan Hai's forehead, it materialized into a cloud of blood mist. The cloud of blood mist pierced through and entered the unconscious wood elementalist's glabella.

The wood elementalist's body began to jerk and tremble violently. Tian Kuan made a squashing action with his hands, and the wood elementalist's body stopped moving, looking as if he was being restricted by a pair of invisible hands.

Beads of sweat began to form on Yan Hai's forehead. The soul-binding spell was far too difficult for him.

Pop!

The wood elementalist's head exploded like a watermelon.

Yan Hai stared blankly at this scene. Immediately, his stomach churned, and he could not help but puke wildly in a corner. He was not a newbie and had seen deaths before, however, this bloody scene was too much for him.

"Again."

Tian Kuan's voice was calm and flat as he threw another comatose wood elementalist at Yan Hai.

Yan Hai was still puking, so Tian Kuan did not rush him.

After a while, Yan Hai stood up with a pale-white face and turned to the second wood elementalist. Once again, the cloud of blood mist pierced through the glabella of the elementalist. This time around, Yan Hai's performance was a lot better than before. The wood elementalist was still convulsing, but not as violently as before.

Suddenly, blood started to seep out from the corner of the wood elementalist's mouth. The color of his face rapidly turned ash-grey and the temperature of his body dropped instantly until it became

ice-cold. His body was completely devoid of life.

"This is the last one. If you fail again, you will die with him."

Even though Tian Kuan's voice was still calm as usual, one could sense the murderous intent within it. Yan Hai trembled in fear. He knew that Sir's patience had reached its limit. The pale-white color of his face was able to conceal his anxiety well. Otherwise, one could see his panic with one glance.

He knew that if he failed at what Sir expected him to do, he would affect Sir's plan and death would be the only way out for him then.

This was the last chance.

He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and tried his best to calm himself down. After five minutes, he opened his eyes again.

The cloud of blood mist penetrated the glabella of the last wood elementalist. Just like before, the elementalist's body still resisted it fiercely.

Even though Tian Kuan sounded calm and nonchalant, he actually cared a lot about this situation. He needed to buy more time for his plan to work. If he could not take control of a wood elementalist, he had no chance of carrying out his plan. Opening the quarantine zone would only bring more chaos to Central Pine City, which was far from his ultimate goal.

As long as it could buy him more time, he would be a step closer to achieving his final goal.

It was a pity that he could not master the soul-binding spell and could only place his hope on Yan Hai.

Yan Hai’s face was becoming increasingly pale, his body was shivering non-stop, and he was drenched in cold sweat. The resistance of the wood elementalist on the ground gradually weakened.

After a while, the wood elementalist suddenly opened his eyes.

His eyes were scarlet in color, containing a hollow gaze.

His eyeballs swivelled a few times and the scarlet disappeared. The hollow gaze also slowly disappeared and was eventually replaced by his eye pupils. Other than looking a bit dull, there was nothing weird about his eyes.

The wood elementalist, who was lying on the floor, quickly stood up and bowed toward Tian Kuan. "Sir!"

"You did a good job."

A smile appeared on Tian Kuan’s face.

As usual, the patrolling elementalists stopped 20 metres away from the quarantine camp. This camp was everyone’s least favorite place to visit. Everyone would rather battle with the blood fiends than see their family members and friends die in this place.

Despair, fear, numbness, devastation. This place was a green colored hell.

Even the patrolling elementalists were not willing to get too close to this green colored hell.

One of the patrolling elementalists yelled from afar, "How’s the situation inside?"

After a while, a hole appeared on the high wall that was covered with vines and tendrils. Next, a head came out of the hole and replied, "Everything is fine as usual. Do you want to come in and take a look?"

Upon hearing this, that patrolling elementalist quickly shook his head and answered back, "We are very busy. Bye."

They did not want to stay any longer. Upon seeing the familiar face of Sun Ke, they turned around and prepared to leave. Everyone sympathized with the Sun Ke trio because this squad was tasked with executing their family members and loved ones. Just thinking about the torment that the three of them had to go through struck fear in everyone’s heart.

The figure behind Sun Ke kept on observing until the patrolling unit was gone.

"They have left," Sun Ke said.

If one listened clearly, he or she could hear that Sun Ke's voice was slightly deeper than usual. However, no one would notice such an insignificant difference during this chaotic period of time. Fatigue, lack of sleep, and low morale. Everyone would be different than usual.

The previously nonchalant Tian Kuan began to reveal a tinge of craziness and excitement on his face. He walked to the window and looked at the countless pairs of scarlet eyes. With a voice that contained a tinge of expectation, he muttered, "Our plan can begin now."

.....

On the fringe of the Heaven Pit, the morning sun cast the shadows of three figures.

"The weather is beautiful." Shi Xueman squinted her eyes as she basked in the morning sun. Such beautiful weather was extremely rare these days.

Lou Lan slanted his head and asked Ai Hui, "Ai Hui, have you thought of a name for your new sword?"

"Name?" Ai Hui replied as he observed the Heaven Pit, "Let’s call it Lou Lan’s sword."

Lou Lant thought pensively before replying, "That does not sound too impressive."

"Let’s call it Ai Hui’s sword then," Ai Hui answered without even thinking. His gaze carefully scanned every single section of the Heaven Pit. The terrain of the Heaven Pit was quite different from the last time they had visited.

The continuous influx of blood fiends had significantly impacted the terrain of the Heaven Pit. There had been several mini Heaven Pits appearing around the city. The sandworms had hollowed out several areas beneath Central Pine City.

"You’re too perfunctory." Shi Xueman was unhappy with Ai Hui’s attitude. "Lou Lan spent so much time and effort to craft this sword for you, how can you treat him like that?"

Lou Lan was everyone’s beloved. Shi Xueman wished that she could bring Lou Lan home. If she had a sand puppet like Lou Lan, she would treat him very well. Ai Hui’s perfunctory attitude really infuriated Shi Xueman.

"That’s true." Ai Hui stopped what he was doing and pondered seriously before saying, "A snake can be considered a small dragon. Since the sword is made using the snake vertebrae, let’s call it Dragonspine!"

"This is a good name," Lou Lan’s eyes lit up.

Shi Xueman pouted and did not say anything else. From the way she looked at it, Ai Hui’s creativity had reached its limit just by coming up with this name.

"Let’s prepare to go down and see what’s going on inside," Ai Hui instructed in a deep voice. "Lou Lan, remember to record the surrounding terrain and remind us of the location of the node. We have to find a suitable path down. I have already talked to the blacksmiths, and the golden needle has very large dimensions. Its length is more than five metres and its diameter is around half a metre. Such a huge object would spell trouble if it enters a narrow space. Even though the golden needle is made of metal, it’s still very fragile. It might not work if even a tiny bit of it is damaged."

Lou Lan was a sand puppet and operating underground was a piece of cake for him. An average person would easily lose his or her sense of direction underground, but it was not a problem for Lou Lan. He could easily and rapidly identify his bearings underground.

"No problem, Ai Hui," Lou Lan said cheerfully.

"If we encounter any danger, when I say retreat, both of you have to listen to me and retreat. I will bring up the rear." Ai Hui’s gaze shifted to Shi Xueman and added one more line, "I am confident that we will come back alive."

"No problem," Shi Xueman nodded her head. With regards to this

aspect, Ai Hui was indeed far more capable than her. This fellow's survivability was matchless.

"Let's go!"

Ai Hui was the first one to jump in. The pitch-black Heaven Pit devoured him like the wide-open maw of a monster. His bright eyes were like the stars in the night sky, clear and firm.

Following closely behind Ai Hui, Shi Xueman and Lou Lan jumped into the Heaven Pit.

Chapter 242: The Transformation Of The Blazing Corals

"Be careful, the terrain has changed a lot," Ai Hui reminded Shi Xueman and Lou Lan softly, his voice containing a tinge of doubt. He found it hard to a establish connection between his impressions of this place yesterday and today. Within a day, the depths of the Heaven Pit had changed beyond recognition. The unfamiliarity of this place was not within Ai Hui's expectations.

What exactly had happened here in a day's time?

A shiver went down Ai Hui's spine as his face turned grave and stern.

Shi Xueman was silently trembling with fear. She rarely saw such a facial expression from Ai Hui. A focused Ai Hui always seemed inhuman. Among their generation, Shi Xueman had never met anyone whose psyche was comparable to Ai Hui's. He was cold and firm like steel. He would have no fear or panic even if a knife was placed against his neck.

Shi Xueman was not the only who felt this way, and everyone else felt the same about Ai Hui. She discovered this during a private discussion with the others.

"Ai Hui, the nature of the surrounding boulders and rocks has changed. Their temperature is slight higher" Lou Lan's glowing yellow eyes kept flickering in the dark.

"The temperature is higher than before?" Ai Hui reached out his hand and touched the cavern wall beside him. His hand felt warm. The weird thing was he did not feel that the temperature of the surrounding air was very high.

"Is this caused by the explosion from last time?" Shi Xueman asked curiously as she touched the soil.

"No," Lou Lan shook her head, "the amount of fire elemental energy in the rocks and soil exceeds the amount from last time around. The nature of the elemental energy given off by that explosion is very complicated. It was not not purely fire elemental energy."

"Are you able to find out why?" Ai Hui asked.

"I need some time, Ai Hui," Lou Lan's glowing yellow eyes continuously flickered. He was the most familiar with matters like soil, rocks, and quicksand. The Midnight core was operating at full speed and was quickly able to identify something strange. "It's fire elemental energy. The soil has been eroded by an unique type of fire elemental energy. It's a rarely seen type of fire elemental energy, and its nature is slowly transforming."

"Its nature is slowly transforming?" Ai Hui asked.

"Yes, Ai Hui," Lou Lan's reply came very fast, "its nature is a mixture of fire elemental energy and fire spiritual force. Right now, it's transforming toward fire spiritual force, but the rate at

which it’s transforming is very slow."

"Fire spiritual force?"

This conclusion stunned Ai Hui and Shi Xueman.

Ai Hui shivered and asked urgently, "How slow is it? How long before the fire elemental energy completely transforms into fire spiritual force?"

"Approximately 200 years, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing the huge number. What happened 200 years later had nothing to do with them. They were fine with it as long as the transformation did not take place now. If the transformation was to take place now, the pressure on them would increase and their chances of surviving would decrease.

"Why did the fire elemental energy undergo transformation?" Shi Xueman did not seem to get it. "Isn’t elemental energy very stable?"

Any elementalist that had a bit of common sense would have such doubts. Even though everyone was very unfamiliar with spiritual force, they still knew that the nature of elemental energy was much stabler than spiritual force. That was a fact. Otherwise, the Avalon of Five Elements would exist.

Right now, the stable elemental energy was trying to convert into unstable spiritual force. This completely defied logic.

The flickering yellow light in Lou Lan’s eyes calmed down gradually. He had already completed his analysis. "The larvae, eggs, microorganisms, moss, and underground plants in the soil have been infected with the blood poison. They are devouring elemental energy and converting it into blood spiritual force."

"Doesn’t that mean the Avalon of Five Elements will completely disappear in 200 years’ time?" Shi Xueman’s face turned deathly white.

"If no preventative measures are taken, then yes, Xueman," Lou Lan answered bluntly.

Ai Hui was speechless. He suddenly thought of the old prisoner. Initially, he frequently communicated with that old man, but as the situation worsened, Ai Hui purposely avoided contacting him. With the increased pressure to survive and the fact that the inside story he obtained from the old man was not helpful for the current situation, he only felt deeper despair.

The inside story had nothing to do with him. All he wanted was to survive the blood catastrophe.

From the words of the old man, Ai Hui understood a lot of things. The Blood of God had extremely huge ambitions, and their ultimate goal was to topple the Avalon of Five Elements.

As such, the Blood of God developed the blood poison... the scary blood poison... the blood poison that could change the world...

Ai Hui felt that the blood poison was the most terrifying creation in the world. It contained the power to change the world, striking both fear and amazement in one's heart.

"So are we going to revert back to the Cultivation Era in 200 years?" Ai Hui sighed. If the world was to revert back to the Cultivation Era, there would be a lot of people joining the ranks of the Blood of God. This process would result in the deaths of many people.

"No, we won't, Ai Hui," Lou Lan shook his head and answered confidently. "This is because the world would only be left with blood spiritual force, and blood spiritual force can't dissipate into the air like elemental energy. Blood spiritual force will have to coexist with all living things. All living things will undergo changes due to the blood spiritual force. Currently, lives are already changing. These changes are permanent. Lou Lan can't predict what the future will look like yet."

Lou Lan sounded slightly distressed. It was as if he was unhappy with himself that he could not predict anything.

"Even God does not know what the future will look like." Ai Hui encouraged him, "Lou Lan, you're already very impressive!"

"Really?" Lou Lan's eyes widened, appearing very happy.

"Of course!" Shi Xueman interjected. She had returned to her senses and decided to leave the vexing global issues to the Elders Guild. She looked at Lou Lan and continued, "Lou Lan is the best sand puppet! The perfect sand puppet! Everyone loves Lou Lan!"

Whenever she saw Lou Lan, she would feel jealous of Ai Hui. Why did she not have such a good sand puppet?

"Thank you Xueman!" Lou Lan replied cheerfully.

"Let’s go, we have to be careful," Ai Hui said in a low voice. "Lou Lan, lead the way."

"No problem Ai Hui!" Lou Lan replied happily.

Ai Hui stayed 10 meters behind Lou Lan. If they were to encounter any dangers, he could launch an attack from Lou Lan’s side in the shortest amount of time.

Even though the ground was filled with fire elemental energy, it had no effect on Lou Lan.

They ventured deeper into the Heaven Pit. Even the mayor was shocked when he learned that the first golden needle had to be nailed in the Heaven Pit. After consulting with Wang Shouchuan, the latter’s answer was able to set them at ease. The deeper the golden needle was nailed, the better the effects would be. If they could bypass the possible dangers they might encounter in the Heaven Pit and nail the golden needle in the depths of the pit, it

would very beneficial for the "treating the city as a piece of cloth" plan.

The depths of the Heaven Pit was far larger than they had expected it to be. The place was like an enormous underground maze.

Without Lou Lan, the difficulty of locating the node would have been many times harder.

Suddenly, the path ahead was illuminated by a faint red glow.

In a dark underground world, even a faint glow would appear extremely bright. Immediately, the walking speed of the trio slowed down. Everyone became unusually careful. It was abnormal for a glow to appear in the depths.

What was ahead of them?

Everyone was filled with uncertainty.

Night vision was the basic ability of any subterranean beasts, just like how they were used to hiding in the dark. For a subterranean beast that dared to emit light, either it was powerful or it was trying to use the light as bait.

Regardless what species they were, all of them were dangerous.

The three of them slowed down and tiptoedquietly, afraid to make the slightest bit of noise.

As they proceeded forward, the glow became brighter and brighter.

The glow originated from the mouth of a cave. Ai Hui and the rest held their breaths as they got closer to the cave entrance and carefully peeked inside. The sight within the cave startled everyone.

The red glow was produced by red, spear-like crystals. The ground and cave roof were lined with these densely-packed crystals.

"They look like blazing corals!" Shi Xueman cried out in alarm.

"Blazing corals?" Ai Hui asked.

Shi Xueman’s face contained an indescribable surprise. She quickly explained, "Blazing corals are a special local product from the Fire Prairie. The ground beneath the Fire Prairie is filled with intertwining rivers of lava and the blazing corals grow on the riverbeds of these lava rivers. Blazing corals are a very expensive type of fire elemental material.

"Fire elemental material?" Ai Hui muttered to himself. Previously, the Heaven Pit’s entrance contained a strong concentration of fire elemental energy. Now, this place was filled

with such a high-level fire elemental material like the blazing corals. What changes was this place going through exactly?

"They are blazing corals, Ai Hui." A red crystal appeared in Lou Lan's hand as the yellow light in his eyes began to flicker. "To be precise, these are blood poison-infected blazing corals. Ai Hui, take a look, there are blood traces in these crystals."

Ai Hui took a closer look. Indeed, there was a trace of blood in the transparent red crystal. It was rather obvious.

"The usually slow-growing blazing coral worms are growing at a very fast speed after being infected with the blood poison."

Before Lou Lan could finish his sentence, several red crystals broke out of the ground, emerging in rapid succession. They were quickly growing at a visible speed

The growing process of the blazing corals sent a shiver down everyone's spine, defying their logic.

"During the initial stages, living things that are infected with blood poison will grow at a terrifying speed. When they start to form blood traces, their growing speed will reduce. This characteristic is unique to the blood spiritual force," Lou Lan explained. He had a deep understanding toward blood spiritual force.

"So are you saying that the blazing coral worms can form blood

traces too?" Shi Xueman was shocked.

"In theory, they can, but the smaller and simpler an organism is, the harder it will be for it to form blood traces," Lou Lan explained.

"I wonder what the blazing coral worms will look like if they develop blood traces?" Shi Xueman's voice quivered.

"I don't know," Lou Lan shook his head.

Suddenly, Shi Xueman thought of another issue and her face turned pale. "Then wouldn't the Fire Prairie be..."

Given the horrifying speed that these blazing corals were growing, what would the blazing corals at the Fire Prairie be like?

"As long as the first strain of blood poison appears, the blazing corals will grow in huge bulks," Lou Lan explained. "Xueman, don't worry, so far there isn't any news of places outside of the Induction Ground being infected with blood poison."

Upon hearing this, Shi Xueman felt slightly at ease.

"Are these blazing corals still usable?" Ai Hui asked Lou Lan. Blazing coral was a high-grade material. It would be a good thing for them if these blazing corals could still be used.

"They are useless to us, Ai Hui." Lou Lan shattered Ai Hui's hope.

"Their fast growth rate has sharply reduced their sturdiness, hence, they are very fragile. However, they are very useful to blood fiends. The blazing coral worms may grow, reproduce, and die very quickly, but the blood spiritual force from the blazing corals will continue to exist. The corpses of the blazing coral worms contain the aura of life, enabling the blood spiritual force to be preserved.

"In other words, the blazing corals are nourishment for blood fiends?" Ai Hui's facial expression changed.

"Yes, Ai Hui," Lou Lan answered with certainty.

Ai Hui immediately knew that there would be consequences for barging into the "pasture" of the blood fiends. At the same time, he sensed that something was wrong.

"Be careful!"

Chapter 243: Lava Spider

A beam of red light erupted from a cluster of blazing corals and shot toward Lou Lan.

Ai Hui's reaction was extremely fast. The Dragonspine in his hand immediately slashed out to block the beam of red light.

The tip of the sword collided with the red beam.

Boom!

The beam of red light exploded and an astonishing wave of energy erupted from the tip of the sword. With a groan, Ai Hui's body was thrown backward.

Shi Xueman was able to respond with such a little amount of buffer time. Instead of catching Ai Hui, she jumped over him and thrusted her Cirrus outward. Moving together with her spear, she surged forward.

Like a collapsed sand statue, Lou Lan dissolved in a puddle of quicksand and moved out of the way.

Shi Xueman was extremely fast, but just as she surged past Lou Lan, another beam of red light erupted from the cluster of blazing corals.

A cold glint flashed across Shi Xueman’s eyes. Not only did she not dodge the beam of red light, but she took the initiative and jabbed her Cirrus toward it. The beam of red light exploded once more. Shi Xueman’s body swayed, but continued surging toward the cluster of blazing corals.

Another beam of red light erupted from the blazing corals.

Shi Xueman remained calmed. Her hair fluttered as she leapt into the air with her spear.

The three consecutive beams of red light were deflected by Shi Xueman. Upon seeing this, Ai Hui was flabbergasted. The shock wave from the explosion of the red light was enough to knock him off the ground, but the iron lady could actually withstand it effortlessly.

She was truly worthy of the nickname "iron lady"...

After Ai Hui’s time spent admiring Shi Xueman ended, his body immediately collapsed on the ground. Then, his left palm pushed off the ground as his body shot forward like an arrow released from a bow.

His gaze was locked onto a black figure within the cluster of blazing corals.

As Shi Xueman neared, the black figure stirred restlessly. It jumped out of the cluster of blazing corals and quickly retreated

backward.

Lava spider!

Ai Hui's eyes dilated. After spending three years in the Wilderness, he could identify many wild beasts and dire beasts. The millstone-sized spider in front of him right now was the renowned lava spider.

Lava spiders mainly lived in lava-filled terrain and were rarely seen in other places. They were dangerous hunters and their movements were extremely fast. They could hide in the lava or camouflage themselves with the rocks. The color and the texture of its back resembled a volcanic rock that had cooled.

Lava spiders could also spurt out scorching lava, hence the name. As compared to usual lava, the lava they spurted out was fused with elemental energy, making it hotter and more dangerous.

Were those beams of red light actually lava?

Ai Hui was confused. Those beams of red light had moved too fast, so he could not see what exactly they were. However, the shock wave from the explosion of the red light was terrifyingly powerful.

Returning to his senses, Ai Hui snuck up to the lava spider from another side like a ghost.

Suddenly, he felt an extremely faint wave of energy.

Not good!

Ai Hui's facial expression changed drastically. The cloud that shrouded his Dragonspine dissipated abruptly and engulfed his body.

Boom, boom, boom!

All the blazing corals within the cavern exploded. Since the violent explosions took place in a small and narrow cavern, the scene was extremely horrifying.

Fireballs were flying everywhere while a scorching heatwave swept across the entire cavern.

Ai Hui felt as if he was in a smelting furnace. The shock wave from the explosion contained immense power. When it hit Ai Hui, he did not dare to resist. He could only protect his vital parts and relax his body.

Thump!

He was swept up by the shock wave and smashed into a boulder heavily. He felt as if his entire body was going to fall apart. From his rich experience, he knew that even though this method landed him in a pathetic state, it prevented him from getting severely injured.

Before his body fully recovered, Ai Hui instinctively laid prone and scuttled his way forward while sticking to the ground.

At almost the same time, a shattering sound came from the boulder he had previously smashed into.

Ai Hui trembled in fear!

When one encountered a powerful dire beast, he or she should never stay in one place for more than a second. A veteran once advised him that if he was on a battlefield, he should keep moving and never stop until he was dead. This was especially true for someone with weaker fighting capabilities.

The body of Ai Hui's Dragonspine bent as its tip pointed at a boulder.

A cold glint flashed across the sea of blazing flames.

[Misty Strike].

Swoosh!

A deafening sonic boom resounded through the air. Afterward, a clang could be heard. It sounded as if the Dragonspine had hit a metal shield.

From the sound alone, Ai Hui knew that his strike had not broken through the carapace on the back of the lava spider. He did not dare to stay at his current position for too long. Slapping his palms on the ground, his body bounced upward.

A strong gust blasted against Ai Hui's body, causing him to fall back to his original position.

Boom!

A loud boom could be heard beneath him as crushed rocks flew in all directions.

The blazing flames in the cavern had not extinguished yet, so Ai Hui was unable to see anything. With a push off the ground using his hand, his body flew into the air. As he flew, he maneuvered his body into the correct posture based on his senses and channeled the [Big Dipper]. With a flick of his wrist, the Dragonspine carved an arc in the air.

A crescent moon-like sword beam shot out from the sword and swiftly blasted the ground below him.

He did not care about the result of his attack. Tapping his foot on the roof of the cavern, his figure flew a few hundred meters away.

The sea of flames had extinguished and the situation in the cavern returned to normal.

The ground was a complete mess. Previously, the lava spider had detonated numerous blazing corals, with only a few dimly glowing ones left.

Shi Xueman revealed herself as well. Her blue-white armor radiated a gentle glow, completely undamaged. However, Shi Xueman's face looked somewhat blank. It was most likely due to the shock waves from the multiple explosions. It just so happened that she was in the center of the cavern. That was a place that Ai Hui would never ever position himself. In such a small cavern, the shock waves from the explosions were bound to converge in the centre of the cavern. Even though Shi Xueman was protected by her armor and was uninjured, the impact from the explosions still hit her squarely.

Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief. Even though he knew that Shi Xueman would definitely be okay in such a situation, he still felt relieved when he personally saw that she was uninjured.

Experience was not as good as having good equipment! That blue-white armor must be very expensive...

Ai Hui silently coveted Shi Xueman's armour, yet even so, he did not dare to look away from the lava spider.

So ugly!

The blood traces of the lava spider were not obvious. Ai Hui could barely see the blood traces on its belly. It seemed that the weakness of this lava spider was on its belly?

This was the second blood fiend that Ai Hui encountered which did not have a red body. The first was the flame-traced blood ape that he previously encountered. The fighting capabilities of these fiends were obviously stronger than the normal blood fiends from last time. Ai Hui conjectured that as the blood fiends transformed and evolved to higher levels, the blood color of their bodies would disappear and return to their respective original colors. Only the blood traces would stay.

According to this conjecture, wouldn't the blood fiends' unique characteristics become unrecognizable as they evolved?

The lava spider was an extremely ugly dire beast. Even after the blood transformation, it did not become prettier. The soles of its feet had webs. When it dived into lava, it would pull its eight limbs beneath its belly. The webs on the its soles would allow it to move about in the lava, while its belly was able to store a huge amount of lava. The abundance of elemental energy in the lava would provide the lava spider with an unending stream of energy. Lava was its weapon, and the lava that it spurted out was swift like an arrow. After being blood-transformed, the lava-spurting ability was further improved.

Its abnormally hard and durable head looked as though it was covered with volcanic rocks. Ai Hui's [Misty Strike] barely left a white mark on it. Even when he utilized the more powerful [Crescent Moon], he had only left a single wound on its back.

As Ai Hui saw the bright-red wound regenerating and closing up, a shiver went down his spine.

When Ai Hui saw that the lava spider was looking at him with so much hatred in its eyes, he knew that the enormous spider had locked onto him.

Ai Hui stood in front of Shi Xueman and did not intend to launch any attacks. Shi Xueman had not recovered from the impact of the shock waves.

She was slowly returning to her senses. All she needed was time.

The wound on the back of the lava spider had fully sealed, forming a black scab that resembled the kind of blemish that could be found on boulders everywhere. Its eyes widened as its belly suddenly lit up with a red glow, looking as if there was a fire burning within it.

A premonition arose in Ai Hui's mind. At this moment, however, he could not retreat and could only stand in front of Shi Xueman, bracing himself for any incoming attacks. He clenched his teeth and muttered, "Iron lady, you have to pay more money for me saving you..."

Pop, pop, pop!

Numerous beams of red light shot out from the lava spider's mouth, resembling torrential rain.

Ai Hui's hair stood on end as a strong feeling of danger engulfed

his mind. All of his attention was instantly shifted to the airspace in front of him. This was the first time he could clearly see exactly what the beams of red light were.

They were bean-sized lava globs. Since they moved too fast, they formed a streak of bean-sized lava as they flew through the air, resembling a beam of red light.

Ai Hui's elemental energy channeled frantically into his sword. The cotton-like honing cloud swiftly transformed into numerous small razor-blade shapes that covered the body of the sword, resembling fish scales. Cold air was rising all around Ai Hui. Sword beams of all sizes were gathering on the sword, gradually becoming more concentrated and sharper.

Ai Hui was so focused that his facial expression turned exceptionally solemn. His wrist was so soft and flexible that it was as if there were no bones in it. The Dragonspine in his hand brandished smoothly through the air. Accompanied by an unusual cadence, frigidly cold sword rays erupted from his sword.

The ice-cold sword lights linked and formed a single long sword beam, resembling a gigantic dragon made up of numerous small blades that flew and danced in front of Ai Hui. The blade dragon's body sparkled with streaks of silvery lightning, appearing extremely eye-catching in the faint red glow of the cavern.

Whenever a beam of red light made contact with the blade dragon, an explosion would occur. The terrifying power from the lava destroyed several portions of Ai Hui's sword light. Fortunately, Ai Hui's sword ray contained lightning bolts, which

also destroyed several beams of red light. The powerful impacts from the continuous explosions, however, had almost caused Ai Hui to lose his grip on the sword hilt.

Suddenly, a snow-white spear extended forward from behind Ai Hui, helping him to block the next incoming red beam.

"With a skill level like yours, you still dare to collect money from me?"

Shi Xueman’s sneer rang across Ai Hui’s ears from his back.

Before Ai Hui could retort, Shi Xueman flew past him like a gust of wind.

Facing the torrential rain of red light, Shi Xueman did not show any sign of retreating. As the Cirrus in her hand danced and formed a light shield, she lowered her waist, bent her knees, arched her back, and surged forward!

With the light shield in hand, she fearlessly surged toward the monstrous, hate-filled eyes and the deadly red light beams like an enraged lion.

The careless mistake that she had made just now sparked the raging flames within her.

Duanmu Huanghun’s talents were like his egoistic character, stunning everyone he came across. Regardless of when and where,

he would always impress people with the magnificence of his talent.

Shi Xueman was also known for her talent, but her situation was entirely different from Duanmu Huanghun's.

She was born in a prestigious family, she had renowned teachers educating her, and she was born with exceptional potential. However, her scariest traitr was her harsh and strong self-discipline as well as her extraordinary endurance.

The process of going through countless days of mundane, tough training to temper her body, coupled with exceptional resources and talent, would neither amaze nor impress others out of grandeur, but instead, it was so practical that it filled her opponents' hearts with despair.

A burst of matchless strength erupted from the enraged Shi Xueman!

Chapter 244: A Psychic Attack

Raging flames throbbed in Shi Xueman's eyes. Braving the storm-like lava, she charged atr the lava spider.

She had been attacked by the lava spider immediately upon entering the cave. Although she was safe and sound thanks to her armor and Ai Hui's assistance, she felt extreme angst for having landed herself in such a sorry state.

The continuous high-intensity battles in the city had enhanced her combat experience so significantly that she felt she was becoming a veteran fighter.

Yet, before she could feel proud about this, reality hit her right in the face.

Ai Hui, who entered the cave at the same time, clearly performed better.

The exploding lava collided incessantly with her dancing Cirrus, but did not raise any waves. The shockingly heavy Cirrus produced astonishingly dreadful power when spinning at a high speed. It stirred up a storm and overturned the soil in the cave. Its low whistle caused the whole cave to tremble.

It was like a humpback whale swimming in deep space. Nothing could obstruct its path and each time it moved, its body carried enormous weight.

Naturally, such mighty power came with a high consumption rate. Shi Xueman's elemental energy was declining at an alarming speed.

The lava spider was stunned by Shi Xueman's might, its face revealing fear. It shot lava frantically while retreating slowly, ready to escape.

Why would Shi Xueman let it go though?

She charged forward at an even higher speed now, the white circular wheel disappearing. She took a stride and before her shadow on the ground vanished, her delicate figure appeared in midair. With both hands, she held Cirrus in a tight grip, its height surpassing her head. She exhaled deeply, the brightness in her eyes lit up as she targeted the lava spider on the ground before crushing it ruthlessly with Cirrus.

Buzz!

The heavy hum was like the sound of an ancient giant swinging and striking with a hefty hammer. The airflow it created made people tremble.

Fear was evident in the lava spider's eyes as it suddenly screeched.

Its shriek made Ai Hui feel like an awl had been drilled into his

brain. There was a sharp pain in his head and a lifeless look on his face. He recovered very quickly, but his face changed drastically.

A psychic attack!

It was his first time experiencing this.

He had heard from seniors in the Wilderness hunting teams that some powerful dire beasts could attack this way. He could still remember the dread in their eyes as they talked about it. Ordinary elemental energy attacks, no matter how powerful, would have a form and a quality. The most dangerous part of a psychic attack was that it was incorporeal and could hit someone even without their awareness.

Plus, why would a lava spider be able to do this? While these spiders were powerful, they most definitely did not possess such an ability.

The moment Shi Xueman was struck mentally, Cirrus released a ball of gentle white light that wrapped itself around her.

Shi Xueman appeared to be completely unaffected as Cirrus smashed firmly onto the spider's back like a sledgehammer.

Boom!

The whole cave shook. The lava spider was like a wooden stake, pounded directly into the ground.

Ai Hui's heart chilled. He knew how much that strike hurt the lava spider just as an observer. Searching his memories carefully, he was convinced that he had not done anything that truly offended this Iron Lady.

Shi Xueman's residual anger made her lift Cirrus yet again, as if it was a club or sledgehammer.

Boom, boom, boom. One powerful strike came after another, as if she was chopping firewood.

Ai Hui bore witness to this act of violence as the ground started to sink in from her strikes. He could not resist scanning through all the memories and details in his brain again.

Yeah, no problem. There was no serious feud between the Iron Lady and himself.

He sighed a breath of relief and actually had lingering fear despite feeling as if he had been reborn.

Within the figure cloaked in that exquisite armor hid a terrifying prehistoric dire beast.

Shi Xueman only stopped to catch her breath after over 10 consecutive smashes. The lava spider had long been etched into the granite rocks, which were as tough as steel.

It must be painful!

Ai Hui moved closer to look at the meter long lava spider embedded in the ground. Its black, steel-like carapace was filled with web-like cracks. It was beautifully violent. Ai Hui asked with much sympathy and pity, "Is it dead?"

"Look and you'll know," Shi Xueman said mildly, her slender fingers brushing aside the hair that fell in front of her face. Her movements were gentle, the earlier wildness absent.

Cirrus's spearhead pierced through the lava spider effortlessly.

Shi Xueman lifted Cirrus up as if nothing had happened. "Dead."

He really had not offended her right...?

Ai Hui could not help but to ask himself once again: Why did he feel so uneasy?

"Do not break the blood crystal." He decided to remind Shi Xueman anyway.

"Find it yourself." Shi Xueman held onto Cirrus as she walked to the side and sat down.

As her anger dissipated, Shi Xueman, who had recovered her peace, finally felt the post-traumatic stress.

She glanced at Cirrus. If Cirrus had not blocked the lava spider's psychic attack, she would have been dead by now. The lava spider was right in front of her, so Ai Hui, who was behind her, would have been unable to save her at all.

"Shi Xueman is so capable!" Lou Lan appeared, cheering loudly.

"Lou Lan, clean this area up quickly," Ai Hui shouted as he stood beside the lava spider. Ever since he realized that Lou Lan's butchering skills exceeded his, he had decided to leave it all to him.

"Coming!"

Lou Lan was always so happy.

When it came to sweeping up the battleground, Ai Hui believed that even with 10 of him , he would not match up to one Lou Lan. Not long ago, he was still convinced that he was the veteran in this aspect.

Luckily, the blood crystal was not broken and its quality was pretty good.

Sadly, the spider's carapace was crushed by Shi Xueman. Lou Lan's processing standards had improved, and he completely peeled the shell off the spider's abdomen. Lou Lan said that there were no internal organs in its abdomen. Instead the abdomen stored lava and, hence, was best suited for fire elementalists to

make a lava pouch out of it. It was commonly known as a "spider pouch."

It might not look big, but its storage was much greater than the large fire tank Fatty carried around. Post blood-refinement, its quality became even more outstanding, far exceeding that of ordinary spider pouches.

Fire elementalists' lava was more potent than natural lava, so the requirements for its container were higher. The better the receptacle, the more potent the fire elementalists' lava could be.

Fatty's luck was not bad. Ai Hui felt happy for him.

Not only would color-faded blood beasts become more powerful, their blood crystals would be worth much more and their bodies would strengthen significantly. Ai Hui guessed that these were the result of the blood spiritual force's tempering and strengthening processes. More often than not, the more outstanding ingredients came from elemental energy tempering.

With regard to tempering, ancient blood-refinement had an obvious advantage.

Even flying swords would not be able to take down refined vampires and drought demons.

Blood beasts displayed the same traits. Their bodies were enhanced after undergoing blood-refinement. This wasn't as

apparent for blood elementalists, but Ai Hui had only seen one blood elementalist after all. One thousand yuan's demonic temperament made it hard for people to associate her with toughness like copper skin and iron bones.

That floating red skirt, eerie smile, and beautiful silhouette flashed across Ai Hui's mind, bringing a chill down his spine.

After cleaning up, everyone forged ahead. Shi Xueman had also recovered her strength by now.

With the appearance of the lava spider, Ai Hui and Shi Xueman became more cautious.

Thinking back, the lava spider was really sly. Right from the start, it had planned to lure them into the fire coral-filled cave and detonate the coral.

It did not expect to meet a freak like Ai Hui, who would take advantage of it like that.

Then, it met the crazy Shi Xueman and deliberately allowed her to get close so it could execute its killer psychic attack.

Sadly, the lava spider was just unlucky. Its psychic attack was ineffective against Cirrus, so it got killed instead.

If there had been any complications with these two circumstances, however, both of them would have been in danger

today.

No one could guarantee that their luck would be this good next time.

Ai Hui remained vigilant, but they never met another lava spider along the way. Nonetheless, there were many blood-refined fire corals everywhere. Ai Hui felt it was weird that there were so many fire corals around. Plus, their growth rate should not be this fast?

Ai Hui stopped in his tracks. "Could there be a lava river below?"

Lou Lan crooked his head while thinking. "Very possible. Fire corals and lava spiders are organisms that live in the lava zone. It is highly likely that there is a lava river beneath."

Ai Hui continued, asking, "Will there be other organisms in the lava river?"

Shi Xueman quickly caught onto Ai Hui's train of thought. While underground, the lava river offered light and heat, so it was just like any water river or lake above ground and would be a place where subterranean organisms gathered.

No matter how powerful, there would not be only one organism monopolizing any lava river.

"There must be." Lou Lan nodded.

"Lou Lan, take note of the concentration of fire elemental energy in the nearby region. We might be able to locate the general position of the lava river. When nailing the gold needles, we must guard against fire elemental dire beasts. Oh, and blood beasts," Ai Hui muttered.

"Okay." Lou Lan nodded.

"Which way should we go now?" Ai Hui questioned.

Lou Lan pointed at a rock wall. "This way. The place to nail the golden needle is 400 meters down. I suggest we open up a passage directly. To go through the cave passage would be a long way, and it might lead to the lava river. It would be safer for us to carve a straightforward opening."

"Open up a passage directly?" Ai Hui was stunned. He examined the solid granite rocks. It was easy for him to break one piece, but to dig a 400 meter long passage was simply too much work considering that it had to be rather wide to fit the volume of the golden needle.

"Indeed. Leave it to me." Lou Lan took up the task spontaneously.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. What he deemed challenging was a piece of cake for Lou Lan. Lou Lan was a sand puppet. Controlling earth elemental energy was his inherent ability.

Ai Hui felt great pride.

Is there anything in this world that my all-purpose Lou Lan can’t do?

Chapter 245: Wanna Be Human?

He Yong looked on listlessly at the densely packed vine creepers. They hung down like snakes, their ends slightly moving. They would flock to whichever wounded person who made any movement. He Yong was a brave wood elementalist. The vines he once treated as his partner were now indicting him cruelly.

From his initial fear to his collapse to the numbness he felt now, He Yong already knew he had no hope of surviving.

At this point, he was actually less afraid. He was merely waiting for the Death God's arrival.

Without hope, people were able to feel calm instead. Complain? There was nothing to complain about. Death meant the end. Killing his partners with his own hands had brought greater and endless suffering.

His trial had already started when he was infected with the blood poison.

The blood poison spread inside his body and he felt a terrifying, ferocious beast awakening within. He would rather die a quiet death as a wounded soldier in the military camp than lose consciousness and start attacking humans like a wild beast. He would rather die than use this body to kill his friends and family.

Death did not arrive immediately. The blood poison was still spreading.

The moments before death often made people reflect on all that they had done in life. While he had not accomplished anything significant his whole life, had not earned a lot of money, had not achieved great success, and had some unfulfilled wishes, he was already very content.

He had a cute child, a beautiful wife, and most importantly, they were still alive.

He had pushed them aside at the last moment. Feeling proud of his bravery, there was no better ending than this.

He was going to die, but they would live on nicely. That was enough for him.

He felt lucky in fact. All he needed to do now was to enjoy his last moments of glory as he waited for the arrival of death.

The blood poison spread very quickly and he could feel the changes within his body. It was not weak. Rather, it was filled with power. Impetuous power. Thoughts of massacre and the intention to kill emerged in his head continuously, growing uncontrollably like wild weeds.

His body was strengthening, his nails becoming as sharp as feline claws. In the middle of the night, he could hear sounds of bones growing. His flesh was becoming thicker, and his hair was growing at a visible speed. His voice became coarser, more turbid, and he even started howling lowly like a wild beast.

His vision became blood red. He stirred restlessly. Any tiny bit of sound greatly provoked his murderous instincts.

He started losing control over his body and would attack anyone who came near.

He Yong noticed that his control was rapidly declining, but he was not that afraid. It happened to the other wounded people as well. The spread of the blood poison would beastify them, turning them into dangerous blood fiends who frantically attacked everything around them.

At this time, the vines above his head would make the final judgment and end his life.

He Yong knew that his time was almost up. The closer he came, the more he felt that death was a form of release. He could not control his body. His mind was filled with evil thoughts, unable to recall the beautiful moments of his life or the beautiful smiles on his wife and child's faces.

What was the point of living like this? The thought that his family would see him in this ugly state made him tremble. When compared to that, death meant nothing.

It was time to end everything.

Come on!

Yet, what he feared happened. The fluttering vines continued swaying leisurely above his head, as if he was not there.

Kill me quickly!

He shouted madly, but only angry, beast-like grunts came out of his throat.

The vines above had no reaction whatsoever.

Why?

An insane bloodlust overtook his body and mind, exploding suddenly. The scarlet red world was like a tide that occupied his vision and brain. His remaining rationality shrank into a corner, witnessing everything that was happening. His body felt so foreign and was no longer under his control.

All of a sudden, he pounced on the person closest to him, his hands full of sharp nails that effortlessly pierced into the victim's body.

What he got in return was a beast-like bellow.

The whole camp turned into a cruel wrestling ring.

Looking down at the fight that was currently raging, Yan Hai's

heart was filled with frigid air. Thousands of people killing simultaneously... such a chaotic, bloody scene made his hands and feet icy. He had never thought of himself as a good person, but the sight before him still frightened him.

What he feared more was the person beside him. The mastermind of it all, Sir Tian Kuan.

Half had fallen in the blink of an eye. The wild beasts' angry grunts became sparser as well. Corpses and crisscrossing streams of fresh blood filled the ground. It was simply a bitter and bleak looking battleground.

Tian Kuan fiddled with the plants unhurriedly.

The densely packed vines grew swiftly, and like agile snakes, they dipped into the bloodpool. They suctioned and absorbed the fresh blood greedily, as if they were tasting a delicacy. Blood red wisps invaded the tender greenery, producing an exceptionally demonic effect.

"This fresh blood is first-rate fertilizer. It cannot be wasted," Tian Kuan commented indifferently.

Yan Hai quivered. "Sir, your subordinate is slow-witted. There's something I don't quite understand," he started to say, but not without hesitation.

"Oh, what do you not get?" Tian Kuan replied casually.

Yan Hai questioned carefully, "These wounded soldiers were infected by the sacred blood and are already our people. Isn’t this... a pity?"

"A pity?" Tian Kuan burst out laughing. "You think it’s a pity?"

Yan Hai stammered, "What I meant was that if this many people were to team up, their power would be commendable."

Tian Kuan smiled. "I only need useful people. There are many of them, but the majority are useless. I only need the cream of the crop. 50 of them is all I need."

Yan Hui trembled inwardly, his legs fighting to remain straight. Cold sweat poured down his back.

"Filtering 50 out from a few thousand is enough of a chance given to them." Tian Kuan laughed lightly. "If they die, it only means that they were too weak. Only victors have the right to gain that opportunity."

Yan Hai was full of regrets. How could he have forgotten? Sir became a victor himself by surviving such elimination methods.

Tian Kuan’s gaze fell onto the battlefield, the smile on his face growing.

"Wanna be human? Not so easy."

The number of survivors decreased as the vines became plumper and replete with fresh blood. They were like demonic, yet quick-witted, blood snakes.

Only 50 were left on the field and those demonic blood red vines flocked toward them, binding them tightly. They were like wild beasts, yelling and struggling.

"Look, these are the strongest 50. Only the victors will have a chance of survival." Tian Kuan paused, a smile breaking out. "And a reward."

He extended one leg out of the window, and the blood red vines rushed over from all directions like a tide, forming a flight of stairs beneath his feet.

With the aura of a ruler, Yan Hai descended the interwoven vine steps.

Behind him, Yan Hai crept forward, his heart filled with reverence.

Tian Kuan mumbled to himself, "No wonder so many people enjoy borrowing outside forces. It feels pretty good."

The survivors raised their heads and glared at Tian Kuan, their red pupils filled with indignation and wrath. They snarled at Tian

Kuan.

The anguished wailings of the wounded was a big blow to morale, so the quarantine camp made special arrangements. The vines produced a soundproofing effect, so earth-shattering bellows would not be heard from the outside at all.

"Respect the strong players."

Tian Kuan’s smile carried a tinge of callousness, emitting a rich bloody glow.

The bloody glow was imposing and overbearing. Still bound by the blood vines, the anger in the survivors’ eyes instantly vanished as fear took over, and they started trembled uncontrollably. Plop! All of them fell and crouched on the ground when the blood vines released their grip.

Yan Hai’s body was shaking as well. He finally knew how frightful Sir’s abilities were.

The bloody glow surrounding Sir made him fear and comply. Not a single rebellious thought surfaced in his brain. The temperature of the blood within his body fell rapidly, as if he was in a cold, icy place.

"Congratulations, a new opportunity awaits. An opportunity is always given to the victor as a prize."

That voice amid the bloody glow was imposing, yet enticing.

He Yong was shivering from the chill. His body trembled. Just like how wild beasts react toward their predators, his urge to kill was gone and replaced by obedience and fear, which instinctively settled in the deepest part of his body

He lost complete control of his body.

That remaining trace of reason shook amongst the tide-like scarlet red. He saw himself killing an unfamiliar elementalist who was close by as well as a friend of 20 years. One after another, some foreign and some acquaintances...

His palms were covered in fresh blood.

He was like a bystander, fearfully watching the crazy massacre. During that nonstop slaughter, his last bit of barely existing reason floated helplessly amid the raging tide of attacks. The thrill of killing was so distinct, so dreadful.

No...

He just wanted to die. To end it all.

The red bloody glow enveloped his world, and the voice within said, "An opportunity is always given to the victor as a prize."

Opportunity...

The wild beasts started to stir, their last thread of reason on the verge of collapsing. What opportunity could it be?

"How does it feel being like a wild beast? Uncontrollable, killer instinct... does it feel very terrible? Do you want to gain control of it all? Gain control of your bodies? You can restart. Restart everything and regain control of everything. You can live on happily, start a new life, and be a human once again."

"Wanna be human?"

Amid the red light, that voice was at times misty and remote and at times up-close.

"Wanna be human?"

...

"Wanna be human?"

Like an echo, he questioned over and over again.

He Yong last trace of reason almost crumbled. Memories of his first meeting with his wife, how he taught his child to walk, how he blocked the blood fiends, and how he saw that his family was safe and sound flashed across his mind. Peace befell his heart.

Not everything can be restarted because not everything can be given up on.

"No..."

The wild beast’s low howl was exceptionally clear.

Tian Kuan was rather surprised. "What a pity."

The blood vines suddenly stretched taut and pierced into the back of the wild beast’s head, causing its body to stiffen as the luster in its red eyes faded. The blood vines withdrew, and the wild beast’s corpse fell onto the ground. An indescribable calmness was evident on its hairy face.

"Next."

"Wanna be human?"

Chapter 246: The Invulnerable Reason

The atmosphere in the magistrate court was tense. Nine golden needles were completed, stirring up much excitement, but also tremendous anxiety for everybody. Once the next part of the plan started, there was simply no room for errors.

To save time, the node at the Heaven Pit was handed over to Ai Hui and his group while the other eight nodes were distributed to other teams to investigate.

Teams came back consecutively to report, and so far, there was only good news.

The "treating the city as a piece of cloth" plan was the key element for Central Pine City’s survival. The mayor and dean placed high hopes on it. Honestly, the fact that things could drag on until now was already far beyond their expectations. This also gave them sufficient time to complete the "treating the city as a piece of cloth" plan.

Perhaps it was the succession of good news that significantly lifted the dean’s mood . His tone became lighter as well. "Only Ai Hui and his group are left now."

"Yes, only their side is left," Mayor Wang Zhen spoke ruefully. Only they knew how hard it was to survive for this long.

"I never thought you would task Ai Hui with the Heaven Pit." The dean felt somewhat woeful as well. He now had faith in Wang

Zhen since things would have been worse if not for the decisions made by the latter during critical times.

As if he had thought of something, Wang Zhen laughed as he replied, "It wasn't easy at all to get Ai Hui to do something. We have been offering Heaven Merit Points, rewards, and training methods to entice him. There's no one in Central Pine City richer than him."

The dean burst out laughing too. "That's not too bad. At least you only gave out the rewards after receiving his services. You should've seen what he was like when talking over conditions with me. No mercy!"

With a smiling expression, Wang Zhen asked, "So you're trying to say that I must agree since he was finally willing to take on this responsibility?"

"I just have no idea what's going on inside." Concern was evident in the principal's face. "We should've gone with them."

"Don't worry." Wang Zhen comforted. "We've not seen all of Ai Hui's abilities. Plus, Shi Xueman is with him so what could go wrong? That fellow has the level-headedness of a general. It's thanks to him, and not us, that the city is still standing."

The principal nodded.

Without Ai Hui, the consequences of the war on Long Street

would be unimaginable. The outcome of the Heaven Pit battle would have been different if not for Ai Hui's reminder to dive.

Any hesitation at that point would have led to a completely different result.

Twice, during desperate crises, it had been Ai Hui who pulled strongly against the crazy tides.

"A chaotic world creates heroes, eh." Wang Zhen was somewhat moved. "Seeing the progress of that fellow, from a student to 'The Lightning Blade,' really reminds us of our old age. The world belongs to the youngsters now."

The principal sighed. "Yeah, I only hope for them to come out of it safely."

"They will." Wang Zhen's tone was exceptionally certain. "We persevered and sacrificed so many people not so we would just fail. We will start nailing the golden needles once Ai Hui and his people are back."

In the dark subterranean world, the rolling waves of the lava river carried bright, glittering sparks.

Two silhouettes, one male and the other female, flew and fought at an extremely high speed. A green arrow ray and red bloody glow collided continuously in midair. The lady was dressed in red and her poses were strange, appearing and disappearing in the air like a

demon. The man was holding a bow and arrow while following closely behind, his movements as fast as lightning.

Wherever they were, sand and rocks flew everywhere as they filled the air with fiery rain from the lava river.

It could be seen that neither dared to fight too recklessly since they were thousands of kilometers underground. If they fought too hard and triggered a collapse around them, they would be buried alive. No matter how strong they were, there was no chance of survival if they were trapped.

"Vice Division Leader Yu has been chasing me for five days. Are you my admirer? Following me so closely."

The red lady's laughter echoed between the rocks as a green arrow ray pierced through her body from behind. Yet, it did not penetrate her body, but landed among the rocks. The red silhouette in midair faded as it was actually an afterimage.

"It's vice division leader."

Deadpan, Yu Mingqiu corrected the lady's mistake as the bowstring in his hand moved lightning fast. An arrow ray was swiftly launched at the red shadow that appeared from the other side, but again, it went through an afterimage and struck a wall.

From the time he searched for her aimlessly to the time he reached her, he immediately noticed that her strength was linked

to the blood poison in countless ways and pursued her even more actively.

The lady's appearance verified some of his conjectures. The blood poison disaster in the Induction Ground was a plot! He had wanted to capture and interrogate the opponent to find out more about the mastermind, but was shocked by her strength.

Both had been fighting for five days and nights, but there had not been a winner so far!

Yu Mingqiu had extreme confidence in his abilities since he was the vice division leader of a division after all. In all of the Avalon of Five Elements, his ability was among the top.

Yet, he quickly found that his opponent's ability was not beneath his.

What surprised him more was the fact that instead of elemental energy, her body contained a very foreign force. Blood poison, blood disaster, mysterious lady, unknown force, misleading background...

He was indescribably shaken, knowing he was on the brink of obtaining the truth.

He had to take his opponent down no matter what. This exceptionally seductive lady in red was the biggest clue.

Yu Mingqiu was like dogskin plaster, pestering her nonstop and not giving up even after five days and nights of chasing.

"Vice division leader? You really look down on me." The lady in red laughed gently and unreliably. "The Avalon of Five Elements is no fun, why not join us? I'll reserve a division leader position for you. This promise I can fulfill."

"Vice division leader position... you're talking like it's real," Yu Mingqiu said dismissively.

"Yes, the timing's just right. We are preparing to establish 13 divisions, so this is an extremely rare opportunity. If you miss it, it'd be difficult to talk about the division leadert position. Perhaps Brother Yu will meet a few familiar faces. Not everyone is as stubborn as you."

Yu Mingqiu was slightly shaken inside, but his movements were not sluggish. "Familiar faces? Come, tell me a few names and I'll see."

"Hehe, join us and you'll know, Brother Yu."

Both had been using such banter to sound each other out for the past five days.

The lady in red felt gloomy too. Her time in Central Pine City had not gone smoothly, and then she had to bumped into Yu Mingqiu and became tangled with him. Initially, seeing that Yu Mingqiu

was exhausted, she had planned to capture him. Yet, Yu Mingqiu was outstandingly tough. Not only did she fail to defeat him, she got harassed by him.

"I’m so cool, yet you’re trying to use a mere division leader position to get rid of me? Don’t look down on me!"

A whole chain of words flew out of his mouth rapidly as his arm movements sped up as well.

The lady in red did not drop her guard and easily dodged his attacks. "It’s a pity that you’re not interested, Brother Yu. Five days have passed. I wonder if the people waiting for your rescue are still alive or have fallen into the blood fiends’ mouths. Seeing that you’re coming for me so relentlessly, we must be closely related?"

Yu Mingqiu burst out laughing. "Unable to escape, it’s depressing eh?"

"I’m just curious as to why you would chase after me so closely and diligently?" the lady in red asked with an innocent face.

Yu Mingqiu answered righteously, "Because I’m lost."

"Lost..." The lady in red was baffled by his reply and was unable to connect the dots.

"Between going after you and finding my way, I think the former

is easier." Yu Mingqiu's reason was invulnerable.

"..."

It was even more complicated underground. Both were lost at this point and knew not where they were. The lady in red moved forward and along the lava river since there were numerous lava river tributaries that were certainly unobstructed. On the other hand, those seemingly open, accessible cracks and caves easily led to dead ends.

She would have no choice, but to grapple with Yu Mingqiu if they reached a dead end.

It was not her plan to engage in a face-off with such a strong opponent right now.

She did not want to waste any more time on Yu Mingqiu. While he seemed to be carefree on occasion, his thoughts were often elaborate. Any slight carelessness on her part will allow him to mislead her easily.

The determination displayed by Yu Mingqiu made her understand what kind of strength and abilities such a fearsome opponent possessed.

What she needed now was time. If she had some more time, she could easily use her beast subjugation spells to subdue a powerful blood-traced fiend. With its help, she could then gain equal footing

and attack Yu Mingqiu from there.

Suddenly, she noticed a wispy, faintly discernable magma odor in the air.

The nearest lava river was about 50 meters away from where she was, and there was an open zone in the vicinity. This wisp of magma odor, mixed with blood spiritual force, produced unique undulations. The surrounding traces of blazing corals being eaten jolted her mind.

Lava spider!

Judging from the leftover blood spiritual force undulations, it was a highly-transformed lava spider. It was likely to be a "blood-faded" lava spider.

When the blood traces that the blood fiends developed started to stabilize, their blood-colored bodies would fade. They would then be termed "blood-faded" when their skin and fur recovered its natural color.

A completely blood-faded blood fiend looked no different from regular wild beasts, but were stronger and much more powerful. Blood-fading was a sign that the blood traces on the fiends' bodies were thoroughly stabilized. They would enter a whole new realm at this point.

If she could engage the help of the lava spider, she could

definitely get rid of Yu Mingqiu.

Killing a vice division leader was a considerably impressive contribution. If she had better luck and could capture him alive, she would have a heavyweight subordinate.

No matter how loyal, one would not be able to resist the Blood of God.

How could mere mortals resist it?

With a twist of her body, she suddenly made her way into the narrow crevice.

Yu Mingqiu was stunned. Not good! He chased after her hurriedly.

For the past five days, the lady in red had been fleeing along the lava river instead of threading through any crevices. Such a sudden change caught him off guard and slightly delayed his reaction time.

This little delay caused him to lose sight of her upon entering the crevice.

Luckily, there was only one path. Without a word, he sped forward.

Chapter 247: Reunion Of Old Friends

"It’s right in front, Ai Hui."

Right after Lou Lan spoke, the wall in front of them suddenly melted and collapsed, revealing a dark cavern.

Behind the three of them was a large passage about seven meters high and six meters wide. The entire passage was an astonishing 400 meters in length and was created by Lou Lan alone.

Lou Lan’s exceptional abilities often left Ai Hui feeling like a tourist.

Seeing Lou Lan’s entire process first hand, Shi Xueman could not resist offering incessant praise. "Lou Lan is amazing! Wow, truly amazing! Lou Lan is definitely the world’s most amazing sand puppet!"

Creating a 400-meter passage this deep underground was no mean feat. The ground was lined with huge, solid rocks and building a tunnel of this scale would probably require at least 10 earth elementalists working for an entire night. Lou Lan, however, was able to do it with ease, leaving Shi Xueman in awe.

Besides following the wrong person, Lou Lan did not seem to have any flaws.

Shi Xueman stared at Ai Hui angrily. She felt that Ai Hui was

unworthy of such an amazing sand puppet, it was like casting pearls before swine! She imagined what it would be like if Lou Lan followed her home. Oh, what a fine time they'd have!

"Why are you glaring at me like that?"

The Iron Lady continued to glare angrily at Ai Hui. Ai Hui felt that she was being ridiculous, especially since he had not even done anything to provoke her.

"Hmph!" Shi Xueman snorted as she turned her gaze away.

Ai Hui entered the cavern and began to examine his surroundings. This cavern was much smaller than the one with the lava spider, but the golden needle was still able to fit in it.

Lou Lan had found the right place!

Ai Hui could sense that the elemental energy here was much more vigorous than that of other places.

He had seen his master's plan and recognized that the nodes involved were something that they had discussed before. His master believed that the world's elemental energies were not stationary, but ever flowing. Its slow movement was the reason why it appeared to be stationary.

According to his master's theory, the force driving these movements was the constant cycling of the five elements.

This was the secret of the nodes. Here, the five elements cycled into a whirlpool of energy. The elemental energy around these nodes were influenced by its activity, making it flow.

Current studies involving the five elements rarely touched upon this aspect, so there were not many full-fledged theories regarding the nodes. Many of his master's preliminary ideas were proven as a result of the current plan's execution.

His master had discussed his deepened understanding of the subject matter when they last met.

Ai Hui snapped out of his daze and began to inspect the cavern. It appeared to have been formed by flowing water, something evident from the stalactites hanging above. The floor was largely uneven and was marked by many slippery gulches. There were two natural crevices situated at the corners of the cavern. A stream could be seen through only one of them, but the other was most likely formed as a result of water erosion as well. Ai Hui could hear the sound of flowing water through both of them.

Small streams were probably responsible for shaping this interesting underground environment, while lava acted as its main source of light.

Ai Hui felt extremely relieved that there were no blazing corals around.

Subterranean dire beasts were dangerous creatures to begin with

and were even more deadly after turning into subterranean blood fiends. If the Iron Lady had not gone on a rampage against the lava spider, Ai Hui would not have had much confidence in defeating it.

Ai Hui could feel how different he had become.

Without the sword embryo's state, Ai Hui's senses were not as keen as before. His perceptive range had reduced greatly, an immense disadvantage in this dark, complex, underground environment. On the bright side, his understanding of swordplay had deepened tremendously, and he was now more conscious of his sword movements. At the moment of contact between his blade and his target, Ai Hui could now react faster and more rationally than before.

The unique sword pills of elemental energy in his body, coupled with his achievement of elemental internalization, had increased his strength by a large amount. The electricity that remained in his flesh had been channeled into his hand palaces as well as his earth palace, imparting a distinct lightning flavor to his elemental energy.

All things considered, he was much more formidable than he used to be.

Although he was more powerful, the enemies he had to face were similarly also becoming more powerful. He often experienced situations where his improvements were practically cancelled out.

Shi Xueman stuck closely to Ai Hui, ready to provide assistance

when required. Having had experience in leading a team, she had become much more accustomed to cooperating with others. While it was difficult to persuade her to do certain things, Shi Xueman often quickly adopted practices that she deemed useful.

Ai Hui decided to further examine the crevice for signs of activity. He would ask Lou Lan to seal it up if no such signs were found.

The same would apply for the other crevice.

Ai Hui felt a cold, biting wind blowing out from the crevice as he neared it. Instead of hastily entering it, Ai Hui stopped a short distance away, listening intently for any anomalies. Shi Xueman stood nearby, holding her breath. She knew that Ai Hui was much more experienced in such situations than her. Although she often looked at him with disdain, Shi Xueman had absolute faith in Ai Hui's decisions regarding combat related matters.

Nothing out of the ordinary was heard.

Ai Hui walked closer toward the crevice. Just as he was about to enter the crevice, a premonition arose in his heart.

His body reacted immediately. The limp Dragonspine in Ai Hui's hand immediately shot up and straightened like a cobra that had sensed danger as he swiftly stepped backward.

Ding!

Just as the Dragonspine’s tip made contact, the seven sword pills of elemental energy within his body simultaneously exploded.

Ai Hui flew backward as if he had been hit by a heavy blow.

A gentle gasp of surprise could be heard from the crevice.

Right after, a red flash shot out of the crevice directly at Ai Hui.

Shi Xueman stepped forward with her spear raised and accurately stabbed the red flash.

The immense force of Cirrus managed to scatter the red flash, but the impact forced Shi Xueman several steps back.

Both Ai Hui and Shi Xueman were slightly surprised that their combined effort was so easily deflected. The two of them stood on opposite sides facing the cave while assuming an offensive stance.

A reddish figure slowly walked out of the crevice.

Ai Hui took a good look at the person walking out, and blurted, "It’s you!"

The lady in red was surprised to see Ai Hui. "So it’s you."

Shi Xueman was amazed by the lady in red's beauty.

She had a refined, flawless face and a beauty that was suffocating. Her smoky eyes were reminiscent of mist floating gently above a body of water. The red robe that she wore was like a coil of crimson smoke that wrapped elegantly around her splendid figure. She looked like she had just walked out of a dense fog and was shrouded temptingly in mystery.

Her fine, delicate, red lips lit up the dense fog and highlighted the fair skin on her exquisite collarbone. The small movements her lips made when she breathed were incredibly seductive.

Shi Xueman would describe her as unimaginably coy.

Since her looks and behavior were always in the spotlight, Shi Xueman never thought much about appearances.

This lady in red standing before Shi Xueman had somehow triggered a sort of awareness in her.

The two of them had met before...

This sudden realization hit Shi Xueman, and she inadvertently turned her gaze toward Ai Hui. She had no idea why she was looking at him, but the movement was instinctive.

Shi Xueman felt the pressure enveloping her evaporate when she saw Ai Hui's body tense up in anticipation of a formidable

opponent.

She regained her focus and gripped her spear tightly. She was secretly rejoicing in Ai Hui's misfortune.

Looks like this scoundrel had suffered in her hands before!

This was the first time she had seen Ai Hui so tense in front of an enemy. Furthermore, the strength the red lady had just demonstrated was quite amazing.

Shi Xueman, however, was not scared one bit. In fact, she was eager to engage.

The lady in red glanced at Shi Xueman, a look of adoration glistening in her eyes. Shi Xueman's outwardly cold demeanor went well with her beautiful features. Combined with her resolute brows and the suave armor on her body, Shi Xueman was indeed a lovely sight to behold.

"I see you've found a new flame so soon. What a heartless scoundrel."

The lady in red spoke faintly, with grief and heartbreak written all over her face.

Ai Hui stared at her with unblinking eyes. He lowered his body ever so slightly as he adjusted his breathing. His five fingers drummed slowly against his sword hilt, relaxing and tensing each

digit at different intervals. He gradually relaxed his stiffened body.

He knew just how dangerous this enigmatic lady was, just how much power she really possessed.

She was definitely high on Ai Hui’s list of opponents he would not want to meet.

It seemed however, that there was nowhere to run.

"Be careful, she’s a blood elementalist," stated Ai Hui.

Shi Xueman was slightly taken aback upon hearing that. Blood elementalist!

She had never heard of this term before, but she quickly understood who they were facing. Countless questions flooded her mind, but the most pertinent one slipped out of her mouth in a grave tone. "They are the ones behind this blood disaster?"

"That’s right," Ai Hui replied matter-of-factly.

The lady in red noticed the pair’s unease and smiled slightly. Her gaze brightened as it landed on Ai Hui. "Your improvement is quite astonishing, and you’re indeed someone worthy of catching my eye. You broke my heart when you left without saying goodbye. I never thought we’d reunite again. Looks like it’s heaven's will."

Compared to that troublesome Yu Mingqiu, the young man in front of her was slightly weaker, but had way more potential.

The lava spider's presence helped her to deduce that the crevice provided a clear path. Her sudden actions had enabled her to momentarily slow Yu Mingqiu's reactions, allowing her to utilize the complex geography of the caves to throw him off.

She had planned to tame the lava spider before killing or capturing Yu Mingqiu.

She was not expecting to meet Ai Hui, much less see him improve this much.

Ai Hui's ability to withstand the blood poison had surprised her greatly. Since then, she had not stopped wondering how Ai Hui managed to escape. She was shocked to see that he did not become a blood elementalist, but even more surprised so to see him improve by leaps and bounds.

This fellow must be hiding something!

A sinister glint flashed in her eyes. Let's see if you manage to escape this time.

Standing there largely unnoticed by the lady in red, Shi Xueman seethed with rage. She had always thought that the blood disaster was a natural disaster. Turns out it wasn't.

How many had died in this disaster?

I don’t know!

How many people were currently experiencing fear and despair at the hands of an imminent death?

No idea!

This was unforgivable!

Shi Xueman’s anger boiled over, and all she could see were flames of rage. Her heart was filled with pure, unadulterated hatred. Destroy her!

She thrust her trusty spear forward without uttering a single word!

Chapter 248: Tree Spirit's Blood

Shi Xueman lashed out hatefully, putting as much power as she could into the attack. The elemental energy within the cavern appeared to be greatly disturbed by this swift, impactful blow.

The lady in red laughed lightly as she sashayed lithely into a wisp of red smoke.

"You have to be more gentle, my dear, or we'll all be buried together. Wouldn't he like that though."

The lady in red teased Shi Xueman in a dreamy, relaxed voice, making her blush.

Cirrus' speartip stopped right in front of the cavern's rock wall, but its spear ray sliced deeply into the wall like a hot knife through butter. Shi Xueman sneered coldly and took a step back. She skillfully spun her spear backward, making its base face the ceiling. Her entire motion reminded one of a large whale slapping its tail up into the air.

The spear's base accurately deflected the red sleeve that was stealthily flying toward the back of her head.

The power within the spear's base exploded, ripping the lady in red's sleeve to shreds.

Shi Xueman's face darkened. Although she managed to hit the

lady in red's sleeves, that attack had felt empty, as if she had missed.

The scattered pieces of sleeves were constantly changing, eventually turning into a bunch of blood red butterflies. Their wings started lighting up with spots of brilliance, creating a gorgeous, multi-colored display of radiance.

"Oh dearie, you're so strong and so pretty to boot. I'd totally be smitten by you if I was a man. I guess it's not surprising that he's moved on from me already."

The colorful butterflies flew all over the cavern, their light lingered in the air and created a beautiful dreamscape that felt surreal, yet extremely lifelike.

A dreamy voice drifted amid the flowing, captivating lights.

Shi Xueman had never faced such an opponent before. She could not tell if the ever-changing butterflies were real or just an illusion. Additionally, no signs of the lady in red's elemental energy could be detected.

As Shi Xueman slowly lost herself to the dreamy display, Ai Hui suddenly swung his sword.

His sword stroke was executed without warning and was aimed at a strange spot. Ai Hui had thrust his sword diagonally upward into the space beside him.

The sound of metal clashing against stone rang out.

A shadowy curtain appeared before dispersing at the spot where Ai Hui appeared to have randomly stabbed. A red figure appeared from behind the illusion.

The lady in red was visibly astonished. She had not expected that Ai Hui was able to detect her true body.

Not giving her any opportunity to react, Ai Hui rained several sword rays down on the lady in red with a flick of his wrist.

She gracefully spun her red sleeves in the air and absorbed the harsh sword rays as they made contact.

"Seems like I've underestimated you," she said teasingly. "Come, follow big sister and you'll be rewarded with sweets."

Her red sleeves spread out in front of her, turning into wisps of lazy, red smoke that drifted toward Ai Hui.

Ai hui's hairs abruptly stood on edge. The red smoke looked innocuous and weak, but something about it made Ai Hui feel threatened. He arched his body like an angered wild beast, ready to attack.

Instead of retreating, he took a short step forward with his left

leg. His body unleashed a cold, sharp intent as the Dragonspine in his hand lashed out in front of him!

A deep, clear sword ray appeared around his blade, accompanied by a melodious ringing sound. Seven daggers wove a web of lightning around it.

Accompanied by the silver lightning web, the biting cold sword ray plunged into the cloud of red smoke.

The sword ray pierced through the red smoke, bringing the lightning web into contact with it. Like how a water droplet touching hot oil causes it to pop, an explosion occurred the moment the lightning web and red smoke came into contact.

Sssss!

The wildly dancing Dragonspine caused a large portion of the red smoke to dissipate.

The lady in red let out a refined "hmph." She casually brushed off the sword ray, but was surprised by the lightning contained within it. Even more shocking was how damaging the lightning was against her.

There were no elementalists, blood or otherwise, who could control lightning. She had nott expected something like this and almost fell prey to Ai Hui’s attack.

Her profound battle experience had saved her life. Having seen more combat than Ai Hui, the lady in red was especially adept at handling dangerous situations.

She used her other red sleeve to strike the sword ray, making use of the force to help her rebound and disappear into the brightly colored lights.

Ai Hui, himself, was taken aback by the lightning's effectiveness. The lady in red had disappeared by the time he snapped out of it.

He remained vigilant while he thought things through.

Since ancient times, the thunder stars had been blood refinement's greatest weakness. Blood refinement had always been the path and domain of those geared toward the more ghastly and demonic yin energy. Thunder stars on the other hand, were one of the strongest sources of yang energy and a natural counter to blood refinement.

The written accounts regarding zombies, demons, and spirits often mentioned that they operated mainly at night. Electricity was also recorded as being their biggest fear.

The electricity within his body had been absorbed and reformed by chance. To think its usefulness would be discovered today.

If that was the case...

Ai Hui glanced at Shi Xueman after he thought of something.

Shi Xueman immediately got the memo, gripping her spear tightly.

The lady in red cautiously remained in hiding. She was deeply shaken by the air of destruction that was present when the lightning burst forth.

This was what caused her minor injuries.

From when she first started nurturing blood spiritual force, she had never experienced such a situation before. Previously, nothing seemed to be capable of opposing her blood spiritual force.

The streaks of lightning were more surprising than they were damaging.

Even though lightning was effective against her blood spiritual force, Ai Hui's use of it was still underdeveloped.

The ironclad beauty's strength had also startled her. Even though she had the upper hand, Shi Xueman's power made the lady in red remain on guard. She was well versed in the differences between elementalists' base levels and rather impressed by Shi Xueman's achievement at such a young age.

Yet, the person who she was truly amazed by was Ai Hui.

How many days had it been since they last met?

How did he become so powerful?

Ai Hui's first sword stroke had completely thrown her off. She had no idea how he managed to hold his ground after executing an attack of that magnitude. What was even more shocking was the lightning contained within that sword ray.

Ai Hui was but an ant to her when they last met, easily squished to death. This time however, Ai Hui was actually strong enough to pose a threat to her.

A killing intent momentarily crossed her mind. If she could not capture him, she would have no choice but to kill them.

At his current rate of improvement, Ai Hui would soon become a huge pain in the neck. She certainly did not want to leave such a troublesome character alive.

Right at that moment, the lady in red sensed danger.

Noting that Shi Xueman understood his intentions, Ai Hui took a deep breath and began to channel his elemental energy.

He activated both his hand palaces as well as his earth palace, causing a silver glint to flash in his eyes. The Dragonspine in his

hand slowly straightened and extended forward.

Ai Hui's tense muscles and slow, deliberate movements made it appear as though the Dragonspine in his hand weighed a ton. His eyes stared dead ahead.

The Dragonspine's blade grew brighter and brighter as it inched forward.

All of a sudden, the sword ray around the Dragonspine grew unbelievably bright. Countless lightning-shrouded sword rays shot off from the sword's blade, fanning out in all directions. The entire cavern was lit up in an instant.

[Dust Fall]!

The scattered sword rays fanned out, covering the entire cavern in a complex web of silver lightning.

The original [Dust Fall] created light, lively sword rays that scattered without much control. In Ai Hui's hands, however, the skill had gained new life. The surging lightning made the nimble technique much more violent and potent.

Half of the multi-colored butterflies and shadowy illusions vanished in an instant.

The lady in red was momentarily stunned as she became exposed. Ai Hui's lightning-enhanced attacks were not as weak as she had

initially thought. This sudden realization made her scoff at her own naivety.

A spear ray was fast approaching her face.

Shi Xueman had totally abandoned her fanciful techniques and poured all of her elemental energy into one clean, unadorned stab.

Not a single shred of elemental energy was left in her body. In that instant, her focus was completely locked onto the lady in red. All those lives that were sacrificed in front of her eyes, all the fear and despair that she had experienced, and every ounce of hatred and righteousness within her bones allowed her to bring out more power than she had ever unleashed before.

All of her incorporeal energies were collectively incorporated into this relentless stab. It was all or nothing.

The snow-white spear had the power of a whale.

The lady in red's eyes filled with apprehension, but it swiftly disappeared. Having participated in so many battles, her psyche was not something to be belittled.

She extended her fingers and gently tapped the empty space in front of her. Her pale, slender fingers were as beautiful as a work of art.

She unleashed a seemingly demonic power that engulfed all light

in the cavern.

The blood red smoke, colorful butterflies, shards of light, and shredded pieces of her red sleeve collected at her fingertips. Everything was swiftly condensed into a bright red drop of fresh blood.

There were no traces of the charming lady from before. The lady in red now had a cold, austere presence.

She flicked her perfectly sculpted middle finger.

The droplet of blood sluggishly flew toward the spear ray.

The entire process was completed in the blink of an eye, but Ai Hui could clearly see each and every move.

Ai Hui’s eyes glazed over in fear.

He could not explain why, but a deep instinctive fear rose up from within his soul.

He leapt toward Shi Xueman without further consideration.

At the moment of impact, a barely detectable cracking sound could be heard. To Ai Hui and Shi Xueman, however, the sound was like a sudden clap of thunder.

The blood droplet ruptured, releasing streaks of blood. These streaks moved like tendrils and rapidly coiled their way up Cirrus.

Shi Xueman felt her elemental energy rapidly depleting, it was as though there was a black hole at the tip of her spear sucking up every last bit of it.

She wished she could withdraw her elemental energy, but it was too late. Her elemental energy was being devoured at a frenzied pace and was completely out of her control.

A sense of helplessness quickly overtook her when she discovered that she could not even toss Cirrus aside. The suction at the end of the spear was forcing the spear to remain in her hand.

The lady in red waved her sleeves. Hints of a wry smile could be seen on her pale face as she watched Shi Xueman struggle to no avail.

Her expression changed to one of annoyance when she heard a piercing sound coming from the other side of the crevice.

Dang it!

Yu Mingqiu!

Although she had emerged victorious from this engagement, her injuries were not all that light. That droplet of [Tree Spirit's Blood] was extracted from innumerable blood trees and possessed a strong

life force. The nurturing quality of the [Tree Spirit's Blood] was highly beneficial for her body. She could not bear to use it unless she had no other choice.

Now that she had lost that precious droplet, her strength had decreased by quite a bit.

She had no chance of beating Yu Mingqiu in her current state.

In addition, she probably would not be able to escape if she were to engage Yu Mingqiu again.

Without hesitation, the lady in red fled the scene.

Yu Mingqiu, who had just emerged from the crevice, relentlessly chased after the lady in red. In his fervor, he had completely missed Ai Hui and Shi Xueman.

Shi Xueman sunk deeper into despair as she watched the tendrils of blood creep up her spear toward her.

Was she going to die here? Her heart sank.

All of a sudden, a hand grabbed her spear.

Chapter 249: An Overlooked Question

Shi Xueman stared blankly at the hand on her spear, recognizing it as Ai Hui's.

Her mind blanked in that instant. Why? Why was it him?

The hand that grasped the spear shook, generating an intense force that released Shi Xueman's grip from the spear and sent her flying. Why was he saving her?

No!

Tears fell down her cheeks uncontrollably while she screamed inside.

The red tendrils of blood were like vines that could not stop growing. They continuously coiled around Ai Hui, as if they were trying to swallow him whole.

All she could see was the side of his face. That thin, humble face betrayed no signs of emotion as the blood tendrils proceeded to devour him. He had not even taken one last look at her.

Shi Xueman collapsed on the ground, but immediately picked herself up in a bid to rush to Ai Hui's side.

A familiar voice resounded through the cavern, causing her to

freeze in place.

"Looks like I've accidentally saved you again. Remember to record it on your tab."

The mad, frenzied blood tendrils suddenly vanished without a trace, as though the entire thing had merely been an illusion. She could once again see the familiar face through the tears blurring her vision.

"Hey, why are you crying? Are you trying to renege on your debt?"

Ai Hui was shocked to see the Iron Lady's tearful face, particularly since this was the first time he had seen her cry. Shi Xueman had lost all of her usual loftiness and reminded Ai Hui of a young girl who had just been bullied.

Ai Hui was a little bit embarrassed. He waved his hand and said, "Fine, fine, I won't charge you this time."

Shi Xueman cried even harder, her tears falling like raindrops.

Ai Hui scratched his head in puzzlement. As an iron lady, her mind and body should both be as solid as iron. She must have been truly frightened by what happened.

Just as Ai Hui was starting to get a headache, Shi Xueman gradually stopped crying. Ai Hui heaved a huge sigh of relief.

Shi Xueman, who had stifled her tears, walked expressionlessly toward Ai Hui. She snatched Cirrus back from him and asked, "What happened to those blood tendrils?"

"Women are indeed as fickle as the weather," muttered Ai Hui to himself before replying, "They were absorbed by my bandages."

Shi Xueman finally saw the light. Every knew that the bandages Ai Hui wore were a gift from his mistress and were artifacts left behind by an ancient blood sect.

No wonder he came to her rescue...

She glared coldly at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui rubbed his nose innocently, unsure of what he had done to provoke her again. This time however, he did not attempt to clarify anything with her. His instincts told him that it was a terrible time to incur her wrath.

Ai Hui shouted for Lou Lan at the top of his lungs, "Lou Lan! Lou Lan!"

"Lou Lan’s here," Lou Lan announced as he emerged from the rocks.

"Is it possible to seal up these crevices?" Ai Hui asked.

"Leave it to me," quipped Lou Lan as he immediately got to work.

Ai Hui marveled at Lou Lan’s ability to put everyone in a good mood. Lou Lan was still the best.

Out of the blue, Shi Xueman inquired, "How did you come to know that blood elementalist?"

"Our first meeting was outside the noodle shop. I was later captured by her during a scouting expedition and almost became a blood elementalist. Thank the heavens I have these bandages," recollected Ai Hui.

Shi Xueman took a good look at Ai Hui. Sensing that he was hiding something, Shi Xueman proceeded to probe further. "What else do you know about the blood elementalists?" she asked.

"Not much," replied Ai Hui, shaking his head. "They’re backed by an organization that is very likely responsible for causing the blood disaster. This, of course, is merely my conjecture."

He was unwilling to divulge any more knowledge since his conversation with the old prisoner would probably land him in trouble.

The reinforcements’ delay led Ai Hui to conclude that the Blood of God had the upper hand. The old prisoner’s group existed solely to take on the Blood of God, but ended up in a terrible state. From

this, Ai Hui deduced that the Blood of God had infiltrated the Avalon of Five Elements and was possibly operating partially from inside. Ai Hui looked at the situation from the perspective of the Blood of God and decided that he too would have done the same.

This would also explain why the Blood of God had such a thorough understanding of the weaknesses of the Avalon of Five Elements as well as why the reinforcements were taking so long to arrive. Everything appeared to be under the watchful eye of the Blood of God.

Again, these were only his conjectures. There were still too many unknowns to be sure.

Shi Xueman did not probe further as she felt that everyone was entitled to their own secrets.

Hearing all this from Ai Hui, however, caused her brilliant mind to generate a good number of questions and scenarios. Her face a little paler than before, Shi Xueman asked, "So there won't be any reinforcements?"

The more she thought about the situation, the paler she became. Looking at Ai Hui, she continued, "So the mayor's residence's insistence on the plan of "treating the city like a piece of cloth" at the cost of Master Han's life is because they already know this."

Ai Hui was hit by a sudden realization. How had he not thought of this? He had assumed that the plan was carried out under his Mistress's insistence, but now understood that the city would not

simply sacrifice an embroidery master like that.

He was now able to confirm his guess regarding the reinforcements.

"They won't be arriving anytime soon at least." Regaining his composure, Ai Hui looked at Shi Xueman and asked, "Will the higher ups send help?"

"Definitely," answered Shi Xueman firmly. She was more familiar with how the higher authorities worked than Ai Hui was. She continued, "They'll definitely send a large force with some masters within."

"Not a single one of them has turned up yet," Ai Hui stated. "Where have all the soldiers and masters gone?"

By this point, all the color had practically drained from Shi Xueman's face. "They must have met with some mishap. Perhaps they were attacked by blood elementalists."

"How then do the blood elementalists know their route?" Ai Hui continued asking.

Shi Xueman was white as a sheet. She opened her mouth and tried to speak, but the words would not come. A moment later, she surmised, "They must have infiltrated our ranks."

Ai Hui took a long, deep breath and heaved a long, deep sigh to

release his pent up emotions.

Shi Xueman seemed to be strongly affected by what she had just deduced. She understood why Ai Hui kept these things to himself and also knew why the mayor's residence would hide such matters. It was as though all her hopes were extinguished in an instant.

There was a long pause before Shi Xueman spoke again. "Is this a planned rebellion?"

"It's more than a rebellion," Ai Hui replied calmly. "They don't just want to wrestle power, they want to completely destroy the Avalon of Five Elements."

"Why would anyone want to do that?" countered Shi Xueman.

Ai Hui did bit have an immediate reply to that. He subconsciously repeated, "Why would anyone want to do that?"

This was a question he had overlooked.

"Power, status, prestige, or wealth? What can they not achieve? Why do they want to destroy the Avalon of Five Elements?" elaborated Shi Xueman.

With the Blood of God's power, these things were definitely easy to obtain. Be it becoming a legitimate sect or secretly controlling the Avalon of Five Elements from the shadows, the Blood of God was definitely able to accomplish both. If the Blood of God

attempted a revival of the Cultivation Era, they would probably be able to rally a large number of supporters to their cause. The people of the Avalon of Five Elements were not against the idea of going back to the Cultivation Era. Its glorious history was still pretty fresh in everyone’s minds.

Why do they wish to destroy the Avalon of Five Elements? Why do they have to take so many lives?

Ai Hui felt that the patient and far-planning Blood of God would have thought through their options before embarking on such a path. There must be a reason behind this destruction.

"Unless they harbor a deep-seated hatred for the Avalon of Five Elements or there’s something that they can only gain through the destruction of the Avalon of Five Elements," Shi Xueman raised her head and commented.

"Is there such a thing?" asked Ai Hui.

"I have no idea," she replied with a shake of her head.

At that moment, Shi Xueman was glowing with wisdom. Ai Hui was completely captivated by her beauty and only managed to regain his senses after a while. Wow, she was so pretty yet still so cold. It must be because her heart is not all that big.

Ai Hui subconsciously looked at the thick breastplate covering Shi Xueman’s chest.

Shi Xueman could sense that Ai Hui was staring at her. Hang on, where was he looking...

Her body stiffened as certain memories surfaced and caught her unaware. Shi Xueman’s face instantly turned a bright crimson.

Iron Lady’s reaction was so strange... Why was she acting all bashful... Weird.... I’m more comfortable with her usual expressionless self.

Ai Hui coughed lightly and looked away. He promptly introduced a new topic. "Just who was the elementalist who managed to scare that woman away."

The lady in red’s enigmatic powers had left scars in Ai Hui’s mind. If the lady in red immediately fled upon seeing that guy, he must also possess formidable strength.

"Oh that’s Yu Mingqiu, the vice-division leader of the Deathgrass Division," Shi Xueman responded normally. "Your Senior Mingxiu’s elder brother’s junior."

"A vice-division leader of the Thirteen Divisions!" exclaimed Ai Hui. "No wonder he’s so powerful!"

Ai Hui saw the Thirteen Divisions as a group that only the truly powerful could join. A vice-division leader in the Thirteen Divisions must be someone extremely formidable.

"Yu Mingqiu..." Shi Xueman paused to think. "He’s rather unorthodox."

Ai Hui gave a blank stare and blurted, "What’s that supposed to mean?"

"You’ll understand when the time comes," stated Shi Xueman.

Lou Lan had packed the crevices with earth, completely sealing the two pathways.

Ai Hui inspected the elemental energy within the cavern. Upon confirmation that the elemental energy in the cavern remained unaffected, Ai Hui and Shi Xueman headed back to the mayor’s residence together.

Entering the mayor’s residence, the pair saw Yu Mingqiu in the seat of honor, having a chat with the mayor.

As the vice-division leader of the Deathgrass Division, Yu Mingqiu ranked above the mayor and the dean.

The mayor saw the two of them approaching and smiled, "They’re back."

Yu Mingqiu nodded. "I’m relieved to see that Young Mistress Shi is safe and sound."

"The pleasure is mine, Vice-Division Leader Yu!" Shi Xueman responded with a salute. Although the two of them knew each other, Yu Mingqiu's high rank demanded the appropriate amount of decorum.

"And this is?" asked Yu Mingqiu as he looked at Ai Hui.

The mayor cheerfully said, "He's Miss Mingxiu's junior, Ai Hui."

The city's administration has always been looking out for Mingxiu. She was, after all, one of the few individuals in the city who hailed from an influential family.

"Mingxiu's junior?" Yu Mingqiu blurted, his eyes lighting up. He enthusiastically stood up and walked toward Ai Hui, patting him on the shoulders. "That makes us family then. I've just reached the mayor's residence so we still have a lot of time to visit Mingxiu. Mingxiu's junior is my junior! If you have any problems in the future, feel free to come find me, Brother Qiu! Do you want to join the Deathgrass Division? How about it? Brother Qiu will look after you!"

Ai Hui was knocked silly by his overly passionate speech. He blankly replied, "I'm metal elemental energy attributed."

"Metal elemental energy?" said Yu Mingqiu. He racked his brains for a reply, trying to avoid offending any more people. He attempted to laugh the awkward situation away before sincerely advising Ai Hui. "Live well," ordered Yu Mingqiu.

This guy was indeed… rather unorthodox.

Chapter 250: Fallen Defenses

45 people.

Tian Kuan sorrowfully stared at the two rows of elementalists in front of him, his thoughts a mystery. Five of the 50 survivors had rejected life and chosen death instead.

45 terrifying and imposing figures who appeared much swifter and fiercer than Yan Hai stood solemnly in front of Tian Kuan. Nothing was stricter than Death's screening process. This free-for-all involving thousands of people had definitely produced a group of true elites. Although they had just become blood elementalists, the aura they exuded was on a whole different level than Yan Hai.

Tian Kuan detected a familiar scent in the air. The bloodthirsty glint in their eyes was exactly the same as the blood fiends and was something he could not be more familiar with.

He was assessing them, and they were sizing him up as well.

Tian Kuan knew that they would rip him to shreds the moment he revealed any sign of weakness. This bunch of wild beasts had no loyalty nor emotions. Only strength could guarantee their respect and command their obedience.

Tian Kuan heaved a long sigh.

He disliked borrowing others' strength, but this was the only

method that would give him enough confidence to carry out his plans.

As he began to circulate his blood spiritual force, Tian Kuan exuded an indescribable aura that permeated the entire area.

The 45 survivors were terrified to discover that the blood spiritual force within their bodies was suddenly out of their control. Several of their faces became flushed red as they forcefully attempted to resist Tian Kuan's aura.

One of the new blood elementalists felt his knees buckle, and the next thing he knew, he was kneeling down on the ground.

The rest of them collapsed on their knees one by one like dominoes.

The sound of men falling to their knees continued until only a handful were still standing. The faces of those standing revealed the violent struggle occurring within. Despite their best efforts, their bodies were eventually overcome by Tian Kuan's presence, and they too kneeled in front of him.

From the beginning to the end, Tian Kuan's facial expression had remained as distressed as ever. To the newly minted blood elementalists kneeling before him, however, Tian Kuan's face was enigmatic, imposing, and dignified. His small, withered stature towered above them, exerting a pressure so great that they could not breathe.

"Life is short and full of sorrow."

He spoke as though he was sighing bitterly. "Life is tough. Most people don’t deserve to be alive, while some people don’t want to continue living. Life is an endless journey of pain. Just look at yourselves. None of you wish to obey my orders, but you don’t have a choice. All of you are prime examples of life’s suffering. Is there anything that isn’t painful? Did you think that becoming beasts would ease your suffering?"

Yan Hai had long since prostrated himself at Tian Kuan’s back. Tian Kuan’s words made his heart race, but also made him realize that his master had actually been treating him quite nicely.

The freshly baked blood elementalists were trembling uncontrollably while the blood within their bodies surged explosively.

He was of course different from these guys. His loyalty toward his master was unquestionable!

Yan Hai firmly believed that his master was aware of his loyalty.

"Whoever can demonstrate their usefulness will be allowed to continue living."

Tian Kuan looked even more worried. His words were targeted at his new recruits, but were also intended for himself. Up until now, he had not achieved anything noteworthy.

He had no idea if the others had been earning brownie points, but he knew he did not have any.

Failing to meet expectations would leave him in a bad place. This was why he broke his own code and proceeded to recruit new allies.

Only time would tell whether he would succeed.

He had a comprehensive plan.

News of Yu Mingqiu's arrival swiftly swept across all of Central Pine City.

A vice division leader from the Thirteen Divisions was someone highly regarded by most people. Furthermore, Yu Mingqiu was well known throughout the Avalon of Five Elements for his prowess. The arrival of such powerful assistance gave the people of Central Pine City hope for the future.

Back in the mayor's residence.

The mayor dismissed all unrelated personnel so that he could have a private discussion with the dean and Vice ivision Leader Yu Mingqiu.

Ai Hui stood rooted to the spot as though he had not heard the

order to withdraw. Seeing that Ai Hui had no intention of leaving just yet, Shi Xueman also remained. Lou Lan stood in one corner, blinking his eyes.

"Both of you may go back and rest. You still have the golden needle to handle tomorrow," informed Wang Zhen. He felt that the two of them were acting strange, so he smiled and continued, "Our scouts have found no issues with the other eight nodes. Both of you should take a good rest to prepare for your upcoming assignments."

Ai Hui cheerfully asked, "Mr. Mayor, our reinforcements aren't coming anymore, right?"

Shi Xueman looked at Wang Zhen as well.

Wang Zhen replied gravely, "Why are you spouting such nonsense? Isn't Vice ivision Leader Yu already here? A vice division leader from the Thirteen Divisions is here in person, wouldn't you consider that to be reinforcements?"

"But Brother Qiu is here alone."

Ai Hui took a quick glance at Yu Mingqiu. If he wanted to rely on a higher power, he would have to go along with some of Yu Mingqiu's whims, like calling him "Brother Qiu." Even though Yu Mingqiu was quite eccentric, his status and strength still made him a precious ally.

"You should tell us the truth," blurted Shi Xueman.

Wang Zhen was not too happy about being confronted like this.

Ai Hui did not seem to notice that the mayor was on the verge of flaring up.

"A sharp individual like you is indeed worthy of being Mingxiu's junior." Yu Mingqiu suddenly burst out in hearty laughter and broke the awkward atmosphere. "Since we're on the same side, I guess there's no need to hide the truth from you. Having one more person to help think of a solution isn't such a bad thing either. Perhaps the mayor could enlighten us on the current situation."

Yu Mingqiu was the highest ranked person here, so nobody could refuse his request.

"Okay, I shall relay the higher authorities' message. We won't be getting anymore reinforcements in the short term. All of the troops that were headed here have been ambushed by a mysterious person and suffered serious casualties. We have received confirmation that one vice divison leader has been killed in action."

Yu Mingqiu's eyes widened in shock. "Who was it?"

"They didn't say, so I have no idea," said Wang Zhen, shaking his head.

Yu Mingqiu was appalled by the damage they had suffered. He could not believe that a vice division leader had actually fallen! Throughout the Avalon of Five Elements' history, the loss a vice division leader was an extremely rare occurrence.

His subordinates might have suffered the same fate...

These thoughts had drained all color from Yu Mingqiu's face. He subconsciously clenched his fist tightly in a bid to control the intense sadness that welled up inside him.

"Our goal now is to execute the 'treating the city as a piece of cloth' plan. We have no other options besides this," Wang Zhen said in a nolens volens tone. "This is the only way we can buy ourselves more time. The higher ups should take note of the large casualties though and respond accordingly. Now that Vice Division Leader Yu is here, our city's strength has increased as well."

Yu Mingqiu shook his head. "There is no increase whatsoever."

"What do you mean?" replied both the dean and the mayor.

"I chased a blood elementalist into the city and lost her after we both entered," growled Yu Mingqiu. "It was a lady clad in red. Her strength matched my own, but her skills and techniques were very odd. The energy she tapped into was strangely different from the elemental energy that we use. The two of them have met her and even exchanged blows with her as well."

The dean and the mayor simultaneously turned to Ai Hui and Shi Xueman.

Ai Hui nodded, "We almost died at her hands."

A sudden realization struck Yu Mingqiu. Giving his forehead a smack, he said, "You guys are pretty strong considering how you managed to escape from that she-devil."

"We got lucky," Ai Hui hurriedly replied.

Wang Zhen paled after listening to Yu Mingqiu's report. "You mean someone as strong as Vice Division Leader Yu has entered the city?"

"Yup," Yu Mingqiu nodded.

Wang Zhen's facial expression changed drastically as he shouted, "Not good!"

Immediately after the mayor's exclamation, sounds of explosions could be heard from all over the city.

Everyone in the hall stared at each other blankly.

One of the mayor's subordinates ran in hastily. "The city's defenses have fallen," he informed, visibly crestfallen.

Wang Zhen forced himself to remain calm. "Which direction?" he asked.

His subordinate stammered, "All, all of them."

All of their defenses had fallen...

Wang Zhen was struck dumb by the news, feeling as though he had just been struck by a bolt of lightning. Ai Hui and Shi Xueman looked at each other and saw the terror in the other's eyes. The destruction of the city's defenses meant only one thing—the blood fiends would be able to enter the city from any direction.

There was nothing left to stop them!

The city's defense was one of the main reasons why Central Pine City was able to hang on for so long. A complete city defense was absolutely essential for repelling most of the blood fiends. This was especially the case for the larger fiends.

From now on, the elementalists in the city would have to face increased pressure.

Blood fiend howls rose and fell like an orchestra. Large groups of them were quickly approaching the city from all directions.

The high density of elemental energy within the city was like a delicious cake. Waves of delicious scents wafted out of the city, attracting every single blood fiend within its range. The blood

coursing the blood fiends' veins made them strongly attracted to elemental energy. Much like how blood crystals were prized spoils of war for humans, humans were the prized rewards for blood fiends.

"Oh my heavens, look up!"

Everyone in the courtyard looked up and saw a huge blood red cloud heading toward the city at an alarming speed.

The sight made everyone pale with fright. Blood birds were rapidly approaching!

Central Pine City had never suffered that much at the hands of blood birds because of the effectiveness of Wang Zhen's strategic air defenses. While they had not faced many blood bird attacks, the residents of Central Pine City knew of the threat they posed.

Most of the city had been reduced to rubble so there was nowhere for people to hide.

The city's elementalists were not skillful enough to fight aerial battles against blood birds.

Yu Mingqiu suavely announced, "Leave the skies to me!"

Even though he knew that the lady in red was waiting to ambush him at his weakest, he understood that there was no time to worry about her anymore.

The Thirteen Divisions existed to protect the Avalon of Five Elements. He was here to protect the skies, the earth, and the people that lived within this space.

He took pride in his role as a vice division leader.

Yu Mingqiu spread his azure wings and soared into the sky. At least there was no chance of losing my direction up here.

Wang Zhen stared blankly at the figure in the sky. He snapped out of his daze after several seconds and urgently commanded, "Golden needles! We need to start getting the golden needles in place! Now! We're running out of time!"

Ai Hui looked up at the sky.

Heavy-set blood clouds loomed over the city, blocking out practically all of the natural light. In front of the swarm was a lonely figure, or rather, a mere speck in the sky.

Shi Xueman gripped Cirrus so tightly that her knuckles turned white.

Ai Hui was momentarily overwhelmed by Yu Mingqiu's noble sacrifice. He smacked his lips and asked, "Where are the golden needles?"

"The warehouse! The smith is there too! Hurry!" shouted Wang Zhen. "I leave the first node in your hands! Quick!"

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman, and Lou Lan headed toward the warehouse without hesitation.

Chapter 251: The Heat Of Battle

The new disaster came so suddenly that the people who had adapted well to the fighting were immediately plunged into the bloody battle. It was fortunate that the eruption of this latest disaster was not in the initial stages of the blood disaster.

Those who had experienced the endless battles in the weeks up until now and managed to survive were the elites who had gradually become accustomed to battle. Both their mental and physical strength had vastly improved.

When encountering danger, they did not panic, but rallied to fight back.

However, serious casualties were abundant because the fighting had changed in nature and intensity. The city defences that once protected them had practically evaporated, leaving them utterly exposed to the blood fiends.

Central Pine City had become a white-hot battlefield as battles raged on throughout the city.

Contrary to the early stages of the blood disaster, wails and cries for help were now rarely heard. The survivors understood that wailing and crying were useless and that the only thing they could do was to fight to the end.

Two main necessities were responsible for maintaining the will to fight. People were driven forward by the need to become more

powerful as well as the need to survive.

Staying alive was after all, the ultimate human dignity.

The distance between the main hall of the mayor's residence and its warehouse was approximately 300 meters. While 300 meters would usually be considered a short distance, in the heat of battle it felt much longer.

Just as they stepped out the front door, the piercing sound of weapons and attacks flying through the air could be heard. Soon after, a huge shadow could be seen heading toward them.

Boom!

The solid walls of the mayor's residence suddenly exploded inches away from Ai Hui. Bricks flew all over the place, raining down on them like a deadly hail.

A two-storey tall blood fiend was surrounded by elementalists. Their relentless attacks had made it lose its balance, causing it to crash into the wall.

The blood fiend's large body hit the ground hard, generating a terrifying impact that made the ground rock violently.

The blood fiend's leftover momentum carried it all the way to Ai Hui, dragging huge chunks of stone along with it.

A cold glint flashed in Ai Hui's eyes as he silently thrust the Dragonspine in his hand forward. A frigid sword ray crossed the short gap between him and blood fiend and embedded itself in its throat.

A pillar of blood shot out of the blood fiend's throat as its body grew limp.

Ai Hui nimbly stepped around the blood fiend's corpse and made a dash for the warehouse.

They had encountered several groups of elementalists along the way, but simply lacked the time to provide aid.

Everyone was in a mad rush and unable to effectively form squads. There were, however, several small teams that effectively fought against the blood fiends by ganging up on them. Both man and fiend were consumed by the relentless slaughter.

Central Pine City had descended into hell.

Ai Hui took the lead and rushed to the forefront. Shi Xueman followed closely behind, firmly gripping her spear in her hand.

The warehouse was right ahead!

All of a sudden, strong waves of elemental energy pulsed through

the air. Brilliant light flashed across the sky, highlighting the proud, solitary figure in the air.

Ai Hui winced slightly. Although he had barely talked to Yu Mingqiu and was not exactly familiar with him, Ai Hui felt that Yu Mingqiu was truly worthy of being addressed as Brother Qiu. If they were to meet again, he would definitely willingingly address him as such.

He continued to press on, a fire burning deep beneath his indifferent surface.

Everyone, including his master, mistress, Brother Qiu, the mayor, the dean, and the A-1 unit was fighting for the future. Every single person, dead or alive, who was involved in this disaster was fighting for their own destiny and survival. In doing so, they were also fighting for Central Pine City's future.

They were on the verge of collapsing, and it felt as though the pressure of a single added straw would crush them.

How could a person give up when even a beast would counter attack when cornered?

Ai Hui abruptly accelerated when he was 10 meters shy of the warehouse's main entrance. He leapt high into the air, curled into a ball, and slammed directly against the warehouse door.

Ai Hui crashed into the warehouse together with the debris.

He saw several frightened craftsmen inside the warehouse.

"Where are the golden needles?" Ai Hui roared loudly, trying to be heard above the noise.

Ai Hui was definitely the most recognizable face in Central Pine City at the moment. The craftsmen heaved long sighs of relief upon seeing him.

One of the craftsmen took a step forward and asked loudly, "What is going on? Why does it seem so chaotic outside?"

"The city defences have been destroyed! Grab the golden needle and get to the Heaven Pit." Ai Hui was practically shouting himself hoarse.

When they heard that the city defences were destroyed, the craftsmen’s faces sank. They most certainly knew what this meant.

"What about the other golden needles?" the craftsman who first stood forward asked.

"You should bring them to the Heaven Pit with Lou Lan first. I’ll defend this place and wait for Huanghun and the others!" Shi Xueman said solemnly. "We have an agreed upon signal, I’m sure they’ll arrive soon."

Ai Hui nodded at her and firmly ordered the craftsmen, "Follow me!"

Several craftsmen lifted a sturdy looking pillar from one corner of the warehouse.

This was the first time Ai Hui saw one of the golden needles and he could not resist taking a second glance at it. The needle’s body had a brilliant glass-like glaze that made it glow with an exotic metallic luster. More than five meters in height and more than half a meter in diameter, it was difficult to associate it with the word "needle." Instead, it was more similar to a house’s support beam. Layers of intricate and sophisticated patterns were carved onto the metal column, making it a dazzling sight to behold.

"If the patterns carved onto the golden needle are damaged, it’ll lose its effectiveness," the chief craftsman spoke in a severe manner. "We used a relatively hard material called glass iron which is sufficiently strong and capable of withstanding geocentric flame. It will, however, shatter easily if exposed to an impact of great magnitude. We only have nine needles. There are no spares."

Ai Hui nodded in comprehension as his eyes met those of the chief craftsman. He then hurried to lead the way out of the warehouse.

Two craftsmen stepped up to carry the golden needle by its head and tail with the chief craftsman following closely by their side.

Shi Xueman raised Cirrus in her hands as she watched Ai Hui and

the others leave. A white ray shot up into the sky, forming the shape of a sword. This was the A-1 unit's signal for seeking assistance.

Sending out the signal brought her some relief. She raised the spear in her hand and leapt onto the warehouse roof.

Until support arrived, Shi Xueman had to defend the warehouse alone.

She was completely unafraid.

Yan Hai hid in the dark with several blood elementalists in tow. Seeing the chaotic scene before him, he could not help but have mad respect for Sir. Tian Kuan's visit to the casualty barrack had been incredibly fruitful, allowing him to gain an additional 45 blood elementalists as followers. This greatly increased their fighting strength and enabled them to cause so much chaos from within.

Yan Hai felt that he was different from the newly created blood elementalists. All of them were much stronger than him, yet Sir had chosen him as the team leader. Surely this meant that Sir trusted him more!

Yan Hai was secretly pleased with himself. He reminded himself to perform well and live up to Sir's expectations.

"Will they really not attack us?"

The question came from Shi Wei, who was a rather well-known student in Central Pine Academy prior to becoming infected. Many believed that he would have a bright future, but all that changed when he got injured.

Shi Wei was a rookie, and as such, he was viewed unfavorably by Yan Hai. Yan Hai was keen to make his mark and felt that rookies like Shi Wei were a major hindrance to him. However, these blood elementalists were assigned to him by Tian Kuan, so Yan Hai could not object. He could not figure out just how someone like Shi Wei managed to survive the brutal slaughter at the quarantine barracks.

Even Shi Wei, himself, did not fully understand how he managed to survive.

Afraid to relive that nightmare, he did not dare to think about it anymore. He just wanted to have a fresh start and continue living.

He convinced himself that what he was doing was not wrong. Did he have any other choice? Apparently not.

Watching the chaotic fights unfolding before his eyes terrified him, yet at the same time, brought him some relief. He felt a little ashamed when he thought of his classmates and teachers struggling, but the mere feeling of being alive made him quietly delighted.

He did not want to experience the mindless, uncontrollable rage

and bloodthirst of the beastly instinct ever again.

Living dishonorably was still a kind of living.

Despite his new position, Shi Wei was still alarmed by the large number of blood fiends.

"I've told you before that it won't happen," chided Yan Hai. "We have a similar presence to that of the blood fiends, so they won't attack us as long as we don't attack them first. Did you not notice that none of the blood fiends that have walked past us have given us a single glance?"

Shi Wei felt somewhat safer.

"Are we just gonna sit here and twiddle our thumbs?"

This time, Old Lei was the one asking. He was an elementalist from a hunting unit and had both strength and experience. Accustomed to a life of killing and looting, his moral boundaries were extremely blurry. He was the fastest to come to terms with his new identity as a blood elementalist.

Old Lei had more worldly wisdom than Shi Wei and knew that performing well was the most important task they had. He was a good judge of character who quickly took note of Tian Kuan's callous nature. He knew that Tian Kuan only converted them into blood elementalists to borrow their strength.

Their lives would come to an end once Tian Kuan felt that they no longer had value.

Old Lei’s ruthlessness made Yan Hai slightly uneasy around him.

"We need to find a high-value target," informed Yan Hai. "Let’s wait a while longer for the elementalists to further deplete their strength before striking. Things will be much easier that way."

Old Lei sneered at him. "If you want to achieve great things, then you’d better step up your game and stop looking for scraps. You think the battlefield will simply be littered with easy-pickings?"

Old Lei did not give a hoot about Yan Hai. He could see that Yan Hai was really just a cowardly weakling. With his experience and seniority, Old Lei’s words appeared to carry more weight among them. Several others nodded in agreement after hearing what he said.

Yan Hai was so agitated that he almost spat blood. However, he did not dare to fall out with Old Lei. Right at that moment, his eyes lit up as he exclaimed, "Ai Hui!"

"Who’s that?" asked Old Lei, shaking his head. "I don’t recognize him."

Old Lei was injured fairly early on and was unfamiliar with Ai Hui.

"The esteemed Lightning Blade, Ai Hui. He’s one of the leading figures in Central Pine City. What a big fish!" Yan Hai’s eyes sparkled greedily.

"A leader?" Old Lei asked in disbelief. He pursed his lips at the sky and continued, "Did you mean him? Who would dare to consider himself a military leader in front of Yu Mingqiu?"

The rest of them quietly laughed. Everyone had heard of the great Yu Mingqiu.

Yan Hai turned pale with anger and scoffed. "Forget it. You can go challenge Yu Mingqiu if you dare."

Old Lei looked up at the sky and felt a slight fear running up his spine. Yu Mingqiu was floating in the air, somehow able to keep an entire sky full of blood birds in check by himself.

One man up against tens of thousands of enemies, refusing to let a single one of them pass through.

Yu Mingqiu truly lived up to his reputation.

"I hope this Ai Hui of yours has some value." Old Lei snorted before giving a hand signal to the others, dispersing them into different hiding areas.

The group of blood elementalists had formed a circle of death and eagerly awaited for their prey.

Chapter 252: Disappearance

Lou Lan was leading the way.

Without his sword embryo, Ai Hui's ability to detect dangers was largely weakened. Fortunately, they still had Lou Lan. Under Lou Lan's lead, they twisted and turned along the streets and roads, but were always able to find a less dangerous route.

Lou Lan was very sensitive to blood spiritual force; therefore, he could feel the blood fiends from a distance. This ability was currently playing an important role.

If they really couldn't avoid a blood fiend, then the craftsmen would stop and hide themselves first, after which Ai Hui would sneak up on the blood fiends and kill them. Finally, they would be able to continue their forward march.

Fortunately, the blood fiends they met were not at all strong.

Gnashing their teeth and gathering their energy, the craftsmen behind them carried the gold needle and closely followed.

At this moment, everyone was pushing themselves.

"The sinkhole is not far away!"

The leader of the craftsmen encouraged them loudly. The shout

boosted everyone’s spirits.

Finally, they were just one block away from the sinkhole. Moreover, there were no blood fiends on the street.

But then, Lou Lan suddenly stopped at the crossing, so Ai Hui and the craftsmen followed suit.

Lou Lan said, "Ai Hui, there are five blood fiends there."

"So many?" Ai Hui asked in surprise. He glanced at the street and said, "But Lou Lan, I don’t see any."

"Then they are hiding somewhere."

"So let’s take another route."

Lou Lan and Ai Hui were talking loudly. Hearing their discussion, the five people who were hiding to ambush the group were speechless. They’d thought they were hiding well enough and didn’t expect their enemies to notice their existence so effortlessly.

How did Ai Hui’s sand puppet find them?

Blood fiends? They were regarded as blood fiends? Having just transformed from beasts to human beings, they were extremely disgusted to be treated as blood fiends from the bottom of their hearts, especially the young men like Shi Wei. He almost rushed

out on impulse.

They were all looking at Old Lei and waiting for his instructions.

Old Lei was experienced enough to keep his composure.

Although he'd been laughing at Yan Hai just now, he didn't underestimate Ai Hui at all. He was surprised that they'd been seen through, but chose not to rush out.

Young men like Shi Wei felt angry when they heard themselves being treated as blood fiends, but Old Lei believed this might be a good opportunity. They could take advantage of the mistake.

He thought fast about how to use this advantage.

Hearing Ai Hui say that they were going to the sinkhole, Old Lei became more relaxed. The street they were hiding in was the only shortcut to the sinkhole. If they did not take this route, they would have to go a long way around.

Old Lei was not at all in a hurry.

He was also curious about the big pillar, as he had a feeling that the pillar must be something important. He was sent to the casualty barrack early, before the plan of "treating the city as a piece of cloth" was announced, so he knew nothing about the gold needles. Still, his keen sense of smell made him realize that the pillar was unusual.

Meanwhile, seeing Ai Hui talking to his sand puppet, Old Lei was a bit surprised. It seemed that this sand puppet was unusual too.

He became vigilant about anything unusual.

After a while, Ai Hui walked to the leader of the craftsmen and told him something. Since they were too far away, Old Lei couldn't hear it clearly, but he did see that the leader's expression was a bit weird.

Weird?

What had he said?

Old Lei tried to guess the content of their conversation, but didn't have the slightest idea.

Yan Hai glared at Old Lei with enmity. I am the team leader, thought Yan Hai. Why was he being isolated by the others?

They must envy him for being trusted by Sir!

We'll see. If the mission fails, then you will know how frightening Sir can be, thought Yan Hai to himself. He made up his mind that if this really happened, he would not intercede on their behalf.

He had cursed Old Lei in his heart thousands of times, but as he was the weakest member and one who feared Ai Hui the most among the five, he didn't dare to rush out either. He witnessed the battle of the streets himself, the horrible scenes of which still haunted his dreams.

Old Lei waited patiently. It was not at all necessary for them to rush out.

In his eyes, it was their most critical moment. Once they were targeted by elementalists, they could only attract more enemies. The level of hatred elementalists had for blood elementalists and blood fiends was totally different. If they were discovered by an elementalist, only death would follow.

That was why Old Lei didn't give any orders, so the others continued to wait silently.

Ai Hui didn't move for a while.

Old Lei didn't move either. He was patient and calm, qualities he believed an experienced hunter should possess. He had been through too many battles, and with his rich experience in battlefields, he knew it was best for them to wait under such circumstances.

After a while more, Ai Hui still didn't move.

Old Lei began to wonder what this guy in front of him was doing.

In such a chaotic and dangerous moment, the other elementalists were either putting up a desperate fight or hiding themselves. Despite that, Ai Hui was standing still in a place threatened by a growing crisis and could be attacked by blood fiends at any moment. Was he thinking about the philosophy of life?

This was weird!

Old Lei thought hard, but still couldn't understand. He narrowed his insightful eyes and stared at Ai Hui as if he wanted to pierce him with his sharp stare.

Wait! His eyes suddenly widened. Where was Ai Hui's sand puppet?

The sand puppet that looked unusual?

He glanced over the whole place, and was astonished to find that the sand puppet had disappeared right under their noses.

Right at that moment, Ai Hui began to move.

It appeared that after thinking for a long time, the stone man was finally bestowed life. Ai Hui moved and the three craftsmen who were carrying the pillar also moved after him.

A flash of vigilance flashed across Old Lei's eyes. Wait! The craftsmen were now standing at the spot where the sand puppet had disappeared?

Then a craftsman disappeared.

Hmm?

And the pillar disappeared.

Hmm?

And the other two craftsmen also disappeared.

Hmm!

Ai Hui turned around and waved his hands in Old Lei's direction, then also disappeared.

They'd noticed them long ago!

Old Lei stood up abruptly and felt surprised and bewildered. He didn't know what had happened, but since they had already discovered his presence, it was meaningless to hide any longer. Thus, he decided to take the initiative to attack.

Old Lei walked out from where he was hiding together with the others, whose expressions revealed their confusion.

What they'd seen just now was really weird.

They walked cautiously toward where Ai Hui had been standing. They were afraid that Ai Hui was playing tricks to lure them out.

When they walked closer, they were stunned to see a huge hole leading deep underground.

Especially Old Lei, whose face was dark and red.

"No wonder he is called the Lightning Blade. Hearing his name alone made us too frightened to move and they were able to effortlessly dig such a big tunnel under our noses. What a shame! I'm wondering what others will say about us if they hear what happened today..."

Yan Hai couldn't help taunting Old Lei. Actually, he was more than happy to see him being fooled. The more shameful Old Lei was, the happier he was.

Bang!

The next minute, Yan Hai's face was kicked hard. Like being bumped by a beast, he directly flew out and fell into a pile of ruins, losing consciousness.

Old Lei drew back his leg as if nothing had happened, but the anger on his face made him look like a furious lion that would eat anything and anyone it met.

The others saw this and all looked away at once.

They also feared Old Lei’s ruthlessness and cruelty.

Without saying anything, Old Lei jumped into the tunnel, leaving the other three looking at each other in hesitation.

"Should we just leave that guy alone?"

"You want to take him with us?"

"No. He is too talkative. It’s annoying."

"Then just leave him there."

Having made up their minds, the other three jumped into the tunnel one after another and soon caught up with Old Lei.

They were surprised at how broad the tunnel was. How had they dug such a deep tunnel within such a limited time? It was not an easy job even for a sand puppet.

Shi Wei couldn’t help murmuring, "Sand puppets are so strong nowadays?"

Hearing his words, Old Lei scolded him in rage. "Shut up! Talk less!"

Before he finished speaking, a cold light abruptly rose from under his feet as fast as lightening, and in the blink of an eye, was almost at his throat.

An ambush!

Old Lei was so scared that all his hair stood on end. He quickly stepped backward while crossing his hands in front of his throat protectively.

Dragonspine was originally aiming for Old Lei's throat, but suddenly bent like a boneless snake and unexpectedly stabbed into his chest.

Ding!

The sound was like hitting a stone with iron.

Ai Hui felt like he had stabbed an iron ingot. The sword pierced only two inches into the chest and couldn't go further.

Old Lei's face was all red. Having blocked the stab, his raging energy and blood sloshed around in his chest.

Ai Hui didn't expect Old Lei's skin to be as solid as iron. Although he himself had attained [Copper Skin], he could not reach Old Lei's level. Nevertheless, since Ai Hui had made great progress in

swordsmanship, when he felt the resistance from the sword point, he slightly shook his wrist before even realizing it.

The sword vibrated like the tongue of a poisonous snake.

Oblique Slash.

In less than one second, Ai Hui slashed eight times like lightening. Without any complicated changes, the moves were simple and fast. The improvement in his swordsmanship was thoroughly reflected in this attack.

The sword rays of the eight slashes overlapped like a high-speed, rotating circular saw.

The Dragonspine that stuck in Old Lei's chest suddenly moved forward. Feeling heat in his chest, Old Lei looked down and only saw a blood mist exploding from his chest that blurred his vision.

He growled in fury and kicked out hard with his right leg.

But once again, there was nothing. Although Ai Hui was close, he was like a phantom.

The next minute, he felt a stabbing pain in his leg; it had been pierced by the sword. He could even feel the parts of the sword that were piercing into his muscle.

This sword was weird. It was a soft sword!

He protected his head and throat. As long as these two were safe, he didn't need to worry about losing his life. Suppressing the fear rising in his heart, he quickly stepped backward.

He could hear his companions' scolding and steps behind him. They were not far away. As soon as they caught up, they could turn the situation around. They were advantageous in number and would be able to kill this damn Lightning Blade!

Old Lei roared in his heart.

He was protecting his head with his arms, but this also blocked his sight. Therefore, he didn't see the Dragonspine sneaking in the darkness like a poisonous snake, and didn't know that lethal danger was quietly approaching closer and closer.

The sword rays around the Dragonspine were becoming stronger. The sword was quivering slightly.

When the sword point stabbed into the wound on Old Lei's chest again, it quivered fiercely and the sword rays reached their peak. The next instant, the accumulated energy gushed out from the sword point.

[Crescent Moon]!

A crescent moon formed, rushed forward, and exploded in Old

Lei’s chest.

Chapter 253: Fierce Fighting In The Tunnel

Dong!

The grave sound of an explosion sounded out from Old Lei's chest.

A crescent moon penetrated Old Lei's chest and exited from his back together with a bloody mist. The blood elementalist who had rushed forward to help had no time to dodge and could only protectively cover his vital parts with his arms.

Those who had survived the bloody fight at the casualty barrack were all cruel and ruthless people. The injury didn't freak the blood elementalist out, but infuriated him instead.

With a stifled groan, he took the initiative to attack. Curving his body at a weird angle, he stepped on the vertical tunnel wall.

He passed by Old Lei like a ghost, and before jumping onto the ground, bent his leg like a folding knife.

He was fast; all these moves were done in the blink of an eye. Previously, he had been moving silently, but when his leg chopped down, the sharp whistle of wind it produced could be heard all over the tunnel.

Puff!

His leg cut down like a sharp knife and plunged into the ground. The solid rocks broke like bean curd.

In the dark tunnel, the expression of the blood elementalist changed drastically.

Nothing!

How was it possible?

His attack had been fast, without any delay, and had covered a large scope, so he had been pretty sure that he could land the blow on Ai Hui. Despite all that, he'd failed.

Where was Ai Hui?

Did he withdraw immediately after succeeding?

Suddenly, he felt something at his back like a needle with a sharp chill in the air. His body froze and eyes widened in disbelief.

He thought of one possibility.

Ai Hui hadn't retreated. Instead, he'd gotten closer to Old Lei in order to hide himself behind Old Lei's figure.

That meant Ai Hui was right behind him!

Even though Ai Hui was his enemy, the blood elementalist couldn't help but admire his reaction and flexibility. Meanwhile, a chill rose in his chest. Unlike Old Lei, he knew of Ai Hui but had still been confident because of his own rapid advance in fighting skills. This unimaginable improvement was supernatural and greatly helped build up his confidence.

Therefore, even though their enemy was Ai Hui, he'd still believed that they had a chance to beat him.

Now, however, he finally realized how frightening and dangerous Ai Hui could be. They had been on the losing side of the confrontation since the very beginning and their moves and attacks had all fallen within Ai Hui's expectations.

Ai Hui would have spoken highly of him if he'd known that the blood elementalist figured everything out almost instantly, but he was now curled up and closely clinging to Old Lei's back.

His sharp elemental energy had cut open the skin on the blood elementalist's back; the blood elementalist didn't even feel any pain because the sword ray was too sharp.

The blood elementalist made a harsh decision. Before his pain started to spread, he stepped hard with the leg that was stuck in the ground and pushed himself backward. His back was pierced by the sword, but it also smashed into Ai Hui like a wall.

Ai Hui hadn't expected him to be so resolute in killing him even

at the cost of sacrificing his own life.

Right at that moment, another blood elementalist caught up with them.

This blood elementalist's fist was surrounded with red, bloody light, which made it look like a red drill. He punched Ai Hui using all his effort because he was freaked out by Ai Hui's swift and mysterious movement. A bloody light suddenly appeared around his body, arousing an upsurge in his power.

He saw the space in the tunnel was limited, so he took the initiative to start a head-on confrontation with Ai Hui.

This was because they had the advantage with their superiority in number.

In the blink of an eye, Ai Hui was caught in a dangerous situation where he had enemies in front and behind him with nowhere to hide. At this moment, the Dragonspine in his hand suddenly bent like a spring. The force of the blood elementalist's backward attack almost pressed the sword to the limit.

But with the sword buffering the impact, the blood elementalist's power was largely reduced.

Then Ai Hui loosened his grip on the sword and it sprung out like a loosened spring. The huge elasticity pushed Ai Hui backward. With force, his back that was near Old Lei's chest trembled

violently.

[Arching Fishback]!

The tempestuous elemental energy and force from the Dragonspine sword swatted the unconscious Old Lei like a huge wave.

Bang! Old Lei's chest was dented. In the next second, he flew out like a stone struck by a wildly running beast and heavily dropped to the ground.

It was too late for the blood elementalist to reclaim his force, so his fist punched forward without any restraint.

His fist surrounded by the bloody light collided forcefully with Old Lei.

The frightening sound of broken bones reverberated throughout the tunnel.

The wounded blood elementalist became completely discouraged and freaked out. All their attacks were within Ai Hui's expectations.

Along with the force from the sword, he jumped forward with all his effort in hopes of escaping.

He felt that the sword stabbed into his back was like a toothed saw, leaving behind great pain as it was pulled out. Despite this, he couldn’t care. All he wanted to do was run away.

He rushed forward and was about to break away from the sword, when he felt the saw-like bone sword suddenly come to life.

The feeling was so strong that all his hair stood on end.

An even stronger danger alert broke out in his heart. He had a hunch that his life was coming to an end.

No!

Feeling intense frustration, he knew that there was no way back. Streaks of bright blood traces lit up on his body, each of which was about the size of a copper coin. They spread all over his body, including his face, nape, and arms, and flowed slightly. If Ai Hui had the time to count, he would notice that the number of blood traces was exactly nine.

As the blood traces lit up, the blood in his body boiled and became as bright as lava. It sensed the external invasion and squirmed like a monster to rush at the Dragonspine sword stabbed in his back.

He didn’t know why he was doing this. It had not been long since he’d gained the ability to agglomerate blood traces, but at this moment, his counterattack seemed to come from an intuition

buried deep in his body.

The blood in his body flowed quickly. If Ai Hui could see through him, he would have seen numerous blood streaks appear in his body that stretched from each of its corners to the point of the sword.

When the blood touched the Dragonspine, it abruptly triggered a bizarre chime from the sword.

The chime was like the hiss of a blood snake.

The sword was excited to feel the smell of its kind.

Meanwhile, the end of the bandage on Ai Hui's wrist also rose like a snake and twined weirdly around the sword hilt.

The hissing chime stopped all of a sudden and the mysterious Dragonspine sword suddenly became like a stove poker.

This happened so abruptly that even Ai Hui was surprised.

The bandage!

It had just absorbed the blood of the girl in red and Ai Hui hadn't had time to check if it had caused any changes.

The bandage was a blood refinement object. Therefore, it could devour blood.

This was not a secret, but just because of this feature, the bandage had saved Ai Hui's life many times.

If it were not for the bandage, he would have already died in the blood disaster.

That's why he had been keeping a watchful eye on it. After careful observation, he found that the bandage was becoming more and more fastidious about blood.

For example, it had no interest in the blood of ordinary blood fiends at all.

It only acted when there was some special blood, such as the drop of the girl's blood, which was extremely weird.

Ai Hui didn't expect that the bandage would move this time and he felt the "fear" the Dragonspine held toward the bandage. That's right, if Dragonspine was a living thing, then it would feel "fear".

Its unique quality was revealed in such specialties.

All of a sudden, Ai Hui became curious about the bandage. What had it been in the Cultivation Era?

It was a pity that Mistress had also come across it by accident and thus knew nothing about its origin.

All these thoughts flashed through Ai Hui's mind within an instant while the mysterious red blood shone and then quickly merged into the bandage. Then, like a successful hunter, the bandage retracted silently and tied itself into a knot at Ai Hui's wrist.

If he hadn't seen it himself, Ai Hui would have thought that what happened just now was his imagination.

Ai Hui retook control of the Dragonspine and was surprised by the feeling at its point.

The blood elementalist in front of him was totally lifeless. His blood traces which had been bright red were now grey and gloomy.

Whoosh!

Hearing the whistle of wind approaching from behind, Ai Hui stepped lightly to the side.

Old Lei, who was limp and feeble from head to toe, flew past Ai Hui. Ai Hui could still see a streak of incredulity in his widened eyes.

Seeing his two companions killed within the blink of an eye, fear flashed in the other blood elementalist's eyes and he shouted, "Shi

Wei! What are you doing?"

Before he could finish his words, Ai Hui rushed at him like a beast pouncing on its prey.

The blood elementalist had to retreat step by step and put up a desperate fight to withstand Ai Hui’s attack.

The sword moves were as fast as a violent storm. There was nothing magnificent, but all the ordinary sword moves were fast, precise, and powerful.

The Dragonspine seemed to be alive in Ai Hui’s hand. It could bend freely and thrust out at a weird angle. What was more annoying were the seven small swords which were like a colony of bees that would sting anyone who showed the slightest flaw in his movements.

In an instant, the blood elementalist was covered with wounds like a blood man.

"Shi Wei, help..."

The blood elementalist could never finish his words. The Dragonspine sword curved weirdly and slid into the gap between his arms.

Puff!

Blood splashed. The body of the blood elementalist stiffened as the sword pierced his throat.

He fell on the ground with a loud crash.

Shi Wei trembled all over. He never thought that Ai Hui could enjoy overwhelming superiority throughout the battle. He felt his throat dry up and stammered, "Ai Hui, I was compelled. I, I didn’t want to be your enemy. Can, can you let me go..."

Ai Hui knew his face. He said calmly, "I know you. You are a student at Central Pine Academy."

Feeling soothed by Ai Hui’s calm tone, Shi Wei spoke more fluently. "Great! I was afraid you wouldn’t know me. Since we are classmates, would you please let me go?"

"If you want to survive, then surrender." Ai Hui looked into his eyes calmly and said in a low voice, "I will send you to Mayor’s residence. You will not die, but will be observed and have the opportunity to get medical treatment."

"No, I won’t surrender..."

Ferocity and cruelty flickered in Shi Wei’s eyes. He was struggling.

"Then one of us will die here, you or me." Ai Hui raised his sword and walked slowly toward Shi Wei.

Seeing Ai Hui approaching put great pressure on Shi Wei, who was putting up a last-ditch struggle. The lights of fear and danger flickered on his face.

Chapter 254: Ai Hui’s Rage

The blare of the alert indicating that the city’s defences were destroyed and the booming earthquake interrupted the A-1 unit team members who had been resting.

The signal immediately caught their attention.

"The warehouse of the mayor’s residence!"

Duanmu Huanghun knew the map of Central Pine City very well. He gave a precise judgment of the signal’s location at once.

Before orders were given, everybody already began to act.

Fatty took his heavy shield and put down his face armor, Duanmu Huanghun began to adjust his clothes and limber up his fingers, while Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun arranged the bow strings and filled their quivers.

In less than one minute, the A-1 unit was assembled.

"Let’s head to the warehouse of the Mayor’s residence!"

The A-1 unit members rushed out of the training hall like a flood.

Just after stepping out onto the street, they became stunned by the number of blood fiends ahead of them. They regained their

composure before long and moved toward the warehouse of the Mayor's residence.

Each of them was extraordinarily resolute.

As the most powerful team in Central Pine City, they were like a sharp blade.

Fatty was armed to the teeth and walked in front with the heavy shield in his hands. The other members stood in two rows behind him. Once Fatty blocked a blood fiend's attack, they would rapidly rush out and kill it from two sides like scissors. Duanmu Huanghun stood in the air behind Fatty to take overall control. The everchanging [Viridescent Flower] kept disrupting the beasts' pace.

The long-range attack team led by Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun was either keeping the other blood fiends from getting any closer or jointly killing those whose scope of movement was being restricted by the close combat fighters.

"Release!"

With each order given by Jiang Wei, a bunch of blood fiends would be killed by a rain of arrows and lights which fell to the ground with large booming sounds. If the blood fiends they encountered were too powerful, they would shoot out one arrow using their joint effort, the power of which could be astonishing.

They had become more and more familiar with tactics and had also improved their coordination. Now they were like a highly effective killing machine. No beasts could survive and bodies were left on the road wherever they went.

The A-1 unit’s performance greatly boosted the morale of the elementalists they passed along the way.

The team was calm and didn’t stop for a second, steadfastly heading toward the warehouse of the Mayor’s residence.

Not surprisingly, such a performance attracted the attention of the blood elementalists hiding in the dark.

"The A-1 unit deserves its name!"

"Shall we join the fight?"

"Are you seeking death? They are right at their peak and we will only get our heads broken and bleed out."

"Then we just watch and do nothing?"

"No need to hurry. They are human beings, so they will tire and feel fatigue. We have so many blood fiends as our death squads, the A-1 unit will exhaust all their elemental energy against them. When they are tired and their elemental energy is used up, then it will be our harvest time."

"Good idea!"

In the air, Duanmu Huanghun suddenly turned his head and looked in the blood elementalists' direction.

The blood elementalists immediately shut up. After a while, when they cautiously looked out, the A-1 unit had already left.

"Is that Duanmu Huanghun? He is awesome!"

"He found us!"

Duanmu Huanghun's glance disenchanted the blood elementalists. They were now vigilant about his capabilities.

"Someone was hiding in the dark and peeping on us just now."

Duanmu Huanghun suddenly told Jiang Wei.

Jiang Wei was startled and asked, "Who?"

"I don't know," Duanmu Huanghun said coldly. "Leave them alone. The first thing is to get to the warehouse as soon as possible. Humph, I knew those two guys were unreliable."

Jiang Wei had already gotten used to Duanmu Huanghun's

arrogance, so he said nothing and simply smiled and nodded.

The team continued to move towards the Mayor’s residence.

At the warehouse gate, Shi Xueman was surrounded by three blood elementalists who were standing in a triangle formation.

"Never thought we could catch such a big shot! Surrender now, goddess! I’m too strong and will feel pity if I unintentionally hurt you," said the blood elementalist standing in front.

The other two were also smiling unkindly. They glanced up and down Shi Xueman, whose hot figure could not be hidden even though she was in the armor. Their greedy gazes that were fixed on Shi Xueman’s splendid face revealed their dirty minds.

In the past, Shi Xueman was a goddess in their hearts who was awe-inspiring and inviolable, but now that they knew there was no way back, they could no longer restrain their evil thoughts and inner lust.

Staring at the one who had spoken just now, Shi Xueman felt he looked very familiar. He was tall and strong, a fine-looking man with sword-shaped eyebrows and star-like eyes. His clothes were already ragged, but Shi Xueman recognized that they were the uniform for guards in the Mayor’s residence.

Then she remembered his name, Liao Nan, one of the bodyguards from the mayor’s residence. They’d once fought

together. She knew he used to be calm and taciturn, and the mayor put him in an important position. It was said that he'd been wounded later.

Shi Xueman's pupils contracted. "Casualty barrack? You were wounded soldiers from the casualty barrack?"

"You're truly a goddess. They all say that women with big breasts are brainless. You have big breasts too, but you are not brainless," said another blood elementalist, voice dripping with sarcasm. He had a pair of triangle eyes and his eyeballs kept rolling.

"You all became blood elementalists?" Shi Xueman was shocked.

"Yeah." Liao Nan laughed. "No one wants to die. Living in degradation is better than death. I'm all alone and carefree anyway. It's not bad to be a great blood elementalist."

"You don't hate them?" Shi Xueman asked.

"For what? They have all died. Can hatred keep me alive?" Liao Nan laughed again.

"You destroyed the city's defences?"

Liao Nan shrugged. "We are blood elementalists now. We do what blood elementalists are supposed to do."

Shi Xueman clenched her Cirrus so hard that her fists became white.

"Surrender now. You have no chance to win." There was no expression on Liao Nan’s face. "If you are willing to join us, I believe Sir will give you a chance."

"I’m different from you," Shi Xueman said lightly.

Liao Nan gave her a look of pity. "You will soon know that many results are worse than death."

"Cut the crap! Resist if you can." The one with triangle eyes whistled flirtatiously. "You can shout out loudly. I’ll like it."

He had hardly finished speaking when the other blood elementalist could not hold himself back any longer and groaned while pouncing on Shi Xueman. This guy was like an iron tower, and his pulsing muscles indicated his unimaginable power.

His stretched arms glowed with bloody light and reached out towards Shi Xueman like pliers.

Shi Xueman seemed to be scared by his powerful pounce and stepped back subconsciously. The iron-tower blood elementalist’s expression became more ferocious as he was aroused by the fear on Shi Xueman’s face.

Feeling hot and dry in his body, he couldn’t help leaning

forward. He was itching so badly in his heart that he couldn't wait to hold the goddess in his arms and abuse her.

Just at this point in time, however, a cold light flashed in Shi Xueman's eyes. Her foot that was stepping back suddenly stopped and stretched forward, taking a step as fast as a flash. Then, swish! She disappeared from where she was standing.

A figure appeared in front of the iron tower unexpectedly. More frighteningly, it was glowing slightly.

At first the iron tower's face changed, but then he burst into laughter. He didn't try to dodge at all, and stretched his arms wrapped in bloody light to embrace her.

He was confident he could clamp down on her as long as he could catch her, and by then, Shi Xueman would be fair game. For this end, he wouldn't mind getting injured. His capacity to recover was good enough anyway.

Streaks of blood traces appeared on his skin and he was covered with a strong bloody light which contained a metallic luster. He looked like a man made of iron and copper.

He was confident; he could feel that his muscles were even more solid than metal.

Cirrus stabbed into his body without any fancy tricks.

Inside the tunnel.

Ai Hui walked closer and closer, casting a shadow of death on Shi Wei. Shi Wei was struggling. He could not see any fluctuations on Ai Hui’s emotionless face. Ai Hui was like a killing machine approaching him to take his life.

The pressure was so strong that he felt as if he was being put on a guillotine, the blade of which was slowly pulled up. The breath of death was so close; his death penalty was likely to be pronounced at any time.

He felt he was going to collapse.

No! He didn’t want to die twice!

"I surrender!"

He breathed heavily and didn’t even notice that his clothes were completely soaked by his own sweat. When he shouted out those two words, he felt relieved and relaxed.

No matter what would happen in the future, at least he’d survived this time.

Ai Hui’s sword was at his throat, causing goosebumps to pop out on his skin, but to his relief, Ai Hui didn't kill him.

"Tell me what you know."

He could get no information from Ai Hui’s poker face.

…

After a while, Ai Hui finally finished his interrogation and Shi Wei heaved a sigh of relief. During the interrogation, Ai Hui asked many questions about the details and didn’t give him any time to think. Some questions were also asked repeatedly. Moreover, as long as Shi Wei hesitated even a little bit, the sword would once again approach his throat.

As a result, Shi Wei didn’t dare to play any tricks and honestly told him everything.

Then he relaxed.

Now he was not at all nervous, because he knew that what Ai Hui had said was reasonable. Keeping him alive could bring them more benefits, so they didn’t need to kill him.

But he had to better control his emotions. The intent to kill deep inside him could hardly be soothed, driving him to be extremely eager to initiate an attack.

Meanwhile, the cowardice and fear made him struggle and not dare to take any action.

Could he escape from Ai Hui?

He believed it was almost impossible. Ai Hui reminded him of Sir Tian Kuan. Maybe he was not as powerful as Sir Tian Kuan now, but in terms of making their enemies desperate, they were quite similar. He took it for granted that Sir Tian Kuan's strength was unfathomable, but why was Ai Hui so powerful?

He could not figure it out.

Just when he was going out of his mind, he felt a chill at his throat and in the next second, he fell into infinite darkness.

The headless body fell in a pool of blood while Shi Wei's head dropped on the ground and rolled away. His eyes were still open and his face was left with his astonishment before death.

Ai Hui's figure merged into the darkness.

After a while, he heard the fearful voice of the craftsmen's leader. "I thought you wouldn't kill him..."

"I lied to him."

Ai Hui was emotionless. Cold light flickered in his eyes in the darkness.

He had appeared to be calm while asking Shi Wei questions, but deep down he'd actually been greatly shocked. When he learned that the forty-five blood elementalists were those who had survived the internecine killing in the casualty barrack, he had already made up his mind. As one of the forty-five survivors, Shi Wei could not have possibly been as harmless as he'd acted.

The next move was so important that the slightest mistake could not be made. Ai Hui would not take the risk.

But a furious fire burned inside his heart. He was more wrathful than ever.

He must kill Tian Kuan!

Chapter 255: Liao Nan

The iron-tower blood elementalist stood like a statue in astonishment. The point of the snow-white Cirrus was stuck against his chest. Shi Xueman was still in position to rush forward, but remained motionless.

The sounds of fighting were deafening in Central Pine City, but here at the warehouse gate, there was only dead silence.

Liao Nan and the triangle-eyed blood elementalist's expressions were frozen. Their eyes were filled with shock and fear.

The iron-tower blood elementalist looked down with difficulty, like rusty machine. Even such a simple action required almost all his effort. His eyes were vacant with astonishment and incredulity.

The snow-white Cirrus was surrounded by white fog. The figure at the other end of the spear was blurred in his vision.

The tip of the spear, made of Firmament Iron, was crystal clear, like a sapphire. Its blade which was as thin as a cicada's wing reflected his pale face.

On his chest, cracks spread like a spider web from where the spear point was poking.

This... was really like broken porcelain.

His body turned out to be as fragile as porcelain…

He had always been confident in his body. Only now did he realize that such confidence was ridiculous.

But it was too late to learn this, and the powerful attack had been too abrupt. He didn’t feel rage or unwillingness, however, only freedom. Such an ending… was not bad for him.

His body that was as heavy as an iron tower fell backward, throwing up a dust cloud. once again, everything fell into silence.

Shi Xueman recovered her spear slowly. She looked tranquil, as if she hadn’t done anything special. There was no trepidation or anxiety on her face. Her eyes were calm, as if she was in her own family’s training hall.

"As the descendant of the Shi Family, I’m honored to have fought with you using the move [Cloud Whale]."

Her voice was clear and sonorous. Waving Cirrus in her hand, the girl looked at them peacefully.

A streak of fear flashed across the triangle-eyed blood elementalist’s eyes. Just now, he’d said those lascivious words on purpose to get his companion aroused, so that the idiot would initiate an attack first. He didn’t care about that idiot’s death at all, but Shi Xueman’s strength was indeed outside of his expectations.

That spear move just now was stunning.

Clap, clap, clap.

Liao Nan applauded. With excitement and admiration, the former mayor’s bodyguard said, "I’d heard of the Shi Family’s inheritance, [Hydromancy], which covers everything related to the water attribute. Having seen it myself just now, I have to admit that it really lives up to its reputation. That spear move was as powerful as a mountain and could hardly be withstood. [Cloud Whale] deserves its fame. What’s more, the spear move is forceful. As a girl, you didn’t weaken its power at all, and instead added to its glory. I really admire it."

Liao Nan gave a salute with respect.

Shi Xueman was indifferent. She stood still with the spear in her hand.

The triangle-eyed blood elementalist said coldly, "Stop that nonsense. Let’s fight back together."

"Together?" Liao Nan laughed out loud. "I dare not. The bad example is right in front of us. You’d better go your way and I’ll go mine."

The triangle-eyed blood elementalist didn’t really care about his words, simply giving him a grim smile and saying, "If so, then enjoy your time with your goddess. I’ll leave first."

Then he bent his knees and bounced up. Like a flash, he immediately disappeared behind the dilapidated walls.

Shi Xueman became less anxious in her heart and slightly moved her fingers that were tightly holding the spear. Although she had seemed to utilize that spear move effortlessly, in fact it had consumed a great deal of her energy. The surging energy and blood inside of her chest were only soothed after a while.

That move was called [Broken Sea], indicating that the sea would be broken by the bump of a Humpback Cloud Whale. With this move, she could gather all her strength and elemental energy from the eight palaces at the point of the spear, which would create an astonishing destructive power. The spider-web like cracks were its unique feature.

The power of [Broken Sea] correlated with the number of elemental energies one could control. Every eight elemental energies would drive its power to a higher level.

Shi Xueman was only able to control eight elemental energies.

Practicing [Broken Sea] was extremely difficult, and only those who had achieved elemental internalization could do so. Shi Xueman was already pushing herself to utilize this move, after which she needed about thirty seconds to recover every time. During the recovery period, her fighting strength was zero.

She had noticed the precautions the three blood elementalists

took against each other, so she'd decided to bet on her judgment. It was a risky bet, since if she was besieged and caught in a dogfight, the situation would be dangerous.

Fortunately, she won.

Her attack had scared the two who were still alive and one of them left. Now only Liao Nan was here and her strength had recovered, which was a perfect ending for her.

But just as she felt a bit relaxed, what Liao Nan said next made her nervous again.

"I know you are buying yourself time."

"I'm familiar with the distress signal of A-1 unit," Liao Nan said with a spurious smile on his face.

Shi Xueman was not swayed by him and tightly held Cirrus in her hand. As long as Cirrus was with her, there was nothing to fear. No matter how disadvantageous the situation was, she would not lose her courage.

"Let's fight if you want!"

The flickering light of the explosions in the distance lit up Shi Xueman's cold and perfect face, which attracted Liao Nan's attention like a magnet.

Liao Nan looked at her as if he was looking at the most beautiful masterpiece in the world. Suddenly, he said, "Do you know what happens when an elementalist is infected with blood poison?"

"What do you mean?" Shi Xueman frowned.

Liao Nan spoke in a relaxed tone and even had a smile on his face, as if what he was saying had nothing to do with himself. "As long as you are infected by the blood poison, your mind will be eroded by it and you will finally descend into a beast. No, not beast, but half a beast and half a human being. You will have some remaining consciousness, but your body will be dominated by the beast. You will be irritable and eager to kill. Yes, you will not be able to control yourself. It’s more miserable than death."

Shi Xueman was shocked by what he said.

To any survivor in the Central Pine city, the casualty barrack was something that no one wanted to mention. They didn’t know how to face the fate of the casualties.

Neither did Shi Xueman. It was too desperate.

Therefore, hearing what Liao Nan was saying, her heart shivered.

"The only way to stay alive at this point of time is to become a blood elementalist." Liao Nan paused and then burst into laughter.

"I’m not saying this to seek your sympathy. I’m satisfied with what I am now. Of course, it was hard to accept at the very beginning, but now I have let it go. I’m free from care anyway, so why not choose to stay in this world as another form of being?"

Shi Xueman didn’t say a word. Eyes downcast, she suddenly burst out with a strong intent to kill.

"Oh, calm down." Liao Nan smiled. "I know what’s in the warehouse. It will be terrible if you act on impulse and damage the things in there."

Shi Xueman, who was about to rush out, suddenly froze. Yes, he was right. The gold needles in the warehouse must not be damaged. She saw the mayor and the dean leave in the direction of the embroidery workshop, so she could only depend on herself now.

Now, Master Han’s plan of "treating the city as a piece of cloth" was their only hope.

Compared with the golden needles in the warehouse, Liao Nan was of no importance at all.

"Then let’s continue." Liao Nan looked up to glance at the sky and leisurely said, "It’s my great honor to talk with goddess like this. I never had such an extravagant hope before. That’s why I said maybe there would be a chance if I change my way of being. Do you have any understanding of blood elementalists?"

Shi Xueman felt a flicker of interest in her heart, but she didn’t say anything.

Liao Nan continued, "If one wants to transform from a blood fiend man into a blood elementalist, he has to be able to agglomerate blood traces. Hmm, the feeling was spectacular at that time. It was just like drifting up and down in the blood sea of the netherworld, then hearing a voice calling your name. After that you can’t help walking towards the shore, and once you step onto land, you come back to this mortal world."

Shi Xueman only hoped that Duanmu Huanghun and the others would arrive sooner.

Liao Nan was not annoying. Instead, he had an elegant and collected demeanor. Plus, she was very sympathetic about what he had encountered; nevertheless, she intuitively disliked him for no reason.

Suddenly, Ai Hui’s figure appeared in her mind.

That guy was not at all elegant and was always sarcastic and mean; however, you could always see the eagerness for life in that bastard’s eyes. It was so strong and firm that nothing could influence it even a little bit. More importantly, there was not the slightest hint of confusion in his eyes.

In Liao Nan’s eyes, there was only confusion, decadence, and annoyance towards life.

Was it because of what he had been through? Yes, it was understandable that Liao Nan might have become what he was today after such a traumatic experience.

Not everyone was like that bastard who could never be influenced by anyone or anything!

A glimmer of a smile flashed across Shi Xueman’s face.

Noticing the smile on Shi Xueman’s face, Liao Nan cheered up. With more sincerity, he said, "After you can agglomerate the god trace – oh, I mean what you call the ‘blood trace’ – then blood spiritual force can be produced and you become a blood elementalist. Not everyone is equally talented, so the blood elementalists are different too. Basically, there are three categories."

Shi Xueman suddenly asked, "Which three?"

Liao Nan smiled faintly. "The first is called god guard. A god guard’s body is being constantly tempered by keeps by blood spiritual force, which, compared with elemental energy, is far more effective. Your training speed can be largely boosted and your body will become invulnerable. Neither swords nor spears would hurt you. Some gains great improvement in speed, some in flexibility, some in strength, and some in self-healing ability. Most blood elementalists – about sixty percent – fall into this category."

"How about the second category?"

"The second is called god shaman. They are more sensitive to the surrounding environment and are good at communicating with the Nature. They can summon spirits and train blood demons. To be a god shaman requires a lot of talent, so only three out of ten people are qualified."

"But the rarest category is god priest, who is well versed in psychi attacks. They can create illusions to control enemies' minds. Less than ten percent of blood elementalists can become a god priest. Their attack patterns are hard to predict. If you encounter them, you'd better run for your life."

This suddenly reminded Shi Xueman of the frightening girl in red. She was very likely to be a god priest.

She suddenly asked, "Why are you telling me all of this?"

Liao Nan raised his eyebrows and said with ease, "Although we belong to different sides, I don't want you to be killed so soon. The battle has just started and it's sure to last for a long time. If you die in the early stage, I'll feel lonely. I hope you can live longer."

"I will. We belong to different sides," said Shi Xueman seriously, her eyes downcast. Then, she raised her head; her eyes were cold. "That means we are enemies."

"Get beheaded!"

The cold and clear voice was filled with power.

Shi Xueman’s spear stabbed out.

Chapter 256: Liao Nan Beheaded

Liao Nan had not expected that Shi Xueman would suddenly take action. He was shocked to see the spear swiftly piercing toward him.

Shi Xueman’s super quick assault created a stream of lights that gradually enlarged in Liao Nan’s eyes. Liao Nan’s pupils constricted abruptly. As he rapidly retreated, his palm lit up with red light and slapped at the spear, but it was instantly penetrated by the awl-like spear.

With a muffled groan, Liao Nan sped up sharply and reappeared several meters away.

He looked at the bloody hole on his hand and deeply asked, "Why?"

"No matter what you say, we are enemies. So, why not cut the crap?" Shi Xueman said indifferently. Her voice was as chilly as the morning mist.

Liao Nan asked, "As long as I’m a blood elementalist, you just can’t let it go? No exception?"

"Maybe there will be." Her calm and clear voice revealed no emotion. Looking directly into Liao Nan’s eyes, she said, "But it won’t be you."

"Apparently, it was all my wishful thinking." Liao Nan pulled himself together. Suddenly, a bloody glow flashed in his eyes. "Then I won’t be lenient anymore."

Liao Nan took a step forward and disappeared unexpectedly.

The look on Shi Xueman’s face hardened. As the end of Cirrus shivered, she jumped upward abruptly.

Clink!

Sparks splashed in the air.

Shi Xueman felt a blast of power come through the end of the spear, which made Cirrus almost slip out of her hands. She grasped Cirrus with all her strength, spun in a circle as a result of the impact, and stabbed the spear again into the air.

Clink!

Another radiant spark bloomed in the air.

This time Shi Xueman was prepared. After a slight jolt, she stamped hard, dashed like a lightning bolt, and once more stabbed the Cirrus skyward.

A transparent ripple appeared in the atmosphere.

The look on Liao Nan's face became serious. The spear move used by Shi Xueman seemed to not be fancy or complicated, but he could not help gravitating toward the spearhead. He saw an illusion that the space around the point of the spear was collapsing inward Like a moth flying to a flame, he could not stop his slap from approaching.

Clink!

This time, the force generated by the spear was stronger than the previous ones. It was so powerful that Liao Nan lost feeling in his arms.

Shi Xueman deserved to be called goddess!

Liao Nan genuinely admired Shi Xueman in his heart. She was called a goddess not only because of her unparalleled beauty, but also due to her strength that largely surpassed her peers. Once, he had fought together with the A-1 Unit, so he had witnessed Shi Xueman's might. She was indeed strong at that time, but definitely could not compare to what she was today.

The power he had obtained through death could not at all compete with the progress Shi Xueman had achieved. Was this the superiority of those so-called aristocratic families?

Liao Nan's mind was filled with jealousy and a little bit of anger.

He roared in fury, a bloody glow flowing around him. The speed

of his attacks accelerated, which generated red lights shining all over the sky.

Shi Xueman stood calmly on the ground. Her moves slowed down, and each strike was extremely simple as well as lucid. With each move, a cloud of bloody glow faded away. Without the protection of the glow, Liao Nan's hands collided solidly with the spear.

Liao Nan was rocked by every collision.

Shi Xueman's moves became more and more fluent. She felt as if she was silently swimming in the stratosphere like a whale. There was no splendid radiance, but spectators could sense the incomparable power hidden under the serenity.

Shi Xueman found inspiration.

The humpback cloud whale was the overlord of the sky. They had no natural enemies, which allowed them to freely swim in the sky without any obstacles. As the overlords, they did not need to care about other creatures' thoughts. All they needed to do was swim silently.

I'm the center...

A brilliance emerged out from Shi Xueman's eyes as her spear moves became slower and crisper.

Liao Nan sensed the pressure increasing steeply as if he was in a horrible whirlpool. Enormous power pressed against him from all directions. No matter how he changed his attacking angles, his hands would slap upon the spear without exception. The force from the spear was so strong that each collision could numb his arms.

What kind of spear move was this?

Liao Nan now realized that Shi Xueman had become so strange and so strong.

His mind was disturbed for a moment and so was the surrounding space. Liao Nan's expression changed, as he felt something was about to happen. The snow-white Cirrus dashed out from the clouds like a humpback whale. Then, without any fancy moves, it directly jabbed toward him.

The ambient space seemed to freeze, and Liao Nan felt that he had no way to dodge.

Taking a deep breath, Liao Nan's chest promptly compressed, while his arms grew much thicker and stronger. Veins crawled all over his hands,resembling a pair of blood-made net gloves..

Liao Nan gradually pushed out his hands while exhaling.

When her spear and Liao Nan's hands clashed, Shi Xueman's body was shocked, while Liao Nan's hands exploded like

watermelons. The weirdest thing was that the blood net gloves covering his arms abruptly wrapped backward before flying toward Shi Xueman.

Liao Nan showed a flash of complacency on his face. As a blood elementalist, he could always recover as long as it was not a fatal wound. The blood elementalists who were good at healing could even restore themselves immediately.

Liao Nan could not do that, but he did not care about it at all.

As long as the blood net could cover Shi Xueman, it would be impossible for her to get rid of it.

After he awakened as a blood elementalist, some abilities hidden in his body had swarmed into his mind as memories. His blood was different from the others'—it could be separated from his body and absorb the elemental energy from other elementalists.

When Shi Xueman saw the blood net, her pupil suddenly constricted.

The memory of the time in the tunnel emerged before her eyes. She had almost been swallowed by those crazy blood streaks. If it had not been for the bastard who saved her...

An inexplicable mood rose in her heart, but she stopped it immediately. Killing intent flashed in her eyes.

Being beaten by the same problem twice was not her style.

Withdrawing her Cirrus swiftly, Shi Xueman grasped it bizarrely—she gripped the end of the spear with one hand, the body of the spear with the other like she was holding a bamboo pole, and stabbed forward with a spin.

Bang!

Air exploded ahead of the spear, forming an air shield dome in the sky.

Bang! The blood net crashed on the dome air shield and was blocked by it.

At the same time, Shi Xueman stepped back, easily breaking the attack of Liao Nan.

She had been thinking a way to break an attack like this and finally came up with this solution. The most terrifying part of these blood streaks was that they could swallow and absorb elemental energy. That was to say, elemental energy was useless when facing the blood streaks.

Therefore, she had to find another solution, which was the air shield. The theory behind an air shield was quite simple: compress the air to form a dome shaped shield. The air shield was a popular technique. It provided a low level of protection, but when coping with something special like toxic smoke or mist, it had an

outstanding performance.

Blood streak attacks lacked great impulsive force, but they corroded elemental energy, which theoretically made the air shield the best choice for defense.

Real combat also confirmed the theory.

Liao Nan was shocked. He had not expected that Shi Xueman would easily break his killing move. He could not figure it out, but he realized that the situation was now quite dangerous for him. Consequently, he bit his tongue and transformed into a streak of bloody light, fleeing away as quickly as possible.

Shi Xueman had not anticipated that Liao Nan would be so decisive. Before she could react, Liao Nan had already dashed dozens of meters away. It was too late for her to chase him.

Just then, a strip of white blade glow cut toward Liao Nan from behind a pile of ruins.

It arrived so fast that Liao Nan was chopped into two parts before he even realized it.

The upper part of his body flew several meters away before falling heavily to the ground.

Wang Zhen came out from behind the ruins and walked to Liao Nan, who was still alive. Wang Zhen said seriously, "No matter

what reason you have, betrayal is a capital crime. You were my bodyguard, so I will end your life."

Then, he beheaded Liao Nan without any hesitation.

Wang Zhen gave a thumbs-up gesture to Shi Xueman and said, "Good girl!"

Shi Xueman was a little shy and asked, "How is Master Han?"

Wang Zhen answered agreeably, "We arrived in time. There were five blood elementalists. The dean and I killed four of them. The last one was severely injured before he escaped. Next, we escorted Shouchuan to the embroidery workshop. The dean is there with them and I came over to see how things are going."

Only now did Shi Xueman notice that Wang Zhen's left arm dangled about his waist. Shocked, she asked, "What happened to your arm?"

"It's not a big deal. Compared to what I have been through before, this is nothing," Wang Zhen said lightly before sighing. "I am no match for you youngsters. Nowadays the youngsters like you are marvelous. You are the leaders of the future."

Shi Xueman was filled with deep respect for Wang Zhen. What he had been through, as he just mentioned, referred to the Battle of the Dawn.

"How many blood elementalists are there?" Shi Xueman asked.

"I have no idea." The mayor shook his head. His tone was sad, and his eyes were full of sorrow. "I went to the quarantine barracks. No one was alive."

Shi Xueman was astonished.

All of a sudden, the ground began to quake from the agitation of an elemental energy blast. About two minutes later, the elemental energy gradually became stable.

Wang Zhen said merrily, "Ai Hui has inserted the first gold needle!"

Knowing this, Shi Xueman’s cold expression melted and her face beamed with joy.

Duanmu Huanghun and the others also arrived at the warehouse at this point. When they saw that Shi Xueman was safe and sound, they felt a sense of relief.

Fatty looked around and asked, "Where are Ai Hui and Lou Lan?"

"They have just inserted the first gold needle successfully." Shi Xueman said happily.

Everybody else was excited to hear the news. Altogether there

were nine gold needles, so there was still a long way to go before the final success. However, the first victory was still a good sign. After a gold needle was injected into a vital node, it would integrate with the elemental energy of the universe. In that case, blood elementalists would not be able to destroy it anymore.

Ai Hui brought his craftsmen back. They still looked excited.

"Let’s inject the second gold needle right now!" someone shouted.

"It’s not time yet." The leader of those craftsmen explained, "We can only do that after the first node becomes totally stable. Then, we can activate the second node."

"How long will it take?" Ai Hui asked.

"No more than one day," the leader of craftsmen answered while shaking his head. "Based on the plan, the time gap between inserting two gold needles should not exceed one day."

Hearing that, everybody’s excitement wore off. For them, the longer they waited, the more casualties they might suffer.

"Then we wait. "Let’s start to arrange our defensive line," Ai Hui said deeply and commanded Shi Xueman.

Everybody looked at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui said with gravity, "Blood elementalists will definitely notice this big scale elemental energy fluctuation. I predict they may attack the warehouse."

Everybody present knew that the most horrifying time of the battle in Central Pine City had begun.

Next, no matter if it was day or night, even each second would be soaked in blood.

Looking into the distance, Ai Hui had a feeling that they were under the watch of somebody hiding in the shadows.

Chapter 257: A Handsome Guy Cannot Be Made An Enemy

Ai Hui was extra cautious. He sent someone to check out the situation, but did not find any tracks. However, at this point in time, he no longer had time to bother about those that were acting on the sly.

Time was very precious.

Once Ai Hui returned, he immediately took over the command of the A1-Unit. The warehouse was the core of the operation, so he started planning the layers of defense.

After hearing Ai Hui report on the blood elementalists, the atmosphere became heavy, especially after hearing that there were no survivors in the quarantine barracks.

Death was no longer scary. How many people had died in Central Pine City? The survivors were less than 50 percent of the population now. They were used to seeing death. Nevertheless, they could not accept the fact when they heard the news.

The injured soldiers from the quarantine barracks were once their comrades. Everyone felt guilty and upset that the injured soldiers could only wait for their deaths following their injuries from battle. Now, they still had to endure such cruel torment by being forced to kill each other.

After Tian Kuan destroyed their bodies, he continued to destroy their faith and conviction.

The A1-Unit only consisted of students. They were unable to imagine the cruel reality. When they heard that there were five survivors who gave up on their lives, they were no longer able to control their emotions and many of them sobbed silently.

Wang Zhen seemed to age suddenly and was in a daze.

While there were no alternatives to the quarantine barracks, he was still burdened by guilt as he was the one that gave the order. At the front line, no one would give up on their companions. Even when he broke his leg in the past, his comrades carried him back.

He was unable to persuade himself that it was not his fault, but rather in service to the greater good and without other alternatives.

Shi Xueman's face was as white as paper. She trembled slightly, and there was a hint of fear in her eyes. She had never thought that there would be such a dreadful incident in the world and had not understood the suffering that Liao Nan had been referring to.

Ai Hui stood quietly. He did not console them, nor did he know how to console everyone.

One month ago, they were just normal students, merely naive and innocent teenagers.

However, Ai Hui felt that he should say something. Not because he wanted to, but because time was running out.

Life was cruel. It did not provide the time to digest sorrows.

"I know that everyone is upset, but now is not the time to be upset. We do not have much time left."

Ai Hui's voice was clear and distinct in the midst of deathly stillness. Tearful faces looked up at him in a daze. In their eyes, Ai Hui was still calm as per his usual self. His thin, yet structured, face did not display any hint of emotion.

"The whole city knows about the plan to treat the city like a piece of cloth. Tian Kuan and his team will definitely know about this too. The activity of the elemental energy waves was too obvious just now, and we are unable to hide it. Tian Kuan will definitely try to sabotage our plans."

The indifferent voice was like a narrator explaining an incident that had nothing to do with them. While it was harsh, the others still felt a sense of peace.

"There are two ways for Tian Kuan to sabotage the plan of 'treating the city like a piece of cloth'. The first would be to destroy the gold needles. The second would be attacking Mistress."

"That's right."

The voice belonged to Wang Zhen, who stood rigidly. Wrinkles and signs of hardship could be seen on his face. While his face was pale, he did not forget his duty.

His voice was hoarse, yet forceful. "Tian Kuan is relying on his subordinates and the blood fiends. They will use the blood fiends to expend our elemental energy and strength. Blood elementalists are the best at taking advantage of a crisis. We should not give them the opportunity to do that."

Ai Hui’s gaze fell on the mayor. The mayor’s gaze was steady, yet powerful, and he emitted an indescribable aura. It was like the mayor was emitting light. Ai Hui did not know why, but he thought of dried twigs burning.

Burning?

Ai Hui looked pensive.

"The warehouse is not a good place for defense. We should change it to the mayor’s residence. I will fetch Master Han and Shouchuan later. We should reduce the areas that we need to guard. Gather the survivors. Let the streets be used by Tian Kuan. While there are many blood fiends, they are not organized. There are few blood elementalists, and they will definitely not use them to attack us. Their only chance to attack us is when we nail in the gold needles," Wang Zhen said all this in one breath.

The mayor residence was only three hundred meters away from

the warehouse and it was not really difficult for them to transfer the gold needles. The defense of the warehouse was much weaker than the mayor residence's. Considering the fact that they had to endure until all the nine gold needles were inserted, Ai Hui felt that it was better for them to move the needles to mayor residence.

"Let's go and nail the gold needles." Shi Xueman took the initiative and stood up.

The A1-Unit was currently the best squad in Central Pine City, and they were duty bound.

Wang Zhen looked toward Ai Hui. He knew that Ai Hui's opinion was more important.

"Alright!" Ai Hui replied. Wang Zhen heaved a sigh of relief.

Ai Hui was someone who was very capable. Except for the fact that he did not have a strong sense of responsibility, he had no other faults.

If only Ai Hui had a strong sense of responsibility like Shi Xueman!

"Then it is decided!" Wang Zhen declared. Everybody scurried off and started doing what they were supposed to do.

Wang Zhen walked out of the warehouse and looked up at the sky. He prayed silently, hoping that Vice Division Leader Yu could

endure for a longer period of time.

A loud clap resounded from the heavens as green light enveloped the whole sky like a tornado.

Countless dismembered limbs and body parts dropped down from the sky like raindrops, but there were none around Yu Mingqiu.

At the moment, Yu Mingqiu's expression was filled with excitement, and his eyes were bright as he looked for new targets. Within the vicinity of 300 meters, however, there were none to be seen.

"Eh, no more? That's it?" Yu Mingqiu muttered to himself.

He did not lower his voice. Those who had better base levels could hear him clearly.

Yu Mingqiu was not content. He lifted his bow and continued to search for targets. His bow was primitive. Three dark green branches as thick as his thumb were twisted and bent to form the body of a bow. The bow string consisted of slender vines, and there were still a few fresh leaves on the vine.

This wooden bow was not eye-catching, but possessed an imposing name.

Blue Dome of Heaven!

When the Blue Dome of Heaven was first created, it immediately became famous throughout the world.

The blood birds fled when they saw Yu Mingqiu approaching.

There were some defects on Yu Mingqiu’s azure wings, but he paid no attention to them. He flew in a circle, but there were no blood birds that dared to battle with him.

He stood blankly, and after a moment, his crazy laughter was heard throughout the sky of Central Pine City.

"A handsome guy cannot be made an enemy!"

"How can anyone not understand such a simple theory."

"When a man is standing, all the birds will flee!"

His comments were laced with disdain and they spread among Central Pine City’s sky like a violent storm.

The elementalists who were still hanging on strenuously had a boost to their morale.

The dean was guarding the embroidery workshop, and his face was filled with admiration. He was also affected by Yu Mingqiu’s valiant battle spirit.

It was no wonder he was the youngest vice division leader in the Thirteen Divisions. His capability had no limit.

However, after he heard Yu Mingqiu's speech, the knowledgeable dean paused for a moment. In a hesitant tone, he asked Mingxiu, "A commander cannot be made an enemy, what a nice phrase! He was referring to the word 'commander' right?"

A smile appeared on Mingxiu's pale face, "He is referring to being a handsome guy."

Dean: "..."

Mingxiu looked up into the sky at Yu Mingqiu, who looked like a war god. When she was young, her big brother was always studying diligently and did not have time to play with her. It was Big Brother Qiu who played with her, bringing her up to the mountains to catch birds and to the rivers to catch fish.

So many years had passed, but Brother Qiu was still the same as before.

Lost in thought, she suddenly thought of Li Wei, and her gaze grew dark.

Currently, there was a woman at a corner on the ground who focused on Yu Mingqiu in the sky.

Several times, the red-dressed girl wanted to make a move, but was hesitant. While Yu Mingqiu looked like he was in a pathetic situation, such combat was truly exhausting. It was unfathomable that he could endure for so long.

It was reasonable to say that Yu Mingqiu was like an arrow at the end of its flight.

However, the red-dressed girl still had some doubts. Unlike the others, Yu Mingqiu's master was the best wood elemental Grandmaster. She understood how elementalists worked and knew how formidable a Grandmaster could be.

Yu Mingqiu definitely had skills that could save his life as a last resort. However, looking at his condition, it was apparent that he had gone crazy. It was impossible to reason with a crazy person. If Yu Mingqiu had thoughts of destroying everything, she was going to die as well.

Her injuries were quite substantial.

Furthermore, she had a new target now. That target was Ai Hui.

She was heartbroken when she was forced to use the [Tree Spirit's Blood] in the tunnel. However, her pain gave way to shock when she saw Shi Xueman. How was Shi Xueman still alive?

When the [Tree Spirit's Blood] invaded one's body, the person would become a tree and grow rapidly.

She never imagined that the [Tree Spirit's Blood] would fail. She jolted with shock when she saw Ai Hui and felt the aura of the [Tree Spirit's Blood] on himi.

Immediately, she knew that Ai Hui was the key.

She was stirred up by this discovery and more interested in Ai Hui than Shi Xueman. This was not the first time that Ai Hui had dispelled the blood poison. It was as if Ai Hui was very familiar with blood spiritual force and had many secrets.

The highest probability was that there was some form of blood-refined artifact on Ai Hui's body.

The blood-refined artifacts left behind after the Cultivation Era were the most well-preserved artifacts, but there were slight differences between blood spiritual force and actual spiritual force. As such, not all blood-refined artifacts were usable. Furthermore, ancient blood refinement was much more in depth than the current blood refinement that they practiced. There were many things that she did not understand.

It was not an easy feat to find an artifact that she could use.

However, Ai Hui was too alert. He seemed to have discovered that he was being spied on. The red-dressed girl was astonished. Ai Hui was constantly surprising her.

To prevent alerting Ai Hui's attention, she retreated immediately.

First, she decided to examine what exactly Ai Hui had just done. Just now, the elemental waves in the tunnel were very strange. She also saw a few blood elementalists. They had just awakened recently as blood elementalists and had not learned any spells. They could only battle based on their instincts.

There was a competitor concealed in Central Pine City who was worthy of her.

She did not show her face to her competitor, hiding further instead. The threat of her competitor was comparable to an elementalist. It was even more dangerous when her competitor was at an advantage.

She thought for a moment and decided to take a look at the source of the elemental waves. What were these fellows trying to do?

A play on the chinese word. 帅 - can mean handsome or commander.

Chapter 258: Dividing The Troops

The red-dressed girl found the place where the elemental energy waves originated. Surprisingly, it was the same place where she crossed paths with Ai Hui last time. Only then did she realize Ai Hui's objective of traveling to the tunnel earlier. Walking a few circuits around the location of the gold needle, she was puzzled. However, she was not worried as she knew that she had just arrived in Central Pine City, and there were many things that she was still unaware of.

She walked out of the pit quietly. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed the movement of a stone from the ruins not far away.

Yan Hai woke up in a daze, aching all over. He was trapped in the middle of the rubble and surrounded by darkness. Slowly, he tried to recall what had happened. Instantly, he was filled with fury.

That damn Old Lei!

Wait until he returned. He would definitely report this incident!

He exhausted his strength to climb out of the rumble. He was covered in dust and looked disheveled. This was simply too embarrassing. The hatred in his heart intensified. Old Lei was now ranked as an enemy. Yan Hai silently swore to himself that he would get his revenge!

Upon climbing out of the debris, he was met with the glaring sun and had to squint his eyes.

"Blood elementalist?"

A sweet voice sounded from above him.

Yan Hai’s body stiffened. Something was wrong. Out of the 45 blood elementalists, there were five females. However, this was not a familiar voice so it had to belong to an elementalist...

Yan Hai’s heart jolted when he thought that he had fallen into the hands of an elementalist.

Looking foolish with his eyes closed, Yan Hai suddenly spun into action. Making use of both his hands and legs, he quickly shot out.

His actions were as fast as lightning. The average person would not have time to react to his speed.

Yan Hai did not meet with any obstructions for the first 10 meters. He involuntarily released his breath, but did not have the chance to rejoice when his body was suddenly pulled back without the ability to continue rushing forward.

Yan Hai was terror-stricken and turned his head. A bright red silk cloth was wrapped around him like he was a dumpling.

Following this, he felt a tug and flew backward. He fell heavily on the floor. It was a harsh fall and made his head spin.

After a moment, Yan Hai regained some of his wits. Without hesitating, he got on his knees and begged, "Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me!"

"I like people who know how to adapt to circumstances," a sweet and languid voice rang across the air.

Yan Hai gathered a few ounces of courage and lifted his head secretly to take a peek. He was dumbfounded by what he saw. The lady in front of him was like someone who came out of a painting. She wore a red dress while looking beautiful and alluring. Her languid and charming aura made his heart speed up involuntarily.

How could there be such a beautiful lady in this world?

Looking at Yan Hai’s dumbstruck expression, the red-dressed girl covered her mouth and laughed lightly.

"Who is your master?"

Her voice was enticing. However, upon hearing the word "Master," Yan Hai immediately regained his wits. While he felt dominated by the beauty of the red-dressed girl, his fear toward Tian Kuan was carved deep into his bones.

Yan Hai asked in a trembling voice, "Who, who are you?"

The red-dressed girl replied while smiling, "You have no right to ask questions as a captive. If you are unwilling to say, I will just hand you over to the elementalists of Central Pine City. Surely they would give you a hearty welcome."

Yan Hai’s face paled.

He would rather be killed than fall into the hands of Central Pine City’s elementalists. The elementalists there hated blood elementalists to the core. If they saw a blood elementalist, they would tear him to pieces without a second thought.

When he heard the two words "hearty welcome," Yan Hai’s face became even paler.

The hatred between both parties was beyond any point of redemption.

If it came to that day, it would also not be an easy task to simply die.

Hold on!

Yan Hai stammered, "Fairy, are you a blood elementalist too?"

He rejoiced. That’s right! If the red-dressed girl was an elementalist, she would have killed him long ago.

"I am." The red-dressed girl smiled and creased her eyebrows. Her expression was adorable as she continued, "You have yet to answer my question?"

Yan Hai blurted, "It is Sir Tian Kuan."

When the words left his mouth, Yan Hai was filled with regret. He did not know what had happened, but it was like he was possessed. He did not think before answering.

"Oh, Tian Kuan." The red-dressed girl suddenly seemed to see the light. She threw a dazzling smile at Yan Hai. "We have time to slowly discuss this. I am very interested."

Her sentence had not yet ended when the red-dressed lady folded up her red sleeves and disappeared along with Yan Hai.

Wang Zhen was very efficient. Along the way, he continuously gathered the younger elementalists. The battle raged in every corner of Central Pine City. At this point, none of the people held any hopes that they would remain unscathed. As a result, this made them more determined when fighting back.

While the blood fiends caused many casualties, this did not kill the people’s morale.

Pretty soon, Wang Zhen gathered a group of elementalists and arrived at the embroidery workshop.

After he explained the plan to the dean and Mingxiu, he was surprised by their answer.

"Mayor, you are very considerate, but my teacher is unable to move."

Mingxiu bitterly laughed.

"Unable to move?" Wang Zhen stood rooted to the ground. Next to him, the dean was also caught by surprise. It was also the first time he had heard of this news.

"Mistress Han has been meditating since the start of the plan." Mingxiu's voice trembled. "The plan of 'treating the city as a piece of cloth' requires the ability of a Grandmaster. Mistress Han is merely a Master and there is still some disparity. Mistress Han has already started meditating and is unaware of the affairs of the world. She has instructed Mingxiu not to disturb her. When the nine specific nodes have been activated, she would naturally awaken.

"Could it be that Master Han is trying to break through the Grandmaster barrier?" The dean turned pale with fright.

"Apart from this, there were no other options." Mingxiu paused for a moment before she continued, "Mistress Han knows that there is not much hope. She instructed me to pass on the message to Mayor and Dean that if she fails to break through, she would still complete the task of 'treating the city as a piece of cloth'"

By the last sentence, Mingxiu’s eyes were red and teary.

Wang Zhen and the dean stayed silent. They understood the true implication of the last sentence. If the breakthrough failed and Teacher Han still wanted to complete the plan, she would have to pay a huge price. It was possible that the price would be her life.

Compared to the chance of success for breaking through to be a Grandmaster, there was a higher possibility of her losing her life.

"If that is the case, we need to make some adjustments to our plan." Wang Zhen cut straight to the point and said gravely, "Now, we have two areas that we need to guard. The first is the embroidery workshop and the second is the mayor’s residence. We will do some simple division of the troops. The dean and I will take a group of people to guard the embroidery workshop. The mayor’s residence and the gold needles would be handed over to Ai Hui. Let him know he can act as he deems fit."

He had yet to finish his word when a few blood fiends were spotted at the end of the street.

An elementalist soared into the sky and flew toward the mayor’s residence.

Now that the sky was guarded by Yu Mingqiu, it had unexpectedly become the safest place in Central Pine City.

Ai Hui sat on the rooftop of the mayor’s residence and was

greeted by a view full of ruins. Clouds of black smoke rushed skyward. Ai Hui was all too familiar with the landscape before him. This was Central Pine City. This was their battleground.

How could a soldier be unfamiliar with his battleground?

Yet, Ai Hui was also familiar with another side of Central Pine City.

The image of a peaceful, but lively, street flashed past his mind. The streets were lined with shops and also many training halls. Flags outside the training halls fluttered in the breeze.

The scene that flashed past in his mind seemed like it was just yesterday, but it also seemed like eons ago.

Ai Hui missed those days, but he knew that they could no longer return to the past.

Intermittently, sounds of explosion boomed out from many directions. The battle was still taking place.

The process of shifting from the warehouse to the mayor's residence was smooth, and they did not meet with any mishaps.

Looking at Shi Xueman who was busying about, Ai Hui could not help but smile.

The iron lady was always meticulous, strictly impartial, and incorruptible. He was always assured when he delegated tasks to her. It was not that Ai Hui did not have a mind of his own. Rather, there were many miscellaneous things that he was unwilling to do.

For example, how should they organize the newly joined elementalists?

In such instances, completing the task might not bring about the desired effect. However, if they did not complete the task well, the effect would certainly cause endless trouble. Ai Hui always steered far away from such tasks. In this aspect, however, Shi Xueman was always patient.

Lou Lan sat next to Ai Hui.

Initially, Fatty wanted to go up as well, but he was kicked down by Ai Hui. If Fatty were to come up, the rooftop would definitely collapse.

"Ai Hui, can we win?" Lou Lan tilted his head and asked.

"Lou Lan has no confidence?" Ai Hui replied to Lou Lan with a question.

Lou Lan replied, "Because Lou Lan has calculated and the probability of success is very small."

Ai Hui’s interest was piqued. "Lou Lan you are so useful! You can

even calculate this? Tell me, what are the odds of succeeding?"

Lou Lan replied, "Ai Hui, not even 10 percent."

Ai Hui was somewhat surprised. "Such a small percentage?"

He quickly responded while nodding his head, "Ok, seems like that is the case. However we can't help it. No matter how small the hope, there is still a hope. We still need to do our best. If we manage to get it right, then we will have made it. Even if there are a few deaths, we won't be on the losing end."

"Ai Hui will not die!" Lou Lan said loudly and seriously.

Ai Hui loudly chuckled. Lou Lan's current expression was like an innocent and naive child.

"Lou Lan will help Ai Hui. Lou Lan will not let Ai Hui die!" Lou Lan replied earnestly.

Ai Hui nodded his head while smiling. "Yes, yes, yes. Lou Lan is brilliant! With Lou Lan's help, Ai Hui will definitely defeat all the blood fiends and kill all the blood elementalists! And we will live until a ripe old age!"

Sang Zhijun, who was in the courtyard, shouted, "Lou Lan, come back home with me if we succeed!"

This sentence sent the courtyard into chaos.

"Zhijun, how could you snatch my Lou Lan?"

"Big sister, while you are our respected and beloved big sister, we will definitely not concede regarding Lou Lan’s case!"

"Lou Lan, I love you!"

"Lou Lan, I will find you a female sand puppet!"

"That is too treacherous! Brothers, let’s beat this chap into a female sand puppet!"

…

……

Looking at the chaotic courtyard, Ai Hui could not help but smile. After the commotion, the initially stern and restrained atmosphere became lively.

Ai Hui was the most relaxed when he was with Lou Lan. His guard would always disappear without a trace when Lou Lan was around.

The elementalist who had just descended brought with him the

latest news.

Ai Hui heard the news that Mistress was unable to move, and that they had to guard both the embroidery workshop and the mayor’s residence. If the mayor and the dean took a group of elementalists to guard the embroidery workshop, the task of guarding and placing the golden needles would fall on Ai Hui and the others.

The situation was worse than he thought.

However, Ai Hui maintained his composure, looking the same as his usual self.

Suddenly, a craftsman rushed into the courtyard. With a happy expression he declared, "The first point has stabilized!"

Ai Hui gathered his thoughts and was preparing to jump down from the rooftop when the alarm suddenly rang.

Ai Hui stared ahead. The blood fiends had arrived.

The blood elementalists had definitely arrived too.

Chapter 259: The So-called Path

After hearing Yan Hai's stammering recount, the red-dressed girl finally made sense of the situation in Central Pine City.

"Treating the city as 'cloth.' I can't believe that there's actually such a capable person in Central Pine City. Seems like I should hold them in higher regard. Central Pine City has concealed many talents. 'Treating the city as a piece of cloth', the Lightning Blade, the A-1 Unit, Wang Shouchuan, and Han Yuqin. It is incredible that all of them are from Central Pine City.

"Yes, yes." Yan Hai nodded his head like a chick pecking on grains. He had recovered from his initial fear and realized that the red-dressed girl did not have any intention to kill him, so his brain immediately jumped into action. In a flattering tone, he continued, "Miss, you have such good foresight. If all the things you mentioned succeed, it might actually leave a legacy in Central Pine City's history. However, as we are here, they will not have a chance to succeed! Hahaha!"

The red-dressed girl glanced at Yan Hai. "You seemed to be rather confident."

"My lady, with you and Master Tian Kuan, the blood elementalists would definitely be confident." Yan Hai was buttering her up without a care in the world.

"Tian Kuan?" The red-dressed girl laughed coldly. "His base level has reached his limit."

Yan Hai trembled and asked timidly, "Miss, what do you mean..."

"You don’t understand." The red-dressed gave a hmph and continued, "Previously, Tian Kuan took on an approach in strengthening himself and did not use any external force to help. The route that he chose is extremely dangerous. If there are any slight mistakes, he will fall into the deep abyss with no hope of reprieve. How did he manage to endure so many stages of god refinement? Because he was resolute and undaunted by death. As a result, he was able to persist and attain what he has today. However, due to his current injury, his mind is no longer as resolute, and he has lost his spirit. It is impossible for him to achieve any further achievements."

When Yan Hai heard this, he had chills in his heart. He asked feebly, "Is it that serious? Sir Tian Kuan’s capability is incomprehensible. I am unable to tell..."

God refinement was simply blood refinement. The blood elementalists felt that the word "blood" sounded too demonic and was not impressive enough. As such, they renamed it "god refinement." Following the increase of blood elementalists, such minute details were slowly gaining the attention of people, unlike in the past.

Even the title of "god elementalist" was starting to get popular.

"On what basis do you think you are capable of seeing it?" The red-dressed lady said bluntly, "The road of god refinement is

extremely difficult and dangerous. While the road for an elementalist is long and slow, there are limits to the transformation. It is easy to train and mishaps seldom happen. However, the road for blood refinement is equivalent to climbing a precipitous cliff. While the view is incomparable, you are met with many obstacles and dangers. You consider the word ‘god’ as a word that attracts people. Little do they know that there is actually a profound theory behind the word."

Yan Hai listened attentively. He knew that such an opportunity was hard to come by.

"What do we mean by god? Being detached from life and death as well as being one with heaven and earth like God! In this aspect, we are no different from the elementalists. They also believe that they have a common origin with heaven and earth and they will live forever. In short, they are following the path of the cultivators from the past. However, we are different. We walk in between the path of life and death. We treat life and death as an integral whole, that they are similar. Our theory is profound. Walking between life and death is akin to walking on a tightrope between high cliffs. Below our feet is an unknown abyss. In order to succeed, our hearts and minds must be resolute. We must not hesitate, else we will definitely fall into an situation with no hope of reprieve."

Yan Hai was alarmed after hearing what she said and forced a laugh, "Wouldn’t this mean that they are unable to make any mistakes?"

"God makes mistakes too." The red-dressed girl continued unhurriedly, "Making a mistake is all right, and as long as the

heart is resolute, there will be a chance to survive. To be alive after dying. To become a god overnight. This is something that is unique to us, blood elementalists. Compared to us, the training of the elementalists is much stupider."

"Why are we still not able to match up against them then?" Yan Hai asked subconsciously.

Through the red-dressed girl, he learned that his partners had died in the battle. He could not believe his ears. He could feel that after he became a blood elementalist—oh, god elementalist—his strength had improved tremendously. Old Lei and the rest were even stronger than him. Otherwise, they would not have treated him like that.

However, all four of them were dead.

"You guys?" The red-dressed girl smiled. "Even though you have managed to grow the god traces and become a god elementalist, you have not practiced any god spells nor do you have any suitable weapons. If you are able to defeat the Lightning Blade just like that, then he isn’t someone to be feared either."

When Yan Hai heard that the opponent was the Lightning Blade, his bewildered expression cleared. His doubts were cleared as well. If Ai Hui was the one they were dealing with, then the conclusion was a given and nothing out of the norm.

The Battle of Long Street had left an lasting impact on Yan Hai.

Yan Hai was glad that he had managed to escape due to Old Lei's kick.

"Regarding Ai Hui, how much do you know?" the red-dressed girl suddenly asked.

"Not much," Yan Hai replied weakly.

"Say what you know." The red-dressed girl's voice was melodious but commanded attention.

"Yes." Yan Hai did not dare to miss out any details and narrated what he knew.

.....

The battle was in full force at the mayor's residence.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman were jointly attacking a blood ape. This blood ape was the same flaming ape that they had encountered in the Heaven Pit previously. It was defeated in Central Pine City last time and had barely managed to escape. Initially, the blood ape did not dare to enter Central Pine City. However, given that Central Pine City's defense were destroyed and the enticing lure of the elementalists, it gave into temptation and entered Central Pine City once more.

They had had the aid of the mayor and dean previously, but at the moment, they had no other people to help them.

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman, and Duanmu Huanghun rushed forward. The others were trying to stop the advancement of the other blood fiends.

Compared to seeing it at a distance like earlier, Ai Hui was able to better comprehend the formidability of the flaming ape at a closer proximity.

Bang!

Ai Hui's Dragonspine collided with the palms of the flaming ape. At the point of contact, the Dragonspine suddenly curved, like a spring that was compressed. Chi, chi, chi. Seven small swords intertwined, formed a lightning net, and flew toward the flaming ape's face.

The flaming ape was fearful of the thunder and lightning. It lifted one of its palms to protect its face.

Ding, ding, ding. The sound of the lightning colliding on the flaming ape's palm was heard. The flaming ape's palm was numb and the fear on its face became more intense.

Ai Hui made use of the recoil from the Dragonspine and rebounded up into the air. When he was airborne, he felt that his right arm was numb. The flaming ape's strength was incredibly shocking. He also confirmed something else.

The flames had a suppressing effect on him.

Was fire able to restrain metal?

In the basics class, enhancement and restraint of the five elements were common sense, but these properties were also the most amazing transformations for the five elements. In previous battles, the traits of enhancement and restraint were not obvious. Following the increase in Ai Hui's base level, the concentration of elemental energy in his body also increased. His metal attribute became increasingly prominent. As such, the effects of enhancement and restraint became more distinct. If he were to achieve elemental externalization, the metal attribute in his body would become even stronger, while the effects of enhancement and restraint would become even more prominent.

All living things had weaknesses and enemies.

Ai Hui did not find this strange. He was thinking of how to counter this.

A ferocious glare flashed past the flaming ape's eyes. When it wanted to rush forward, the tip of a spear pierced at its throat. It had to halt its tracks and threw a fist toward the spear tip.

Boom!

A smothered, but loud sound was heard throughout the residence.

The flaming ape appeared sluggish as Shi Xueman retreated a few steps back. Both parties were reevaluating their opponent.

The flaming ape opened its eyes wide. It did not understand why the delicate figure in front of it contained such tremendous strength, but it was more concerned with the smell the other party was emitting. The smell of water.

Just as fire restrained metal, the element that could restrain fire was water.

Facing an opponent on equal ground whose attribute could actually restrain it, the flaming ape was extremely fearful.

Shi Xueman remained calm and collected. Her eyes sparkled like the stars. That collision had increased her confidence. Her strength was increasing practically everyday. Her gains from the blood crystals seemed to differ compared to the others.

Like the Cirrus she wielded, her looks were deceiving as well. Her petite body contained a tremendous amount of strength. Occasionally, she would worry that such a change was a bad thing.

How can a girl just grow in strength? What happens if her legs become chunky? What happens if her arms expand?

Of course, these were just fleeting thoughts. She fought everyday with all her might and had no time to seriously think about all

these minor issues.

Through that strike just now, she realized how much she had improved.

After the battle with Liao Nan, she gradually started to find a battle style that belonged to her. The same set of spear movements could have a different effect when different people executed them. From a young age, she knew that people had to find a battle style that belonged solely to themselves, just like people had to find a pathway that only belonged to themselves.

She thought that she was starting to find her own road.

Her eyes brightened as she saw the fear in the flaming ape's eyes.

She took a step and thrust out Cirrus, courageously continuing her advance.

The flaming ape loosed ferocious roar and shot out its fist.

Boom!

The collision resulted in an even louder sound. Shi Xueman retreated further than before. Her arms were numb, but her eyes became brighter again.

A drop of fresh blood seeped out of the flaming ape's fist. Just

when it was about to drip to the floor, the blood became a flame that enveloped the ape’s fist. The color became darker and emitted a high heat. The ground beneath the flaming ape was burned red.

Everyone was shocked into oblivion by the collision.

Shi Xueman’s figure was graceful. Even though her body was covered by the armor, it was unable to conceal her perfect figure. Regardless of the angle, Shi Xueman and the word "sturdy" did not seem to be correlated. She only emitted gentleness, albeit her gentleness was "cold."

But... what did they just see?

Dumbstruck, Ai Hui gaped. He had just clashed with the flaming ape. Even he, who had attained the level of [Copper Skin] through training, found it difficult to deal with the flaming ape.

Yet, Iron Lady could meet the ape’s force with force.

To meet force with force!

Oh, to hell with it...

Ai Hui was shocked speechless. Although he had always referred her to as "Iron Lady," he had never imagined that such a dainty lady would be a brute force freak. To be able to meet the ape’s force with force, if she was not a brute force freak, then what was she?

She was a young lady from an influential family who used elemental ingredients to rinse her mouth, alright?

She was a talented goddess who had the ability to captivate countless men, alright?

She was someone who practiced an abstruse and inexhaustible absolute art, alright?

Why did she have to snatch the rice bowl from us, people who can only rely on brute force and are struggling to get by?

The world was too cruel!

Ai Hui sent a pitying glance in Fatty's direction.

Chapter 260: Dilemma

Yan Hai watched the ongoing battle at the mayor residence from far away. His mouth was agape and he wore a shocked expression.

A small and dainty young lady and a flaming ape which was as big as a small mountain collided repeatedly. The visual impact that it brought totally undermined any knowledge he'd previously had.

A freak was definitely hiding in that dainty body.

That was what Yan Hai thought.

Compared to the blood elementalists, the blood fiends had a greater advantage. They had gone through millions of years of transformation. The world bestowed upon them the rule of survival.

The flaming ape had already formed the god-traces. Those god traces allowed it to control flame. It had transformed into a completely different creature. Its blood was hotter than lava and the energy it accumulated was distributed throughout its body. Just like smelting iron with fire, the original strong body of the flaming ape became even stronger.

Despite this, it was unable to restrain Shi Xueman!

All of Central Pine City was in ruins. There were no high-rise buildings to obstruct his vision. He could clearly see the fierce

battle that was happening at the mayor’s residence from a far distance.

In the battle, Shi Xueman fought more courageously.

Cirrus was like a snow-white whale that charged around violently. There were no gaudy moves and the elemental energy was concentrated and held back. The weirdest part was that Cirrus did not produce any sound. It was like a huge whale that had its mouth wide open and could swallow up everything.

"Such a brilliant goddess!" The red-dressed lady was slightly moved. "Her spearmanship is on a totally new level. It is no wonder that she is a genius from the Shi Family."

To be on the next level indicated that Shi Xueman had started to comprehend her training and was developing her own sense of style.

In accordance with her age, Shi Xueman would be graduating from the Induction Ground this year. Even the red-dressed lady was impressed by the fact that Shi Xueman was able to achieve such a profound level in her spear movements at her age.

"A totally new level?" Yan Hai was more shocked than the red-dressed girl. "How old is she? Isn’t she graduating only this year?"

"Hence, she is a genius," replied the red-dressed girl casually. "Look at them meeting force with force."

"How can she possess such tremendous strength?" Yan Hai's heart was filled with many doubts and was stunned by such strength.

Yes, all the elementalists who were watching the battle were also shocked by the visual impact.

"Because she has a solid foundation." The red-dressed lady's tone held a hint of respect. "To be able to have such a solid foundation is not easy. You will understand this reasoning in the future."

Yan Hai did not dare to ask further. Despite the fact that the lady was always smiling at him, he knew that she would not have any mercy on him, just like Sir Tian Kuan.

The red-dressed girl's gaze shifted from the flaming ape to the whole battleground. This was her first time seeing the A1-Unit in action.

She was impressed by the A1-Unit's battle style.

Snares and traps surrounded the perimeter of the mayor residence. She was astonished that a sand puppet was actually the one controlling the snares and traps. What blew her mind was that the sand puppet was extremely smart.

The traps were not intended to kill or injure directly, but rather to delay the arrival of the blood fiends and create more

opportunities for the team attacking from a further distance.

The solid floor beneath the blood fiends' feet would suddenly become loose sand. These subtle changes affected them greatly.

When that happened, the arrows would envelope the blood fiends like raindrops.

About one third of the fleeing blood fiends would then fall into the snares.

Those that managed to avoid the snares would encounter the second line of defense - the elementalists that formed a defence line around the perimeter. They formed a small group and constantly thrusted out attacks. They were like a sharp razor blade which nobody dared to pass.

The red-dressed girl slightly feared the combat ability that the A1-Unit displayed. Through Yan Hai, she knew that it was due to the blood crystals. The discovery of the blood crystals had changed Central Pine City's situation tremendously. The influence of the blood crystals was like a wave of ripples that kept expanding. In fact, it was having a lasting influence and impact on both sides.

As the elementalists were unable to create elemental food with just the blood crystals, then if not for the fact that resources in Central Pine City had been depleted, the strength of the elementalists would have increased even more tremendously.

The Blood of God was not the only force pushing the progress of the battle; the elementalists were also using all their means to quickly adapt to the new battleground.

Due to the existence of the flaming ape, there were no other strong blood fiends in the surroundings. The smaller and weaker blood fiends had been driven out by the flaming ape.

If there was a slightly stronger blood fiend, Fatty would rush forward to the front line. Those elementalists who were near him would then weave in like a pair of scissors and attack.

Of course, Fatty did not know that Ai Hui was laughing at him in secret.

Even if he knew, he would not want to prove himself. Even if the world collapsed, shouldn't it be those who were taller and more capable that provide the support? In any case, there was Ai Hui, Shi Xueman, and Bangwan. He would just follow and drift along.

Fatty held onto the shield and forcibly prevented the blood fiends from attacking.

Currently, the impacts the blood fiends made were practically nothing to him.

After a few consecutive successes in blocking the blood fiends, Fatty's level of confidence increased tremendously. He was like a moving wall and the blood fiends had to pass him to attack the

others.

The strongest flaming ape was being "attended to" by Ai Hui and Shi Xueman. The rest of the blood fiends were lackluster, most of them being injured or dead upon facing the retaliation of the A1-Unit.

With the support of a few elementalists nearby, there were just a few blood fiends left. The blood fiends were on the losing end.

Fatty started to slack off and was left with nothing much to do.

If not for the fear of incurring Ai Hui's wrath, he would have wanted to start a small gambling den where he could gamble.

Ai Hui was getting stronger and stronger. He should be able to have a better life in the future and definitely live to a ripe old age, Fatty thought lazily. Fatty was happy and felt that Ai Hui deserved a better life. He was always so hardworking and attentive. Ai Hui has never harbored any complaints as well.

Whoo, he shall share some of Ai Hui's glory!

The mayor's residence was the sturdiest building in Central Pine City. Fatty also needed to act as the last defensive wall around the mayor residence.

The red-dressed girl was dazzled and impressed by the coordination of the A1-Unit. This was the first time that she

witnessed such excellent coordination and they were just a group of students. If they were able to make it out alive, they would definitely become the backbone of the Avalon of Five Elements in the future.

"Should we go forward and help?" Yan Hai asked.

"Why should we help?" the red-dressed girl asked, astounded.

"We are all blood elementalists..." Yan Hai replied feebly.

The red-dressed lady merely shot a glance toward Yan Hai and did not show any signs of going to help.

Yan Hai was aware that he had said the wrong thing and quickly shut his mouth. He did not dare to utter another word.

The blood elementalists who were hiding in a corner were met with a dilemma. They had never imagined that the A-1 Unit would be such a strong and capable team. They were the best in Central Pine City.

Yet, they had to attack!

Another person who was ready to show his hand was Ai Hui. He had found a solution.

Chapter 261: Ai Hui's Discovery

Ai Hui was surreptitiously observing the flaming ape.

No one dared to say that he or she understood the blood fiends well, including Ai Hui. Different blood fiends had different fighting capabilities and characteristics. One could only identify their specific weaknesses through observation.

Shi Xueman and the flaming ape were engaged in a furious battle, giving Ai Hui the opportunity to observe the enemy.

The flaming ape was undoubtedly powerful.

Its six meter-tall body gave it terrifying strength, and instead of being slow and clumsy due to its sheer size, it was also nimble and agile. Its shiny metallic hair prevented it from getting injured easily and even though the flaming ape appeared abnormally irascible and violent, its flickering eyes revealed its craftiness.

Looking at it, the flaming ape did not seem to have any weaknesses. In the Wilderness, this type of dire beast was the most troublesome and no one wanted to encounter it.

However, Ai Hui knew that there was no such thing as a dire beast without any weaknesses in this world.

He carefully observed the flaming ape's every movement and the changes in its body. Shi Xueman's attacks were forceful and rapid,

allowing no room for the flaming ape to dodge. Both of them were fighting with brute force. Furthermore, due to the flaming ape's elemental weakness to Shi Xueman's water element, it was not an easy task for the former to deal with the latter. The flaming ape needed to go all-out in its attacks.

Thanks to the flaming ape going all-out, Ai Hui was able to pick up more details from its body.

Especially its blood traces.

Its flame-shaped blazing blood traces were covered by its thick and coarse hair, making them very difficult to spot.

As the blood fiends continued to evolve, their bodies became more impressive, but not in the sense that their powers became stronger. Instead, their weaknesses were reduced in number. For example, the blood traces on low-level blood fiends were very distinct, but after they evolved to a higher level, their blood traces would become darker and less distinct. The flaming ape's blood traces grew under its hair, making them extremely hard to spot. The hair also acted as a form of protection for the blood traces.

Fortunately, the flaming ape's blood traces could still be seen. Even though Ai Hui's eyesight was not as sharp as the sword embryo's, he still could capture many small details.

Ai Hui noticed a weird phenomenon. The flaming ape's blood traces were expanding and contracting faintly, as if they were breathing.

Whenever this phenomenon happened, the flames on the flaming ape would burn more intensely.

The higher-ups were unable to provide much information on the blood traces, but there had been many discussions on them. Everyone fought blood fiends everyday, so they could directly experience and understand the blood traces for themselves.

The mainstream belief was that the blood traces were the blood fiends' source of power.

This idea matched very well with the old prisoner's conjecture. The old man felt that blood traces were the blood fiends' weakness.

The flaming ape's performance had verified these conjectures, however, just this information alone was not enough. Duanmu Huanghun did try using the [Viridescent Flower]'s vines to attack the flaming ape's blood traces, but to no avail. The flaming ape did not mind its blood traces being attacked at all.

At that moment, Ai Hui noticed an easily overlooked detail.

The blood traces did not breath all at the same time. On the contrary, the breathing followed some kind of unique pattern. After observing a while more, Ai Hui knew he was right about the blood traces.

For example, the first blood trace to light up was the one that was

near the flaming ape's heart.

Ai hui suddenly realized something. The breathing pattern of the flaming ape's blood traces reminded him of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution in elemental energy training. If he replaced the blood traces with the palaces, wouldn't it be a Circulatory Cycle Revolution?

Could there be a mechanism like the Circulatory Cycle Revolution in the body of the flaming ape as well?

A burst of excitement erupted within Ai Hui. The more he thought about it, the more it made sense. Spiritual force needed to be channeled through the meridians of a body using the Circulatory Cycle Revolution as well. The current version of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution for five residences and eight palaces was based on the Cultivation Era's version.

The only difference was that the Cultivation Era's version of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution was much more complicated and detailed.

Ai Hui believed that the blood fiends' version of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution would not be too complicated. The blood elementalists' Circulatory Cycle Revolution would be similarly simple. A body's meridians had to be slowly developed and expanded from a young age. They could not be fully formed in only a day's time. The few blood elementalists that Ai Hui had encountered used to be quarantined casualties. How could it be possible that they had had the time to learn something as complicated as the Circulatory Cycle Revolution?

If that was the case…

A bold idea arose in Ai Hui’s mind. Was it possible that the Blood of God borrowed the training system of five residences and eight palaces from the Avalon of Five Elements?

Initially, he felt his idea was ridiculous; however, upon second thought, he realized that it was possible. The greatest advantage of the five residences and eight palaces’ Circulatory Circle Revolution was its simplicity.

Ai Hui started to make conjectures based on this ridiculous idea and imagined the blood traces as palaces. In other words, the flaming ape had nine ‘elemental energy palaces’ on its body.

The energy channeling path should start at its heart, followed by its left abdomen, subsequently to its back, and then to its right knee…

"Stab its right knee!" Ai Hui suddenly yelled.

Shi Xueman was too slow and did not react in time. She did not expect Ai Hui to suddenly open his mouth. By the time she could react, it was too late.

She had absolute confidence in Ai Hui.

Even though that rascal's character might be terrible, he must have discovered something if he'd yelled like that.

The thing that surprised Shi Xueman was that Ai Hui had remained silent for the last few rounds of attacks against the flaming ape. Initially, she and the flaming ape were evenly matched, however, Ai Hui's distraction caused her to become immediately suppressed.

The flaming ape was abnormally sharp. When it sensed that Shi Xueman was distracted, it immediately exploded with a burst of strength. The flaming ape bellowed and clenched both its fists. The blood trace on its back lit up and blazing flames erupted, forming a pair of fire wings!

Before it even finishing bellowing, the flaming ape increased its speed sharply and surged toward Shi Xueman like a flaming shadow.

Duanmu Huanghun, who had not really done much during the battle, had a cold glint sweep across his eyes. He spread out his fingers like a blossoming flower in an instant.

[Viridescent Flower, Perennial Lock]!

Numerous [Viridescent Flower] vines shot out from the ground and devoured the fire-winged flaming ape like green floodwater.

A towering green cage stood tall and straight in the middle of the

field.

The Perennial Lock appeared too suddenly. Without a single sign, it appeared out of nowhere on the field.

Boom!

Surging oil-like flames gushed out of the Perennial Lock.

The secured, green cage burst into a sea of fire, resembling a heap of burning dry grass. Duanmu Huanghun did not continue to attack. He did not have any advantage against the flaming ape. He had achieved his objective by executing the Perennial Lock.

A gigantic figure engulfed in flames walked out from the sea of fire.

Its enormous body was filled with an imposing aura. As it moved forward, an aura of killer intent pervaded the air.

Shi Xueman remained unflustered. Even when the flaming ape looked so terrifying, the young pony-tailed girl did not show any intention of retreating.

She held her spear tightly and slightly lowered her body, looking like a leopard about to pounce on its prey.

Ai Hui’s eyes became brighter and brighter.

The flaming ape bent its knees slightly and the flames in the air were extinguished. All of a sudden, a dazzling blaze erupted through the air as the flaming ape charged ferociously towards Shi Xueman.

"Right knee!"

Even though Ai Hui's voice was not loud, it could still be clearly heard amidst the deafening explosions and the ear-splitting roar of the flaming ape.

Shi Xueman's eyes slightly lit up; however, the next moment, she squinted her eyes. The dazzling blaze in the air was blinding her vision. Soon, her vision went dark as a gigantic figure appeared before her eyes.

The flaming ape's charging speed this time around was much faster than before!

Without any hesitation or intention to retreat, she struck out her spear firmly. Cirrus shot forward like a whale swimming silently in the depths of the ocean.

The surging and overpowering blaze collided heavily with the streak of concentrated, white-colored spear glint.

Both Shi Xueman and the flaming ape subconsciously squinted their eyes, bracing for the incoming explosion and shock wave.

With two such terrifying forces colliding against each other, a colossal explosion was about to take place.

Crack!

The sound resembled an egg shell being smashed.

The white spear glint pierced through the surging blaze and a wisp of blood mist spurted out. Without having enough time to dissipate, the wisp of blood mist was devoured by the blaze.

Everyone was shocked by this scene.

They had thought that it was going to be a fierce collision, but it turned out like this in the end.

The flaming ape, which had lost its balance, smashed heavily to the ground, causing crushed rocks and flames to fly everywhere. The flaming ape's right knee and everything beneath it had completely disappeared.

The flaming ape's flames began to dim. It rolled in the rubble while howling in grief non-stop, looking extremely pathetic. It looked completely different from its previously domineering self.

The epic turn of events caused everyone to be dumbstruck once again.

The turn of events was far too abrupt!

Duanmu Huanghun cast a glance at Ai Hui with a bewildered look on his face. He did not see what exactly had happened when Shi Xueman struck out her spear. He also did not understand why it had to be the flaming ape's right knee. Why was there such a huge difference in demeanor between the current flaming ape and its previous self?

Countless questions ran through his head, but very soon, these questions completely disappeared and were replaced by a single statement—She is indeed someone I have to have to catch up to!

Yan Hai, who had been observing from afar, was filled with shock. "Miss, what happened?"

After a long while, he did not hear Miss's voice. Subconsciously, he turned his head around and he was dumbstruck.

Miss's face was filled with indescribable incredulity. Her face was pale-white, looking as if she had seen a ghost. Her facial expression contained shock and even a hint of fear.

Yan Hai muttered with a blank look on his face, "Miss..."

Ai Hui walked to the flaming ape and took a closer look at it.

The flaming ape was rolling on the ground and groaning, appearing to be suffering pain.

At this moment, Shi Xueman also returned to her senses from her battle state. When she saw the flaming ape in agony, she was astonished. Upon taking a closer look, she understood what was going on and her face turned slightly pale.

The flaming ape was in so much pain because the flames that engulfed it were burning its body.

It had completely lost control of the flames on its body. The power that once belonged to it had become the cause of its death.

The surging flames began to extinguish. The scary part was that the color of the flames was turning bluish. Like a melting candle, the flaming ape's flesh melted, burned, and then disappeared.

In the blink of an eye, a ghastly white skeleton and several blood crystals were left on the ground.

Shi Xueman did not move. She looked on blankly as Ai Hui picked up the blood crystals and pounded the skeletal remains of the flaming ape. Poof, the skeletal remains turned into ashes. The previously formidable flaming ape had been reduced to ashes.

Ai Hui picked out three remaining bone pieces from the ashes. These three bone pieces had irregular shapes. They were bright red, resembling lava that had not completely cooled off.

Holding them in his hands, they felt extremely hot.

Ai Hui was somewhat unhappy. Why were the spoils of war always something Fatty could use? This had also happened last time with the lava spider!

Shi Xueman was filled with doubt. Just as she was about to ask Ai Hui about it, she suddenly heard Lou Lan’s warning.

"Ai Hui, be careful!"

Chapter 262: Protect Ai Hui!

A grey shadow wriggled forward along the ground. It was extremely slow. Using the surrounding rubble as camouflage, it avoided everyone's attention.

It suddenly stopped in its tracks and like water seeping into sand, the grey shadow permeated the shadows cast by a nearby pile of crushed rocks.

The fall of the flaming ape had captured everyone's attention. Even Ai Hui did not notice what was going on beneath his feet.

"Ai Hui, be careful!"

Lou Lan's warning sent a cold shiver down Ai Hui's spine. Before he could react in time, his feet sank downward as if he had stepped into quicksand. A gloomy and cold aura penetrated his legs and rapidly spread up his body.

The turn of events had been too sudden, catching Ai Hui off guard. By the time he could react, both his feet had lost all feeling, becoming completely numb.

What was that?

The grey color extended through Ai Hui's legs. They now looked extremely odd and scary, resembling two dried-up branches.

Ai Hui suddenly remembered Shi Wei mentioning that there was a type of blood elementalist that could summon and nurture blood demons. Could this be a blood demon?

A chill entered his bone marrow, causing him to swiftly lose control of his body.

Ai Hui tried channelling his elemental energy to expel the chilling grey shadow, but to no avail. The situation worsened instead. The elemental energy was like nourishment to the grey shadow, allowing it to spread through Ai Hui's body faster.

In the blink of an eye, the grey color extended as far as Ai Hui's waist. The lower part of his body resembled a grey-colored, immovable stone statue.

Everyone panicked.

The previously cool-headed Shi Xueman was at a loss. What exactly was the grey shadow? What should she do? Ai Hui was just within her reach and yet, she did not know how to save him.

Fatty's facial expression changed drastically. Without a second thought, he dashed wildly toward Ai Hui.

The yellow light in Lou Lan's eyes flickered frantically. He was doing his best to analyze the grey shadow. Suddenly, he took out a blood crystal, following which, his palm turned into quicksand and devoured it. The yellow light in his eyes became brighter.

A trace of blood spiritual force was inserted into Midnight. Numerous mysterious veined patterns appeared on the translucent, sparkling sand core, causing it to operate frantically.

In the distance, more and more blood elementalists were emerging from the dark and approaching the mayor's residence. This was their best chance to advance.

Ai Hui was their most feared opponent, the one they least wanted to engage in combat. By suppressing Ai Hui, their pressure was significantly relieved.

"So much for the legendary Lightning Blade."

A repulsively ugly and sly-looking blood elementalist sneered. His facial expression was sinister and his smile contained a hint of evil.

Meanwhile, Ai Hui felt as if there was an invisible, cold hand gripping his body tightly from within. He could not help but groan.

At this moment, a sneer appeared on the sly-looking blood elementalist's face. All of a sudden, he yelled, "Kill Ai Hui first!"

The other blood elementalists all rushed toward Ai Hui at the same time. It was no secret who the core of the A-1 unit was. Anyone who had witnessed the battle of the streets knew how

dangerous Ai Hui was.

Shi Xueman was very powerful, Duanmu Huanghun was very powerful, and the A-1 unit was also very powerful; however, in everyone's eyes, Ai Hui was the only one who could single-handedly change the outcome of a battle.

All the blood elementalists made the same decision and charged towards Ai Hui from all directions, resembling a rain of fast-flying arrows. Biting-cold killer intent filled the air as all the blood elementalists locked onto Ai Hui.

Without any hesitation, Shi Xueman stepped out and stood in front of Ai Hui to defend him.

Duanmu Huanghun descended from the sky and defended Ai Hui from another direction.

The earth-quaking rumbles spontaneously came to an end as a thick, heavy shield plunged ferociously into the ground, causing soil to fly everywhere. The heavy shield was then steadily erected. Fatty used one of his shoulders to support the heavy shield and arched his body slightly, preparing to defend Ai Hui against the charge.

Jiang Wei's hair stood on end. He felt somewhat suffocated and his body shivered involuntarily.

The enemy had premeditated this; their goal was to kill Ai Hui!

Ai Hui, who had triumphed in almost every single battle, was encountering an unprecedented danger.

If anything was to happen to Ai Hui…

Jiang Wei returned to his senses and cleared his throat. With all his might, he yelled, "Protect Ai Hui!"

The A-1 unit looked as if they had just awoken from a dream; everyone’s face was flushed.

The enemy’s target was actually Ai Hui!

"Protect Ai Hui!"

Everyone roared in anger. Close combat fighters rushed towards Ai Hui while ranged fighters pull their bowstrings with all their might.

Twang, twang, twang!

The sounds of bowstrings snapping resounded through the air. The sound was terrifyingly concentrated, resembling a storm. No one was holding back. They were going all-out on their attacks.

The blood elementalists felt as if they had stirred up a hornet’s nest.

The sky-covering rain of arrows troubled them greatly, on top of which, the imposing manner of the flooding students put an immense pressure on them. The blood elementalists felt as if they were dealing with a pride of angry lions that was about to rip them to pieces.

The blood elementalist controlling the grey shadow involuntarily changed his facial expression. He was stunned by the A-1 Unit's grandeur.

Yan Hai was also greatly stunned. It was a dog-eat-dog world among the blood elementalists, without the slightest bit of trust between them. Everyone guarded against each other instead. However, even in a life-threatening situation, the members of the A-1 Unit still went all-out to save Ai Hui.

All of a sudden, Yan Hai felt envious of them.

The A-1 Unit was indeed different.

The red-dressed girl's gaze was filled with shock. She was surprised by how beloved and respected Ai Hui was. Her impression of Ai Hui was not that of a team player. She saw him as antisocial and introverted, on top of which, he exuded an inharmonious aura. It was incredible that someone like him could garner so much trust and respect from everyone else.

Every time she saw Ai Hui, she would have a surprise waiting for her.

Ai Hui was like a renewable treasure chest. Every time she opened it, there would be a new treasure inside. What other secrets did this fellow still hold? The red-dressed girl was filled with curiosity.

In terms of fighting capabilities, Ai Hui was inferior to Yu Mingqiu. Despite this, the red-dressed girl was more interested in Ai hui.

That blood elementalist was a god shaman and his grey shadow was a very unique type of blood demon. This was the red-dressed girl’s first time seeing it. Compared to spirit guards, god shamans were much rarer and the qualifications needed to become one were much higher.

Blood demons were "fished" out of the Yellow Springs using a dark spell and the god shaman’s soul as the bait. The wisp of evil aura that was "fished" out was the demon. Upon fusing with the god shaman, the demon would feed on his or her blood and eventually become a blood demon. Meticulous nourishment and tempering would make the blood demon increasingly powerful. To repay the god shaman, the blood demon would use its various remarkable abilities to assist him or her.

According to blood-refinement manuals from the Cultivation Era, there were ninety-thousand species of demons in the Yellow Springs. The type of demon that a god shaman obtained depended on his or her soul’s attributes. This was why the qualifications for becoming a god shaman were much higher.

The red-dressed girl could not determine how powerful the blood demon was; however, from the looks of it, it seemed quite extraordinary.

If a god shaman was to possess a blood demon in the Blood of God, he or she would receive a lot of preferential treatment.

What will he do?

The red-dressed girl was rather curious.

She did not care whether or not Ai Hui could overcome the blood demon. Even if he had all the talent in the world, if he could not overcome this trial, then what was the point of having high expectations for him?

Ai Hui was very calm. He was meticulously analyzing the damages done to his body by the grey shadow.

He was one hundred percent certain that this was one of the blood demons that Shi Wei had mentioned. Unfortunately, Shi Wei had not had much understanding towards god shamans. He'd only known about blood demons. If it was any other ordinary individual, why would he or she know about such an ancient entity?

However, Ai Hui knew.

Swordsmen were a very weird type of Cultivator. They mastered

swords and could use anything under the sun as a sword.

Ai Hui was glad that he'd read many weird swordplay manuals when he'd been in the swordsman school. He had merely been reading them to while away time and had not expected to one day be saved by them.

The blood demon was a dark entity, so its bane was light entities.

Ai Hui jolted. It just so happened that his body contained a light entity: lightning bolts.

He suddenly pointed his Dragonspine sword forward and brandished it. Since the lower part of his body was numb and could not move, his swordplay looked extremely weird.

Once his sword started moving, Ai Hui could feel the elemental energy being channelled. He was silently overjoyed.

The seven daggers danced close to his body like swimming fishes. Numerous electric currents ran through his entire body. The electric currents were accompanied by a strong paralyzing effect; however, Ai Hui felt energized as the feeling of being paralyzed was completely different from having no feelings at all.

The grey shadow was disintegrating bit by bit.

That sly-looking elementalist's facial expression changed drastically. With his eyebrows beading with sweat, he yelled, "I

can’t hold on any longer, faster, kill him!"

Currently, the battle was extremely intense.

The blood elementalists did not expect the A-1 unit to put up such a fierce fight, resembling injured wild beasts that were making their final struggle. The A-1 unit’s offense was extremely powerful, slowing the blood elementalists’ progress. The resistance that the A-1 unit put up was abnormally tenacious.

Upon hearing the sly-looking elementalist’s yell, the blood elementalists knew that it was time for them to go all-out.

Sir Tian Kuan had already mentioned that if they lost this battle, there would be only one ending for them.

Some kind of wild beast’s roar erupted from each blood elementalist’s chest. Their bodies began to undergo a terrifying transformation. Like inflated balloons, their body size suddenly increased and thick, coarse hair grew all over their bodies. Some had metallic skin, some had snake scales for skin, and some even had tree bark for skin. All their skins were extremely hard and durable. Razor-sharp claws grew out of their fingers and their eyes became hollow. Their blood traces turned unusually bright, emitting glows that were of various colors all over their bodies.

Now, all of them looked like the flaming ape as they became tremendously intimidating.

"Kill!"

An unclear yell accompanied by howls and roars resounded through the air.

One of the blood elementalists ran through the rain of arrows like a berserk rhinoceros and dashed towards the heavy shield beside Ai Hui.

Previously, when Fatty watched the blood elementalists transform, his facial expression had already changed. Now, when he saw a blood elementalist charging wildly towards him, his face turned deathly pale.

The ground trembled. Every step the blood elementalist took was immensely heavy, causing Fatty to almost lose his balance.

The blood elementalist's distorted, hair-covered face expanded rapidly in the terror-stricken Fatty's vision. The blood elementalist's scarlet eyes were filled with viciousness and his ghastly white teeth were extremely sinister.

Fatty's limbs went soft and he almost sat down on the ground. His mind went blank and his legs subconsciously prepared to retreat.

Suddenly, his body froze. The one behind him was Ai Hui.

Ai Hui...

It was as if lightning struck him and returned him to his senses. He saw the blood elementalist leap into the air with a callous look on his face, resembling a wild beast pouncing on him.

Ai Hui, you must survive.

The words that he'd shouted at Ai Hui's back before entering the Avalon of Five Elements suddenly appeared in his mind.

"AHHHHH!"

He was like a wild beast that had been pushed to the brink of death, crying out hysterically. Every muscle in his body was trembling and his squinty eyes were tightly shut. His arched, thick body was firmly propped against the heavy shield and the soles of his feet were dug deep into the ground.

Elemental energy erupted from his body.

Chapter 263: Excitement

Boom!

A huge shock wave swept across the entire battlefield like a hurricane, covering up the other noises. Dazzling radiance erupted from the surface of the heavy shield and engulfed the battlefield, distorting the air space and blinding everyone's vision.

The radiance dispersed while the sound of the collision still lingered in the air.

The thick and solid shield could once again be seen.

A deep indentation marred the shield's surface and the soil around it had disappeared. An astonishing, three-meter-deep trench had appeared beside the heavy shield.

"Huff... Puff..."

Heavy panting could be heard from behind the heavy shield. Fatty's body was trembling while his muscles twitched involuntarily. Dark red blood oozed out of his nose and mouth.

Fatty was still propping his shoulder against the heavy shield. His eyes were fixated on the ploughed soil beneath his feet.

His gaze was very weird. Even though it appeared dazed, it also

contained zeal, incredulity, and excitement!

Did he actually… block the attack?

He really did block it…

How did he do it?

Fatty gathered his thoughts. His fear disappeared and was replaced by confidence and excitement. It was as if he was being imbued with some kind of power; even his body had stopped trembling.

For the first time in his life, Fatty felt that he was powerful.

His gaze was resolute as he stood in front of Ai Hui, protecting him. In his memories, Ai Hui was always the one fighting ahead, holding back the enemies. Hiding behind Ai Hui during a fight had become Fatty's habit.

It was not easy for him to step up to the challenge. He did not know whether or not Ai Hui would waive off his debt.

Fatty spat out the blood in his mouth and restabilized the heavy shield in front of him.

The blood elementalist who'd attacked him also had bloodstains around his nose and mouth. His condition was no better than

Fatty's. His gaze became abnormally vicious, staring at Fatty as if he wanted to devour him.

In the past, if Fatty was to face such a sinister and vicious gaze, he would tremble in fear. This time around, however, he did not feel at all scared. He loosened his wrists and straightened his body, then, all of a sudden, he made a beckoning sign to the blood elementalist, taunting him to attack.

Upon seeing what Fatty was doing, everyone was at a loss, especially the members of the A-1 unit. They were dumbstruck. Was this really Fatty?

After making the gesture, Fatty suddenly felt weak. Was he crazy? Or was he trying to provoke the opponent?

Smack! A sharp and crisp sound made everyone's face turn blank.

Fatty had given himself a tight slap to the face. The slap was unusually loud and clear.

What was this fellow doing?

Fatty's previous two actions had baffled everyone. Even the blood elementalist in front of him was at a loss. After his beastification, his intelligence had dropped significantly, causing him to be unable to understand why Fatty would taunt him and then give himself a slap immediately after.

Could it be a pre-ritual to some kind of powerful move?

The blood elementalist was in a daze, but very soon, the vicious and blood-thirsty look returned to his eyes.

With a roar, he pounced towards Fatty again.

Fatty quickly withdrew behind the heavy shield. Just as the blood elementalist was about to collide against the heavy shield, an evil smile flashed across his eyes. The supposedly powerful and heavy collision became a light one instead. He rested his palms gently on the surface of the shield and prepared to use the strength from the charge to propel himself around the shield.

However, he never expected the wall-like heavy shield to spin around all of a sudden.

[Spinning Carapax Shield]!

A sturdy and spinning shield-type inheritance appeared in Fatty's hands. Everyone's impression of Fatty was that of a cowardly, lazy, and sly individual. Even though he was quite useful at times, there wasn't much about him that was attractive.

Very few people knew that Fatty's training intensity was among the top three in the A-1 unit.

Even Fatty himself did not know it.

Since the day Ai Hui met Fatty, the former had been designing high intensity training plans for the latter. These training plans were even forced onto Fatty. With Lou Lan supervising his training, Fatty had no way out. Initially, Fatty had resorted to tricks to evade the training, but Ai Hui's strict punishments had prevented him from continuing to do so.

After Fatty started to drink elemental soups, Ai Hui noticed his potential and silently increased the intensity of his training.

Fatty, who did not know what was going on, could only clench his teeth and endure.

Everyone liked seeing Fatty clench his teeth, but not without Lou Lan by his side supervising him and when he was enduring through his trainings. Usually, Fatty was a fun-loving and covetous fellow. He was always filled with an unusual happiness.

No one had noticed Fatty's training intensity. Everyone only heard Ai Hui emotionlessly meting out punishments on him and laughed it off. Everyone seemed to ignore the fact that Fatty had endured hundreds of sets of punishments that were meted out at the slightest pretext.

The blood elementalist lost his balance, looking as if he had stepped on a patch of slippery moss. Thump. His face smashed squarely onto the surface of the shield and his body spun along with the spinning shield.

Fatty felt something smash into his shield. Following the instructions in the manual of the [Spinning Carapax Shield], he lifted the shield up and used the centripetal force from the spinning shield to slam it heavily onto the ground!

He had practised this move for an unknown number of times.

He executed the move flawlessly.

If the move was unacceptable, it definitely would not be able to escape from Lou Lan's eyes and more punishments would be waiting for him.

Smooth, natural, and unforced.

Snap!

Some sort of sound rang across Fatty's ears. The spot where his shield had landed did not feel like it was made of soil.

Fatty quickly lowered his head to take a look. Surprisingly, there was a head on the ground looking at him fixedly. Fatty's eyes widened unexpectedly. His body quivered as the confidence he had previously vanished into thin air.

Thump. Fatty's legs gave way and he fell on his butt.

Goddamnit, why was there a head on the ground?

It was at this moment that he realized that the blood elementalist had somehow ended up on the ground beside his feet, and that when he'd slammed his shield down, it had landed on the blood elementalist's neck.

Given the immense weight of the shield, no matter how tough the blood elementalist's neck was, it would not be able to withstand the force generated from the slamming of the shield.

The snap he'd heard just now was the sound of the blood elementalist's neck snapping.

Upon seeing what had happened, the other blood elementalists' facial expressions changed. The snap they had just heard sent a cold shiver down their spines.

Then, when they saw that Fatty was scared witless, they were filled with extreme hatred.

How dare he pretend to be a pig to eat a tiger to this extent? It's too exaggerated!

Given the ruthlessness of that move, they believed that they would have also failed miserably if they'd been in the shoes of that blood elementalist. Right now, you still dare to pretend to be weak, are you trying to lure us next?

A lot of blood elementalists looked down on Fatty's character,

showing deep disdain for him. Despite this, not a single blood elementalist dared to charge in Fatty's direction anymore.

Other battle fronts were becoming extremely intense.

As usual, Shi Xueman was fighting force with force. Even when facing three blood elementalists in one go, she had no intention of retreating. After abandoning all the complicated moves, her spearmanship became more prudent and systematic. Currently, she was adopting a defensive position, but the three blood elementalists did not yet back down.

Duanmu Huanghun's performance did not lose out to Shi Xueman at all. The form of his [Viridescent Flower] was ever-changing. Sometimes it erupted from the ground, sometimes it appeared out of thin air behind everyone, and sometimes it appeared in mid-air; it was appearing and disappearing unpredictably.

The three elementalists looked somewhat helpless.

They did not to dare to move too fast. First, if they moved too fast, they might get tripped by the numerous small green vines that suddenly appeared beneath their feet. Second, green flowers might suddenly appear and block their vision, causing them to lose their balance. Losing their balance was not an issue to them. The main issue was the killer move that followed up their loss of balance. For example, if they moved too fast and their necks were caught by the green vines, they would lose their balance and strangle themselves to death.

They had never met such a treacherous opponent before.

The two hundred meters that were between them and Ai Hui were the hardest two hundred meters they had ever travelled in their lives. There were traps set everywhere. The floating, white-clothed young man must have been the most despicable person in the world. Duanmu Huanghun casually set innumerable treacherous and deadly traps in succession.

Very soon, three blood elementalists realized that this fellow did not want to fight them head-on. Even though their opponent was treacherous, his firepower was not strong. The three of them could not be concerned with anything anymore and wildly charged forward; however, by the time they were about to reach Duanmu Huanghun, they had become battered and exhausted, then found themselves trapped in an encirclement.

Duanmu Huanghun had been delaying their pace so as to wait for the other members of the A-1 unit to arrive.

The three blood elementals suddenly realized what was going on. So, this was that fellow's main objective! But then, they began to sneer silently. Even though a huge number of the A-1 unit's members had arrived, their individual fighting capabilities were obviously inferior to the three blood elementalists'. Hence, there was no need for them to be scared.

Just because there were more people on the enemy's side did not mean that the enemy would definitely win. If the enemy side's

fighting capabilities were not on par, then there was no point in them having more people.

The three elementalist failed to see the cold glint that flashed across Duanmu Huanghun's long and narrow eyes.

Very soon, the three of them realized that their anticipated massacre of the A-1 unit's members did not happen. After half a minute had passed, they had not managed to kill even one person. They felt as if they were caught in quicksand, extremely helpless. The unpredictable vines and green flowers were extremely powerful in such a chaotic battle.

They did not expect Duanmu Huanghun's greatest strength to be not his offense, but rather, his control over the battle's tempo.

Starting from the day Duanmu Huanghun had joined the A-1 unit, his [Viridescent Flower] had progressed through a completely unorthodox path which differed greatly from those of the other Duanmu family members.

In the A-1 unit, Ai Hui was in charge of the unit's direction. Shi Xueman was in charge of the unit's offense and the one in charge of battle's tempo was this devilishly handsome, brash young man.

The way he controlled the battle's tempo was very unique in the sense that he achieved control by disrupting his enemy's tempo.

Duanmu Huanghun seemed to have a flair for destruction. He

was naturally treacherous and did not look like someone who came from a prestigious family.

No one had taught him how to do so. He was treacherous by nature.

When the A-1 unit's members arrived, the battle came under his control. He licked his lips and a hint of zeal lit up in his eyes. He suddenly realized that this was the perfect chance.

He was standing in front of Ai Hui and protecting him!

Wasn't this the perfect chance to show off his fighting capabilities to Ai Hui?

As Duanmu Huanghun thought of this, he became excited.

That hateful fellow was always the one that showed off his fighting capabilities in front of him. Every time, all he could do was endure the humiliation.

Today, he finally had the chance to reverse their positions! Hahaha!

Duanmu Huanghun's handsome face was filled with zeal and excitement.

Ai Hui, I know you're aware.

Come on, open your eyes and take a good look at the most perfect [Viridescent Flower] in this world!

Chapter 264: Impossible to Stop Halfway

The [Viridescent Flower] was omnipresent. Enchanted green vines meandered about the battlefield unpredictably while lovely and delicate green flowers blossomed on them, resembling an ink wash painting, elegant and beautiful.

Surprisingly, there was a wide variety of flowers. There were radiant chrysanthemums, beautiful peonies, ravishing plum flowers, and elegant orchids among others. They blossomed on the meandering green vines, blending in harmony.

The flustered members of the A-1 unit calmed down. Only they knew that the different types of flowers had different meanings to them.

The chaotic battle scene immediately became clear and orderly, sharply increasing their offensive threat.

The blood elementalists quickly felt the change in the situation. If they had previously compared their situation to being in a pool of quicksand, then their current situation could be compared to being in a meat grinder.

Their opponent's offensive execution was clear and precise while their own offense was often disrupted.

From the three blood elementalists' perspectives, the green vines had become exceptionally scary, resembling a monster that had countless tentacles.

In the blink of an eye, there were several wounds on their bodies. Even though these wounds were not fatal, they were enough to make the blood elementalists felt a strong sense of danger.

How did the A-1 unit become so powerful?

The blood elementalists found it very difficult to accept reality. They knew about the A-1 unit before and had even had several interactions with them before becoming blood elementalists. The three of them had been brimming with confidence before this battle as they'd known about the A-1 unit's fighting capabilities.

Despite that, what happened during the battle gave them a huge shock.

How did the A-1 unit become so strong?

A blood elementalist who could no longer hold on hurriedly sent out a signal to request support.

"It's a pity." the red-dressed girl sighed faintly as she watched the battle from afar. Similarly, she could see the terrible situation Tian Kuan was in right now.

Yan Hai was startled. He asked, "Miss, what's there to be pitied?"

"I'm pitying Tian Kuan," the red-dressed girl replied with a casual

tone.

"Sir Tian Kuan?" Yan Hai was startled again. "Don't tell me Miss feels that Sir Tian Kuan will lose this fight?"

Yan Hai had a deep fear of Tian Kuan. He saw with his own eyes how Tian Kuan did the impossible. From his perspective, Sir Tian Kuan's powers were deep and unmeasurable. He also possessed terrifying schemes. How could an individual that possessed both brawn and brains lose?

Even though the battle had entered a deadlock, the blood elementalists' side had not yet shown any signs of defeat. Why would Miss assert that Sir Tian Kuan would face defeat?

Deep down, Yan Hai did not want Sir Tian Kuan to lose. He felt that Sir Tian Kuan had treated him quite well.

"Do you know what we need the most right now?" the red-dressed lady suddenly changed the topic.

Yan Hai did not know if the 'we' that Miss mentioned referred to the god elementalists or her and Sir Tian Kuan. He did not dare to ask and put on an attentive appearance.

"It's a matter of heart." the red-dressed girl's eyes glittered like the stars in the night sky. "When the elementalists train, they consolidate what they have learned at every step. They have the talent needed to progress steadily. Having this talent allows them

to start from a higher point; however, even with talent, they still diligently work hard. Persistent effort overcomes all difficulties. For the path of a god elementalist, it’s a completely different case. We don’t talk about talent. It doesn’t matter even if your body is scarred and battered. We travel between life and death, walking on a tightrope. We need the power of understanding. Life and death are unpredictable. The essence of the path of a god elementalist is to develop his or her mind."

Yan Hai did not really understand what Miss was saying, but he knew that she was trying to teach him something. He felt extremely grateful and replied respectfully, "Your lowly servant will always bear Miss’s words of wisdom in mind!"

"This realization of mine came about accidentally." The red-dressed girl smiled. "It is thanks to Tian Kuan; without him, how could I have come up with these words of wisdom?"

Yan Hai’s face was filled with shock. He did not know how Miss’s realization was linked to Sir Tian Kuan; however, he did know that he himself was too low-leveled. Right now, he still found it very difficult to understand these profound and mysterious words, but he had a feeling that Miss’s words contained extremely powerful knowledge that might be of great help to him in the future.

He did not dare to lose focus and kept repeating Miss’s words in his mind, without missing a single one.

The red-dressed girl returned o her usual demeanor and chuckled. "However, Tian Kuan is a ruthless and determined individual. He definitely will not admit defeat easily."

"Miss, should we..." Yan Hai hesitated for a while before he continued speaking. "Provide some assistance to Sir Tian Kuan?"

"Assistance?" The red-dressed girl shook her head and replied, "He doesn’t need assistance."

Yan Hui shut his mouth.

The red-dressed girl cast a glance at Yan Hai and continued, "Tian Kuan’s resolution must have wavered because of his injuries. That man from the Infantry Division was indeed an extraordinary individual. Tian Kuan must have already returned to his senses. If he wants to continue progressing, he must win this battle. Otherwise, he is destined to die."

Upon hearing these words, Yan Hai was dumbstruck. He asked again, "Why can’t he make a comeback?"

"Because this is the path he chose." The red-dressed girl was lost in thought. "He always put his life on the gambling table. It is because of his determination that he was able to make it so far. With his determination, he was able to survive the rounds of blood refinement. If he escapes, he will lose his determination and the gamble, so the next time he carries out blood refinement will be the day he dies."

The red-dressed girl spoke the last sentence with absolute certainty.

Yan Hai was blown away. He felt that the path of a god elementalist was profound and mysterious.

"There is something that you must remember," the red-dressed girl said faintly.

Yan Hai hurriedly bowed his head respectfully and replied, "Please enlighten your lowly servant."

"You have to complete the path you chose even if it's going to kill you," the red-dressed girl said plainly.

A shiver went down Yan Hai's spine. These words were enlightening. He seemed to have realized something. The blood in his body began to boil, something that he had never felt before. Yan Hai stood on the spot and did not move a single inch of his body, resembling a wooden statue.

The red-dressed girl cast a glance at him, then withdrew and shifted her gaze to the battle in the distance.

Hiding in the dark, Tian Kuan's face was ashen.

The battle he'd expected to be an absolute victory suddenly entered a mysterious deadlock. Before the battle, he had emphasized Ai Hui. He felt that Ai Hui was the most threatening individual in the A-1 unit. As long as he could get rid of Ai Hui, the rest were just a mob that would fall like dominoes. In the end, he

did not expect the most threatening Ai Hui to fall into a trap while the rest of the A-1 unit, whom he had previously regarded as a mob, erupted and put up a strong fight.

Should he take action himself?

Tian Kuan's face was filled with uncertainty, unable to make a decision. There were still four blood elementalists beside him. Should they take part in the battle?

He had invested a lot this time around. He already felt that it was overkill to use eight blood elementalists against a mere A-1 unit; however, the eventual outcome was completely outside of his expectations.

He did not intend to reveal himself. Yu Mingqiu was like a sharp sword that hovered in the sky, waiting to strike at any moment. Tian Kuan had personally witnessed Yu Mingqiu's prowess. He did not want to give his life for Yu Mingqiu to test his arrows.

Yu Mingqiu being caught up by the blood birds in the sky was a God-given chance to Tian Kuan. It was the reason why he had planned this operation. Furthermore, for the sake of this operation, he had deployed a total of twelve blood elementalists. The rest of the blood elementalists were carrying out their respective missions in various parts of Central Pine City.

The death rate of the blood elementalists matched well with what he had expected.

When people first became blood elementalists, their fighting capabilities would rise sharply; however, since they did not train with their new powers at all, they would not know how to use them. Even though their fighting capabilities were greater than those of the ordinary elementalists, they were too few. Sending forty-five blood elementalists into the enormous Central Pine City was like throwing a handful of sand into a lake; it disappeared in the blink of an eye.

At the moment, he could only sense the presence of twenty-eight blood elementalists.

It would not surprise him if the missing blood elementalists had been killed. He did not consider them to be of importance.

They were merely used to create chaos in Central Pine City.

What Tian Kuan did not expect was that there were some blood elementalists who escaped from the battle. They had disappeared into the woods outside of the city. If not for the fact that the battle was getting increasingly intense, Tian Kuan would not let them off. Right now, however, he did not have the time to pursue them.

This was a painful lesson for Tian Kuan. It was far too difficult for him to supervise forty-five people. He had underestimated the situation and also did not have the relevant experience to conduct such a strategy. The biggest reason for his failure was that he'd chosen an unfamiliar strategy at such a critical moment.

With Yu Mingqiu's arrival, his plan was further disrupted.

The blood birds in the sky were supposed to play an important role in his plan. Central Pine City had never before faced a legitimate aerial threat. The sudden appearance of the blood birds would have been enough to cause devastating losses in the city.

He had not expected Yu Mingqiu to come and single-handedly clear out the sky above Central Pine City. Without the biggest, aerial threat, the survivors in Central Pine city were able to organize themselves and fight against the blood fiends. All of them were very experienced in dealing with blood fiends. Even though there was a huge number of blood fiends, the survivors did not collapse like Tian Kuan had expected.

This had also directly caused huge losses among the blood elementalists. Their enemy was not really powerful, but they had an advantage in terms of manpower.

It was all that goddamn Yu Mingqiu's fault!

Tian Kuan cursed Yu Mingqiu an unknown number of times; however, at this point of time, no matter how much he cursed, it would not help the situation at all. Given the current situation, it was impossible to stop the operation halfway. He was somewhat vexed. He was far too anxious.

The plan of 'treating the city as a piece of cloth' needed nine golden needles to be nailed in nine specific locations. Right now, only one had been nailed and there were eight more left. He would have enough time to strike, but eight of his blood elementalists

were currently being held up by the A-1 unit. If he gave up now, the eight blood elementalists would die for nothing.

Losing another eight blood elementalists would worsen his situation.

After hesitating for a while, Tian Kuan made his decision and gave the signal to attack.

The four blood elementalists hiding nearby him moved silently to the battlefront like four ghosts.

After devouring the blood crystal, the glow in Lou Lan's eyes suddenly stopped flickering, following which, the bright glow in his eyes began to dim and become dark-red. His dark-red eyes made his pale-white mask calmer and more callous. At this moment, he was like a statue, not moving or making any noise.

There was no wind, but Lou Lan looked as if he was disintegrating into a gust, sweeping up a sandstorm.

Chapter 265: The Reappearance of [Dust Fall]

Without any warning sign, a sandstorm swept across the battlefield.

The surroundings suddenly darkened and everything seemed to be spinning. This caused the blood elementalists that were charging toward Ai Hui to lose their sense of direction.

What was going on?

The four elementalists turned pale with fright. Their communication link with Tian Kuan had been completely cut off. Right now, they felt as if they were in a desert where sand was endlessly blowing everywhere.

In other people's eyes, the battlefield had become extremely weird. The sandstorm swirled around the four elementalists, blinding their vision. This caused them to move clumsily and looked extremely hilarious.

Tian Kuan's eyes widened as his facial expression changed drastically.

How could a sand puppet have such a technique? This was a blood elementalist's technique by right!

Elementalists used elemental energy, so their attacks were actually variations of elemental energy. Blood elementalists were different. Blood spiritual force was an energy that lay between spiritual force and elemental energy. It was about tempering the mind and using the body as a vessel to contain it.

If one described what the elementalists practiced as fullness, then what blood elementalists practiced could be described as emptiness. Blood elementalists were specialized in illusion-related techniques. Since they also specialized in tempering their minds, they also had an extremely strong resistance against illusion-techniques.

All four blood elementalists had fallen into the trap. Could the person that set off the sandstorm be some kind of elite from the organization?

If that was the case, how would Tian Kuan not feel shocked and afraid?

Similarly, the red-dressed girl, who was watching the battle from afar, was flabbergasted as well. Bewilderment could be seen in her eyes. That technique was a typical blood elementalist's technique. Why would it appear in this place?

Her gaze then shifted to the spot where Ai Hui's sand puppet had been standing just now. Surprisingly, that spot was empty.

A sand puppet that knew how to execute a blood elementalist's technique?

Previously, the red-dressed girl knew something was unusual about the sand puppet, but she could not put her finger on it. It was not until now that she was truly shocked.

It was already weird for a metal elementalist to bring along a sand puppet. It was even more weird that the sand puppet knew how to use a blood elementalist's technique...

She looked at the motionless Ai Hui and felt intrigued by him. This fellow seemed to have a lot of enigma to him.

"I hope you don't die too early." The red-dressed girl's mouth curled into a smile.

A wisp of sand blew past Ai Hui's ears.

"Ai Hui, Lou Lan can only last for three minutes."

Lou Lan's voice rang across Ai Hui's ears before the wisp of sand disappeared.

Three minutes.

Ai Hui remained calm, looking as if he had not heard what Lou Lan said. The sword in his hand did not stop moving at all. Looking at him now, other people would have thought that he was resisting the blood demon, but no one knew that he was actually

feeling out the blood demon instead of resisting it.

The Cultivation Era had long passed, ancient books had decayed, and inheritances were destroyed. No longer relevant in the current times, the legacy of the old world had changed beyond recognition.

But why the Blood of God?

It was because the Blood of God not only wanted to revive the glory of the Cultivation Era and inherit the wealth from that era, but they also wanted to transform the ancient powers and create new powers. The Blood of God was ambitious. To them, the practice of blood refinement from the Cultivation Era and the wood elementalists from the Avalon of Five Elements were their soil and nourishment, respectively. They had long since made up their minds to create something of their own.

Initially, Ai Hui thought that the God of Blood's objective was to overturn the Avalon of Five Elements. However, as time passed, his way of thinking changed. He felt that the God of Blood not only wanted to topple the Avalon of Five Elements, they also wanted to establish their own empire and start their own era. There might even be a possibility that they wanted to establish an era that lasted for millions of years like the Cultivation Era.

Ai Hui did not know why he would think this way, but he definitely felt strongly about it.

Was the blood elementalist's blood demon similar to the one mentioned in those swordplay manuals? Ai Hui did not know, so

there was therefore nothing better than experiencing it for himself.

At this moment, Ai Hui was abnormally calm. He was trying out different methods to test the blood demon's reaction.

The aura of chilliness was an important characteristic of the blood demon. It was not a typical chill. Extremely bone-piercing, it resembled the cold wind that rushed from the depths of an ice cavern,. It had already been verified that elemental energy was useless in expelling the blood demon. Initially, Ai Hui thought the blood demon could devour elemental energy. However, after studying it for some time, he discovered that it actually corroded elemental energy. After being corroded by the blood demon, elemental energy would lose its vitality and become uncontrollable.

To an elementalist, this unique characteristic of the blood demon was extremely dangerous and deadly.

It was obvious that the human body had no resistance against blood demons. Even a tempered body could not stop a blood demon from invading it. Ai Hui, however, discovered something peculiar—the blood demon actually reminded him of the sword embryo. However, instead of possessing the blood demon's aura of chilliness, the sword embryo possessed a razor-sharp aura.

Ai Hui seemed to realize something.

The sword embryo was formed by essence, breath, and spirit.

Could the blood demon be formed by something like these as well?

Those swordplay manuals had mentioned that demons were formed by nine spirits. The two words "nine spirits" were far too vague for Ai Hui to make any sense out of them. On the contrary, he knew more about essence, breath, and spirit as he had nurtured a sword embryo before.

It was a pity that the manual was worn-out and did not contain complete information on the sword embryo. As such, there were a lot of areas that he did not really understand.

He noted down this observation as he felt it would be a good starting point for him.

Blood demons loved the presence of vitality. From Ai Hui's conjecture, if a wood elementalist was to encounter a blood demon, it would be a headache for him or her. Among the five types of elementalists, the one that was most unafraid of the blood demon would be a fire elementalist. The scorching flames in a fire elementalist's body were the bane of the ice-cold blood demon. On the contrary, the vitality within a wood elementalist's body was nourishment for the blood demon.

It was about time!

Ai Hui opened his eyes, straightened his back, and swung the Dragonspine in his hand upward. Suddenly, a formidable aura erupted from Ai Hui's body in all directions!

Seven daggers floated around him. The tip of his sword was pointed up at sky, remaining motionless.

Like a sword that had been unsheathed, a biting-cold sword glow froze the surrounding air.

At this point in time, Tian Kuan, who had been contemplating whether or not he should personally take action, looked at Ai Hui dumbfounded. The nightmare-like memory had flowed through his mind like a flash flood.

The red-dressed girl’s eyes widened as she lost control of her facial expressions, looking as if she had seen a ghost.

Beside her, Yan Hai’s facial expression changed drastically. That familiar aura prompted his face to turn deathly white. He stuttered, "The Battle of..."

In the sky, Yu Mingqiu was like an impregnable fortress, effortlessly ripping the incoming waves of blood birds into pieces.

Holding on by a single breath, his body was extremely exhausted,.

He was even surprised at himself for singlehandedly guarding the sky above Central Pine City for so long.

"Can I get promoted to the position of division leader this time around?" he muttered while panting heavily.

His throat felt as if it had been doused in flames and smoke. He took out a jade-green bean and stared at it for a long while before popping it into his mouth. After a while, the color slightly returned to his face.

His last heavenly elemental bean. There would be no more of this bean in stock. All right, even if there were more available supplements, they would not come in the form of these heavenly elemental beans.

The division was not wealthy enough to provide him with heavenly elemental beans. He had bought these heavenly elemental beans with his own money. Each bean cost 10 Heavenly Merit Points.

In total, he bought 10 heavenly elemental beans, which amounted to 100 Heavenly Merit Points. He felt pain in his heart on the day he bought them, but now, he hated himself for buying so few. Heavenly elemental beans were the highest grade food that replenished elemental energy. Breeding them required time and effort. Furthermore, they could only be raised by extremely powerful wood elementalists. As such, they were extremely expensive.

Even the crack troops of the 13 Divisions would not be able to afford them. Only someone like Yu Mingqiu could afford them.

A trace of vitality returned to his eight dried-up palaces.

He straightened his body and looked at the distant horizon. It was a pity that there were no clouds. Soaring freely through the boundless sea of clouds was an invigorating activity. Every time he saw the sea of cottony clouds, he wanted to dunk his head in.

The sky was devoid of clouds, and the sun was scorching hot.

Suddenly, his facial expression froze while he involuntarily shifted his gaze to the ground.

It had been quite a while since he last observed the situation on the ground. It was not that he did not want to observe, but rather, he did not have the time to do so. Regardless, he was a nonchalant individual. The sky was his and the ground was theirs. If they could not hold on to the ground, then so be it.

The energy undulations from the ground... were extremely weird!

Yu Mingqiu was able to locate the source of the energy undulations very quickly, and he was stunned once more. They came from Mingxiu's junior.

All of a sudden, his vision was blocked by a cloud that seemed to come from nowhere.

Wait, why was there a cloud?

A glint flashed across Yu Mingqiu's eyes. His gaze swept across

the area without discovering anything. There was not a single cloud in sight.

On the ground, Ai Hui pointed his sword upward. Swoosh. The seven daggers that were hovering around him shot skyward and buried themselves in the sea of thick clouds.

As the seven daggers entered the thick layer of clouds, numerous silvery lightning snakes sparked off in the clouds and frantically gathered toward the seven daggers. In the blink of an eye, the seven daggers were surrounded and engulfed in densely-packed, stacked lightning bolts.

The seven daggers resembled seven spindles that were fully wound with silvery threads.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up abruptly as a solemn look swept across his face. At this moment, his entire body was dazzling with radiance, preventing anyone from looking at him with their naked eyes. His clothes fluttered on their own without the presence of the wind, appearing extremely imposing. Right now, he looked like a deity that had descended from the heavens.

Suddenly, he swung his Dragonspine downward.

[Dust Fall]!

The seven daggers in the sky were attracted by the motion of the Dragonspine and hurriedly shot down.

Buzz. Seven dazzling and space-distorting lightning bolts struck down from the sky. The aura of destruction that engulfed the city was cleared instantly, bringing light and warmth to the city.

One of the lightning bolts struck Ai Hui's body.

Ai Hui's body twitched, and he felt an indescribable discomfort. The blood demon in his body dissipated instantly without even having the chance to wail in pain.

The body of the blood elementalist that was controlling the blood demon trembled as blood flowed out of his seven orifices. Then, he collapsed on his back and became lifeless.

The other six blood elementalists were struck by the lightning bolts. Their bodies froze and were severely injured. Apparently, lightning was the bane of blood spiritual force. This was the first time they had been struck by lightning bolts. They could not help but want to escape. In the end, two escaped while the remaining four died.

Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun had witnessed this move before, but the lightning bolts this time around were much slimmer than the ones from the Battle of Long Street. The lightning bolts that time were indeed spectacular.

Meanwhile, out of the three men that Lou Lan had entangled, two were killed and one escaped with grievous injuries.

In the sky, Yu Mingqiu was startled. Did the clouds below him just rumble with thunder?

After a while, the clouds dissipated. The scene on the ground entered his vision and his facial expression froze.

The battle had ended?

The battle had ended after a mere thunder clap?

How could these fellows end the battle with just a thunder clap? How come the battle in the sky would not end despite him fighting almost to death? It was not fair! Who was the division leader here? Oh, wrong, vice division leader... He almost forgot again...

The red-dressed girl was petrified. She could hear Yan Hai muttering absent-mindedly, "... of Long Street."

The aura from the lightning bolts had caused her to palpitate in terror. Even though the aura was not really that strong, it was enough to strike her with fear.

The Battle of Long Street...

She had heard these five words several times and felt an indescribable reverence for them.

Chapter 266: Success

Even though Ai Hui's [Dust Fall] was much weaker than the one from the Battle of Long Street's, its intimidation factor to the blood elementalists was much stronger. These blood elementalists were still casualties from the quarantine barracks then, so they had not witnessed what had happened during the Battle of Long Street.

Lightning was a natural bane to blood elementalists, striking fear in them. The arrogance derived from the sharp increase in their fighting capabilities had received an enormous blow. This had at least calmed the chaotic Central Pine City, boosting everyone's moral. Even though there were daily casualties among the survivors in Central Pine City, nobody's confidence wavered. They strongly believed that the time for victory would soon come.

This surging morale allowed them to drive the blood fiends out of Central Pine City once more.

The plan to "treat the city as a piece of cloth" was unexpectedly proceeding smoothly. The lightning bolts from the sky had struck fear into the blood elementalists' hearts. This allowed the A-1 unit to nail the gold needles without any further obstruction from the blood elementalists.

Some of the members conjectured that the blood elementalists must have realized that things were not going too well for them and escaped into the woods outside of the city.

From the continuous battles, everyone had obtained a lot of blood crystals. However, the other materials in Central Pine City had already run out. Without these materials, the blood crystals could not be directly absorbed. Otherwise, everyone's fighting capabilities could rise to a higher level.

Not only did these materials run out, but the supplies in Central Pine CIty were running low as well, especially weapons. Right now, Jiang Wei, Sang Zhijun, and the other archers did not dare to be excessive with their arrows since there was no more spare ammunition.

Regarding the food supply, the situation was a bit better, but only a bit better. During the initial period of the blood catastrophe, there were many casualties. This reduced the consumption of the food supply and allowed it to last until now, but the food supply was still considered low. Wang Zhen had no choice but to deploy some manpower to search for food among the ruins. Due to the presence of blood fiends, however, their efficiency was quite low.

Anyone who possessed common sense would know that the plan to "treat the city as a piece of cloth" was the last hope. Otherwise, they would starve to death.

The blood crystals were very valuable and could be exchanged for Heaven Merit Points. However, as of now, they were rather useless. Ai Hui had a multitude of blood crystals, but all he could do was look at them. Luckily, Lou Lan could still use them.

Ai Hui was a bit shocked that Lou Lan could use the blood crystals, but there was nothing to be surprised about since Lou Lan

was different from other sand puppets to begin with.

As for Shi Xueman and the other, they kept on praising Lou Lan. Omnipotent Lou Lan!

"The seventh gold needle!" Ai Hui muttered to himself as he watched the gold needle being nailed to the ground. The faces of people around him shone with radiance.

"Ai Hui, two more gold needles!" someone yelled, sparking off a wave of cheers.

Everyone followed Fatty in chanting Ai Hui's name. After going through so many trials and tribulations together, the A-1 unit's members treated each other like brothers.

It had been three days since the previous battle. Seven gold needles had been nailed and everyone could clearly sense that the elemental energy field in Central Pine City had changed. It was as if the elemental energy that had been lying dormant in the city had awakened, causing the air to filled with energetic elemental energy.

Every survivor's face was filled with confidence and fighting spirit. The darkest time had passed.

The blood fiends were becoming increasingly stronger, and the number of casualties continued to rise. Battles continued to occur, and there were still people dying every now and then. However,

despite all of this, the survivors' confidence remained unwavering. They strongly believed they would obtain victory.

The vigorous elemental energy in the air was like fresh, clean air. It nourished everyone's wound riddled bodies.

Everyone also discovered that their training efficiency rose significantly.

Yu Mingqiu, who guarded the sky, could clearly observe the situation on the ground. Watching over from above, he could see that the blood aura that engulfed Central Pine City was becoming fainter. It was as if the elemental energy that surrounded the city had undergone a tremendous transformation.

Yu Mingqiu was extremely surprised.

His master was a Grandmaster, so the knowledge and experience that he had been exposed to were extraordinary. However, even so, he had not come across such a phenomenon before. The energetic elemental energy in the air condensed and flowed in an indecipherable manner, forming an unique cycle that even Yu Mingqiu, himself, found incomprehensible.

Yu Mingqu immediately realized its usefulness. The vigorous elemental energy field was good for training!

If there was another city like the current Central Pine City, where the elemental energy field was so vigorous, it would attract

countless elementalists. In the Avalon of Five Elements, any place that was good for training would be packed with people.

One such place was the Silver Mist Sea.

From the Silver Mist Sea, powerful currents of metal elemental energy flowed downward through the great Silver Mist River to Palette Cloud Village. 70% of the population and 90% of the cities were gathered on the two coastlines of the Silver Mist Sea.

This was all due to the fact that the closer a city was to the Silver Mist Sea, the better it would be for its inhabitants' training and its production efficiency. The powerful currents of elemental energy from the Silver Mist Sea were a necessity to workshops and factories, just like how fire was essential to a smithy.

One unique characteristic of elemental energy was that it was very stable in nature. In other words, it was not vigorous enough. When it was not vigorous enough, the rate at which it could be absorbed and used was very low, resulting in a low training efficiency for elementalists.

Everyone knew about this weakness of elemental energy and had been thinking of ways to resolve it. Establishing the Avalon of Five Elements was one of the many ways. Take the Silver Mist Sea as an example. Countless damaged weapons were thrown into the river valley to excite the metal elemental energy within them before the river delivered the vigorous metal elemental energy to the entire Silver Mist Sea.

This was a grand engineering project. The current Silver Mist Sea and Silver Mist River were formed through generations of accumulated effort and hard work.

Yet, other than the two river banks of the Silver Mist River, the other places within the Silver Mist Sea were sparsely populated and unsuitable for living. Currently, the two river banks of the Silver Mist River were well-developed and did not have much empty land.

If those other places were like the current Central Pine City, they would definitely attract a huge number of elementalists. Regardless of their profession, elemental energy was the basis for elementalists. Farmers were not the only ones that needed Mother Earth for their livelihood, as elementalists also needed her. Even though the Silver Mist Sea contained an immense amount of energy, it still faced the risk of its energy being completely depleted. For example, a lack of discarded artifact remnants would directly cause a lack of metal elemental energy in the Silver Mist Sea.

A lot of cities could forge the same gold needles that Central Pine City had forged. Central Pine City was just an insignificant small town with limited resources in the Avalon of Five Elements. If the city could be popularized...

Yu Mingqiu was very excited. If all of these could be achieved, then Central Pine City would become well-known for making such a great contribution.

He remembered the mayor had previously mentioned that the

designer and implementer of this plan were Ai Hui's master and mistress, respectively. Mingxiu's junior was indeed extraordinary.

Yu Mingqiu was not stupid enough to ask for the plan details. Right now, what mattered the most was getting through this crisis. He believed the higher-ups would not turn a blind eye to the impact that the gold needles had on Central Pine City's elemental energy field

Similarly, Ai Hui did not ignore the impact of the gold needles either. He waved his arm and instructed, "Everyone, make good use of the time to train and recover your energy."

Everyone was used to him not saying anything motivational. On the contrary, they felt at ease. After working together for so long, everyone was connected on a deep level with each other. Without any hesitation, they started training.

"Lou Lan, supervise Fatty," Ai Hui instructed Lou Lan without even turning his head.

"No problem, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied cheerfully.

Ai Hui was quite shocked by the fact that Fatty was previously able to kill a blood elementalist. He clearly knew Fatty's fighting capabilities. Other than brute strength, Fatty did not have many spectacular skills. Usually, he was timid and lazy. How would one not find it surprising that he killed a blood elementalist by himself?

It seemed that Fatty did have some potential.

Promptly, Ai Hui increased Fatty's training intensity and ignored his grumbles.

Ai Hui, himself, also tried to make full use of the time he had.

His fighting capabilities had improved greatly, especially his swordsmanship. Other than the last move of the sword pill, he was very proficient in executing the [Crescent Moon] and [Dust Fall]. [Crescent Moon] was used as a long-ranged offensive weapon. Even though the lightning bolt ability of the [Dust Fall] technique had an intimidating effect, its destructive power was not as impressive as the [Crescent Moon]'s in reality.

Of course, it was a different case for the blood elementalists. Lightning was the natural bane of the blood elementalists, so the [Dust Fall] was extremely threatening to them.

He had some ideas about the last move of the sword pill, [Night Epiphyllum], as well. However, he was still far from success.

Ai Hui was not anxious. Day by day, his understanding toward swordsmanship grew. The success of [Dust Fall] had significantly and especially enlightened him. [Dust Fall] differed from the usual sword moves. It more closely resembled the sword moves that the ancient swordsmen used.

Naturally, when compared to the moves of those swordsmen, its

power was much weaker.

The improvement in swordsmanship could only be achieved through persistent hard work. Ai Hui was still working on this himself. As his understanding toward swordsmanship increased day by day, he started to devise more and more basic moves like the [Oblique Slash] and [Misty Strike].

With the destruction of the sword embryo, his swordsmanship instinct had actually become stronger instead. However, his instinct was still filled with uncertainty. To purely depend on instinct was to wager his life on a gambling table.

Ai Hui did not want to do that. Instinct could help him create more basic sword moves, allowing him to have a deeper understanding of swordsmanship.

He did not know how other people trained, so he could not think of anything else other than sticking to this stupid method.

There were very few sword inheritances nowadays.

He had not collected the inheritance that the mayor previously rewarded him and wanted to collect it only after he left this place, provided he was still alive by then. Learning a new inheritance in a short period of time would not be of much use to him at his current critical junction.

Sometimes, due to all the blood crystals and Heaven Merit Points,

Ai Hui would think about life as a moderately wealthy person if he survived this catastrophe.

If he really survived this catastrophe, he planned to return to the Old Territory with Fatty.

His dream of becoming an elementalist had been achieved, and he also experienced being a hero. The other troublesome issues should be left to those geniuses to settle.

Upon witnessing the deaths of countless people and an entire city reduced to ruins, Ai Hui realized there were indeed places that were worse than the Wilderness.

He should bring master and mistress and find a place to lead a simple life.

Master was like a candle flickering in the wind, old and ailing. When mistress completed the plan of "treating the city as a piece of cloth," the damage inflicted to her body would most likely be irreversible as well.

Yeah, the Old Territory was quite good. He did not have any family members, so he could move somewhere near Fatty. He also had some money and could bring master and mistress back to the Old Territory and open an embroidery workshop there. Senior Mingxiu would come along of course.

Right now, Ai Hui’s biggest wish was to accompany master and

mistress through the twilight years of their lives.

He glanced at the snow-white bandage, which was wrapped around his wrist tightly, and discovered that there was a blood trace on it.

This was left by the mysterious drop of blood from the red-dressed girl. The shape of the blood trace was somewhat weird, resembling an eye. Ai Hui did not know if this was just a coincidence or something peculiar.

All right, he would have to wait until everything was over before investigating it.

Everything would have to wait until he lived through this catastrophe.

Chapter 267: Shattered Blood Traces

Tian Kuan did not give up.

He was someone who had returned from the verge of death. The obstacle he currently faced was nothing compared to what he had experienced in the past and was not enough to throw him into despair.

There were 16 blood elementalists under his command, but half of them were injured.

While blood elementalists were much more tenacious compared to regular elementalists, their capabilities were still affected by injuries.

The consecutive failures that these injured blood elementalists had faced were a huge blow to their morale. With morale at an all time low, more and more of them were deserting from Tian Kuan. This batch of blood elementalists were elites who were carefully selected, and as such, had very keen intuitions.

They were quick to figure out that Tian Kuan's method of controlling them had loopholes and managed to exploit these to escape.

Seeing their comrades escape sent the morale of the remaining blood elementalists plummeting even further. Loyalty to the group was dead. Those that remained would definitely seize any opportunity to slip away.

What went wrong?

Tian Kuan could not figure out why nothing was going according to plan.

"Sir, your face?"

A surprised voice rang out from among the blood elementalists.

My face? What's wrong with my face?

Tian Kuan subconsciously touched his face and felt something wet. His hand froze.

Aghast, the other blood elementalists looked at Tian Kuan.

Tian Kuan looked at his fingers and saw that they were stained with blood. The blood was a dusty-red color and had a foul rotting stench. His eyes revealed a deep, troubling fear while his fingers trembled slightly.

He could tell without looking that the blood traces on his face had become like the withered rings of a rotting old stump. The traces had broken in many places, becoming shattered and leaking the dull, greyish-red blood that stained his hands.

Shattered traces!

Tian Kuan’s mind blanked as he fully registered what was happening to him.

The skin on his forehead shrivelled up rapidly, forming deep-set wrinkles that densely covered his entire forehead. His head full of black hair gradually turned white while his large biceps shrank and his spine hunched. In the blink of an eye, Tian Kuan had aged several decades.

The blood elementalists who witnessed this transformation stepped back in horror. It was as if they were staring at a monster.

Not knowing what was going on served only to amplify their fears.

"Shattered blood traces? Why? Why is this happening?"

Tian Kuan’s dry, hoarse voice was filled with fear and panic. His tone had completely changed.

He was utterly racked with fear and felt like a cornered beast.

Shattered traces were an indication that a blood elementalists’ training had gone down the wrong path and something feared by all blood elementalists. Ruptured blood traces marked the beginning of the end as the blood elementalist would lose the power he had attained. The vital energy of the blood would begin to seep out via these broken blood traces, causing the blood’s color

to dull. Over time, the blood elementalist's blood would turn into a clear liquid. At this point, the blood elementalist's life would come to an end.

The shattering of blood traces only occurred when one's training had gone horribly wrong.

Where had he gone wrong?

Tian Kuan forced himself to calm down, completely ignoring the blood elementalists who were already fleeing in all directions.

The other blood elementalists were scared off by Tian Kuan's transformation. The biggest consolation that forming blood traces had given them was their increased strength. After seeing Tian Kuan's abrupt deterioration, they finally understood that the path of a blood elementalist was not that easy after all. In fact, it was even riskier.

Although training as an elementalist was relatively slow, it was much safer and would definitely not result in something this terrifying.

They were unsure of what would happen to Tian Kuan, but were certain that he was unusually weak at this point.

A few of the blood elementalists stared at Tian Kuan with hatred in their eyes.

None of the survivors were grateful to Tian Kuan. In fact, their hatred toward him was something they all shared.

Because of Tian Kuan's accumulated strength, they were afraid that he would have some sort of a backup plan. A few of them hesitated for a moment before deciding to slowly retreat. They took off for the forest the moment they saw Tian Kuan's groggy, weakened state.

Tian Kuan's vitality continued to decline as he carefully sieved through his memories to recall his recent actions. He remembered something that immediately roused him from his thoughts.

Why had everything he attempted to accomplish end unfavorably ever since he entered the city? Because he had chosen the wrong path right from the get go. He had never attempted to recruit strength from external sources before. Although he appeared to have planned everything adequately and appeared to have accomplished his recruitment easily, everything was actually pretty messed up. He could clearly see the hatred burning in the eyes of the deserters and knew that they would tear him into pieces at the earliest opportunity.

When did this begin?

His battle with that Infantry Division warrior had left him physically injured and mentally shaken. Soon after, he chanced upon Yu Mingqiu gravely wounding Situ Zhong and became even more alarmed. After entering Central Pine City, he witnessed the Battle of Long Street, which made him feel even more fearful.

Retreating step after step had created fear in his heart, making him filled with trepidation. Although it looked as though everything was within his control, obtaining strength from external sources was the clearest sign that he had lost confidence in himself.

This was his inner demon.

As his self-confidence wavered, his inner demon grew stronger. He was soon overwhelmed by fear.

The precarious balance between life and death was ever so mysterious. As his blood spiritual force transformed, this balance tipped over, resulting in the loss of his attained power and the rupturing of his blood traces.

It would seem that his will had been robbed from him during that fateful encounter with the Infantry Division warrior. Tian Kuan had lost his indomitable spirit.

His pupils suddenly became clear as he extended his legs and leaned on his left arm. Tian Kuan's stance made him look like a three-legged beast. He twisted his body and tapped his right fist against his tailbone.

Pop!

A crisp popping sound could be heard as a bloody glow appeared

on his tailbone.

One by one, he tapped each vertebrae in his spine, causing a series of popping sounds and blood-colored lights to appear on his back.

Tian Kuan stood up and straightened his spine. The wrinkles on his face had completely vanished, and his skin regained its original moisture and smoothness. Only his full head of white hair remained.

The spinal blood had saved his life.

As a god guard, Tian Kuan's training focused mainly on his body. He would store traces of blood within his vertebrae during his daily practice. He had only done this as a backup plan, but little did he know that it would save his life today.

Despite training for so long and undergoing round after round of blood refinement, the spinal blood he had managed to store was merely as thin as a strand of hair.

Although the amount of spinal blood was minuscule, the power it possessed was incredible. Once utilized, it swiftly stabilized his condition.

Tian Kuan sighed lightly. He used to think that he was a fearless person, but he finally realized just how much of a coward he really was.

Was this a bad thing? Tian Kuan did not think so. Rather, he felt that it was something favorable. Detecting his cowardice and better understanding himself at this early point was a good thing.

Perhaps this was the real purpose of training.

Moreover, it was not as though he had no chance.

He could defeat his inner demon by achieving victory.

The reversal of life and death. Coming back from the dead was what Tian Kuan was capable of accomplishing.

Victory was the one true explanation for everything.

Tian Kuan suddenly raised his head. The elemental energy waves in Central Pine City had become unusually intense.

Ai Hui’s small group was nailing in the ninth gold needle.

Tian Kuan walked unhurriedly through the ruins.

"The ninth gold needle," muttered the lady in red.

Having witnessed her transformation with his own eyes, Yan Hai looked at the lady in awe. Her presence had become ever so fleeting

and unpredictable. It was as though she had become one with the dense mist amid mountaintops, mysterious yet ephemeral.

The lady had grown much stronger.

He had never seen her train but could feel the changes she had undergone. Yan Hai inexplicably thought of something that the lady had previously said to him.

Although it was beyond his understanding, Yan Hai knew that the key to her progress lay within it. He secretly committed the words to memory, noting that he could not grasp it because his level was too low.

"Remarkable."

The lady in red looked impressed. She looked up at the sky and watched the waves of light dancing about layer after layer. This light show was the result of the intense elemental energy fluctuations.

Still looking up, the lady in red abruptly said, "It’s time for us to go."

"Go?" asked Yan Hai, at a loss.

"Withdraw from Central Pine City," the lady in red explained as she retracted her gaze. "The entire city’s elemental energy has been activated. The sky, the earth, and even the plants. We’ll have to

retreat further away so as to avoid being trapped within it.

The lady in red and Yan Hai quietly left Central Pine City. They found a mountain that directly overlooked the city and began their observation.

When the ninth gold needle was fully nailed into place, the vibrantly chaotic patterns in the sky above Central Pine City abruptly changed into a brilliant whirlpool of multi-colored light. The different colored lights fused and expanded, slowly spreading across the sky and becoming more distinct.

Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The five elemental energies combined to form a perfect five element ring in the sky.

The abnormally powerful elemental energy waves roused Yu Mingqiu from his exhaustion. He had reached his physical limit and could not help but wonder how he actually managed to guard the city's sky with his strength alone.

As the battle on the ground raged on, so did the battle in the sky. Toward the end, Yu Mingqiu was fighting purely by his combat instincts.

This ordeal was finally over...

He shakily descended back to ground level, landing heavily with a stagger and plopped backward right onto his rear.

His gaze swept up to look at the five element ring in the sky as he sat there, too tired to even lift a finger.

After putting in so much effort, he wondered if there were any bonus rewards awaiting him...

It's not going to be my problem if things start to go awry again. The most handsome person is going to sleep now...

Darkness swiftly engulfed him the moment he closed his tired eyes.

Yu Mingqiu's wretched-looking state gave everyone around a shock. They heaved a huge sigh of relief when he started snoring loudly. His performance over the past few days had earned everyone's unwavering respect. The city could not possibly have lasted so long without him protecting the sky, let alone have had the chance to install the needle.

The five element ring in the sky started to stabilize.

The ferocious blood fiends became terrified and hastily escaped the city.

Looking down from the skies, one would see the red tide rapidly receding out of the city.

After a moment of silence, loud cheers rang out all over Central Pine City.

Amid the cheering, an exhausted Ai Hui sat heavily on the ground.

Master, Mistress, the nine gold needles are in place...

In his mind’s eye, he saw his master excitedly explaining the plan to "treat the city like a piece of cloth" and subconsciously smiled.

Around him, his team members were all over the place. The A-1 unit had carried out the most important missions in this battle. They had relentlessly pressed onward, tapping into every last bit of energy and breath they could muster. Now that their missions were completed, they could finally collapse and take a breather.

Although they were completely drained, everyone’s eyes were glued on the Jade Embroidery Workshop.

The Jade Embroidery Workshop opened its tightly sealed door.

Chapter 268: Counterattack

Han Yuqin felt as though the whole of Central Pine City's eyes were on her. She wore a solemn expression, and the subtle wrinkles on her face had vanished—it was as if she had suddenly reversed time and returned to being twelve years old. The elemental energy within a three-meter radius around her was similar to crackling volleys of firecrackers, and the exploding rays of light were blossoming like stars in the night sky.

It was as if she was surrounded by a silver river where countless stars were born and destroyed. As she unhurriedly advanced, Han Yuqin resembled a spirit descending into the human world, her strong aura enveloping the whole city. The five element ring, which was swiveling in the air, suddenly froze.

The city's elemental energies were utterly calm; they were all subdued by her alone.

Her movements were gentle; the ground beneath her feet quietly graced her landing like a bowing earth dragon. The paths on both sides became adorned with budding plants and blooming flowers, and in the blink of an eye, numerous fruits could be seen sprouting on branches. Unknowingly, layers of cloud gathered in the sky and rain began to gently drizzle down like threads of silk. A ray of sunshine, surrounded by flames, pierced through the clouds and landed on her body. Golden wind swept across her back, transforming into a silver cape.

Such a breathtaking scene was happening live before everyone's eyes.

The guards knelt to the ground. Even Wang Zhen and the dean were in a half-bow position; only Wang Shouchuan remained standing.

Wang Shouchuan’s aged face was glowing, and his eyes were unable to conceal his adoration.

Although he was accustomed to his wife’s usual brilliance, no moment could compare to the scene before his eyes. His wife was now like the world’s most beautiful fairy. Her stunning face, which was surrounded by stars, easily overwhelmed him, and the memories of his youth started to uncontrollably flood his mind.

Wang Shouchuan observed his wife with sentiment as she ascended into the air with light steps.

With such a wife, it could be said that he had lived his life with no regrets. By being able to fulfill her request and push her up the stage at this moment, it could be said that he had lived his life with no regrets.

Yes, he had no regrets.

Wang Shouchuan gave a content smile.

Han Yuqin understood her husband’s smile. She looked at her aged man with clear eyes, which were as soft as water, and bowed. "Thank you, Husband."

Her expression then became solemn once again. "Mingxiu, follow me. It may benefit you in the future."

"Yes." Mingxiu's eyes were red as she responded in a low voice.

The star-like specks of light from the five element ring resembled waterfalls of light. The light had transformed into a colorful flight of steps in front of her—it was as if a rainbow was hanging down from the sky.

Central Pine City was absolutely silent; everyone was stunned by what they had seen. Was this the power of a Grandmaster? The elemental energies of Nature were tamed like her servant, obeying her commands.

Ai Hui was in shock. He looked on blankly as his mistress departed. Was this a Grandmaster? The operation of Nature's elemental energies had completely deviated from common sense; his understanding of elemental energy had been overturned. Theoretical descriptions of a Grandmaster's power could not compare to the profound experience in real life.

Central Pine City's elemental energies were now in his mistress' hands.

Nobody was able to utilize even a bit of elemental energy. In other words, the whole city was under his mistress' control. She could easily kill anyone within the city; executing a massacre wouldn't require any effort.

It was only now that Ai Hui finally understood why the land under a Grandmaster's watch was unshakeable.

Perhaps a Grandmaster wasn't any much different to those strong figures in the ancient cultivation world.

Kuan Tian raised his head and glanced at Han Yuqin before retracting his gaze. There was a flickering, ominous glint in his eyes. Even if he were to confront an extremely powerful person like Han Yuqin, he would not cower in fear.

He had nowhere to retreat.

Right now, he was only relying on the spinal blood he had accumulated to sustain himself. If he escaped now, his blood traces would thoroughly crumble, and the fresh blood in his body would transform into dead blood before finally becoming clear water.

All trace of his existence in this world would disappear, and even his soul wouldn't have a chance to escape.

He had to win. Only victory would allow him to reverse his fate. Even if he couldn't make a complete recovery, he could at least stabilize his blood traces. In the past, he had felt that the way of God was difficult and dangerous, but it was only now that he genuinely understood its unpredictability and murderous nature.

He could feel the blood spiritual force within his body being

rejected by Central Pine City's elemental energy, and the elemental energy in the air was akin to incorporeal knives that incessantly cut him. Wounds continued to appear on his face, arms, and body, and as he moved forward, he resembled a ragdoll covered with scars and bruises. His body was crisscrossed with countless fresh, red scars.

What was strange, however, was that not a single drop of fresh blood seeped out of these wounds.

Tian Kuan's expression didn't change—it was as if he had no sense of touch.

He knew he had to hurry up since the city had already begun to show signs of rejecting blood spiritual force. Once Han Yuqin started, he would be in a worse situation as the rejection would grow even more intense.

Tian Kuan was like a shadow as he silently advanced. He knew that this was his last chance. With unprecedented focus, he executed his [Shadow Figure] with much better skill than usual.

He appeared outside the embroidery workshop without attracting any attention.

The workshop's guards were kneeling to the ground, and everyone's focus was on Han Yuqin. Wang Zhen and the dean were gazing at the sky in shock. There wasn't anyone else within a three-meter radius around Tian Kuan.

Tian Kuan's target was Wang Shouchuan.

Han Yuqin was currently exuding a terrifying momentum, causing Tian Kuan to acknowledge that he definitely wasn't her match. However, by now, all the gold needles in Central Pine City had been erected, and only by blocking Han Yuqin could this whole plan be stopped.

What could he use to stop a Grandmaster?

Wang Shouchuan!

Only by taking him down could he possibly stop Han Yuqin. Her earlier gaze was clearly brimming with longing and emotions—it was obvious that she wouldn't sit silently and watch Wang Shouchuan die in his hands.

Mingxiu had been Tian Kuan's initial target, but unexpectedly, Han Yuqin had taken Mingxiu with her, leaving him with only one choice —Wang Shouchuan.

It was much easier to control an old man with no fight left in him.

Tian Kuan held his breath, and his eyes turned into an empty, ashy color as his body transformed into a shadow. The shadow had no temperature and heartbeat; all signs of life vanished.

This shadow stuck closely to the ground and slowly approached

Wang Shouchuan.

When Tian Kuan had been small and weak, this method of attack was his expertise. And as he grew stronger, this move became much more destructive.

There wasn’t anything awe-inspiring about [Shadow Figure], but in his hands, it became exceptionally dangerous.

"Is this a Grandmaster?"

Wang Zhen muttered to himself as he stared absent-mindedly at Han Yuqin, who, at this moment, was like a spirit that had descended to Earth.

It wasn’t only him. The dean by his side was in a similar daze. His mouth was open, but no sound came out. The sight before them was simply too breathtaking and impactful.

A few moments earlier they had been battling with the blood fiends, but in the blink of an eye, the entire situation had reversed. The blood fiends had retreated in a tide. Victory had never felt so real. The plan of ‘treating the city as a piece of cloth’ had been well-supported by them to begin with, but to speak to truth, they had been concealing their confidence because they had no other choice.

But now, victory was right before their eyes. Looking at the goddess-like Han Yuqin, no one could question her plan any

longer.

He suddenly sensed something.

At the same time, Han Yuqin, who was already in midair, felt something as well. Her face changed slightly as her gaze hardened.

The dean jerked his head and saw a black, shadowy ball springing up from the ground and pouncing towards Wang Shouchuan.

Tian Kuan's view of Wang Shouchuan magnified rapidly. Almost simultaneously, a stone wall rose steeply from the ground and obstructed his path. Densely packed and sharp stone thorns lay atop the wall. An ominous glint appeared in Tian Kuan's eyes, and he let out a low growl, like that of a wild beast on the verge of death. Without dodging, he crashed head-on into the stone wall.

Bang!

The stone wall shattered, and from the rubble, a black shadow shot out and struck Wang Shouchuan.

Han Yuqin, who was floating in midair, suddenly turned around.

As Tian Kuan struggled to stand up, his abdomen ached—he had been stabbed by a thick stone thorn. It was as if he felt nothing, though, as he gripped Wang Shouchuan's neck with one hand and used the other to pull the thorn out from his body. He then carefully placed Wang Shouchuan's figure in front of him, his

palm firmly grabbing onto his neck.

An eerie arc formed at the corner of his mouth and became increasingly curved.

Success... He had succeeded!

The silent smile gradually turned into an unbridled, wild laughter that resounded throughout Central Pine City.

Both Wang Zhen and the dean’s faces became a deathly white as they understood Tian Kuan’s intent. Despair crawled up onto their faces.

Throughout his entire life, Tian Kuan had never felt as happy as he did now. So what if you’re a Grandmaster? So what if I made the whole city my enemy?

His laughter suddenly stopped. He grabbed Wang Shouchuan and started to float upwards slowly.

"I’m sorry I disrupted your show, but this is good as well. We can have a nice talk."

The whole city could hear the arrogance and satisfaction in his voice.

Her face ashen, Han Yuqin roared, "Let him go!"

Tian Kuan’s fingers punctured Wang Shouchuan’s throat, who resembled a choking fish as his body trembled and jerked uncontrollably.

Her husband had never suffered in such a manner—he was just a normal husband. Han Yuqin’s heart was also trembling.

Mingxiu’s face paled as she covered her mouth with her hands. Tears blurred her vision.

"Why? Is this heartbreaking? What a loving couple," Tian Kuan commented leisurely.

He had already taken the initiative and grabbed ahold of his own destiny. And just like in the past, he was always the final victor. So what if you’re a Grandmaster?

His thoughts were remarkably clear, and his body flourished with vitality. Taking a quick glance at his previously declining condition, he discovered that his blood traces were speedily stabilizing. His flesh was like dry mud being moistened by the rain. The familiar strength returned to his body.

What a fascinating feeling.

Victory was so sweet.

When Ai Hui saw Tian Kuan and his teacher, it was as if his head had been dealt a massive blow. All was black before him. But just after a second, he quickly recovered, and an indescribable fury exploded within him.

He had never before felt such rage. Never before.

He obviously understood Tian Kuan’s intention, and he knew what was about to happen. And it was precisely because he knew that that his body began to involuntarily shiver. He had never before felt such fear.

He would rather face his own death than what was going to happen next.

His whole body was shuddering and shaking.

The entire A-1 unit was stunned by the sudden change of events; in fact, the whole city was dumbfounded. Earth-shattering bellows immediately followed after a short period of deathly stillness.

"Release him if you have the guts!"

"Bastard!"

"I’m going to hack you to pieces!"

Tian Kuan laughed aloud as he witnessed the explosion of the

elementalists and the deafening clamor. It felt so good to see these helpless people, who viewed him as their enemy, be unable to do anything. It felt so good to crush and bury all their hopes.

Such despair was enchanting!

Shi Xueman's face was beyond pale. She looked at the sky in disbelief and was at a loss.

She looked toward Ai Hui subconsciously. She did that whenever she felt a loss for what to do.

Ai Hui was still trembling and breathless—it was as if he was drowning.

His shaking hand groped around subconsciously, and upon touching the Dragonspine Inferno, it was as if he had grabbed hold of a life-saving rice straw. He fumbled about, his shaking palm stroking the sword's blade.

It was only when he found the sword's hilt that his trembling hand finally calmed down.

Ai Hui, too, had now calmed down.

He was going to save his master.

Chapter 269: A Devastating Ending

"You stay here."

After giving a brief instruction, the red-dressed girl floated towards Central Pine City like a wisp of red smoke.

The turn of events for Tian Kuan had been too sudden. She could not help but go to take a look.

It would be a pity if she didn't join in the fun.

She was very clear on what Tian Kuan was going to do next. She was more curious about what Ai Hui's reaction would be.

Ai Hui's background was no secret, everyone in Central Pine City knew about it. Right now, he was a legendary figure in Central Pine City, everyone's favorite topic to chit-chat about in their free time. Obtaining all of Ai Hui's information was a piece of cake.

He came from the Old Territory and spent three years in the Wilderness as laborer. He then entered the Induction Ground as an overaged student. Eventually, he became the disciple of Wang Shouchuan and learned embroidery from his mistress.

Reportedly, Ai Hui had a deep relationship with both his master and mistress.

He would definitely take action!

Her interest in Ai Hui far surpassed anyone else's. That fellow could not be analyzed logically as he always came up with different surprises. No one knew what he was going to do next.

Holding the Dragonspine, Ai Hui dashed towards Tian Kuan's location.

The sound of wind surged past his ears like thunder. At this point of time, Ai Hui felt abnormally calm. He held his sword, slouched his body, and flew along the dilapidated street. It was as if he did not feel the fatigue from the previous battles.

His brain was working at an unprecedented speed as he tried to think of a way to save his master.

There must be a way!

He told himself that.

Tian Kuan's purpose in holding Master hostage was to stop Mistress from completing the plan of 'treating the city as a piece of cloth.' Mistress had an unyielding character and the only way for Tian Kuan to make her surrender was to torture Master.

Ai Hui forced himself to focus on thinking through the situation. He did not dare to be distracted as any moment of distraction would cause him to feel a heart-twisting pain.

His facial expression resembled that of a granite statue, motionless and without emotion.

There was no point feeling angry or sad now. At this point in time, what he needed to do was stay calm, achieve absolute calmness. Letting his emotions affect his decision would be totally unhelpful to the current situation.

He forced himself to stay calm and allowed the palm that was clenching the sword hilt to turn white.

He first had to get close to Tian Kuan because he lacked long-range offensive attacks. The sudden attack would only work if he could prevent Tian Kuan from sensing his presence.

Very soon, Ai Hui confirmed his plan of attack and decided to approach Tian Kuan silently from the right side of his back. Even though he needed to make an extra effort to reach that position, he did not mind as it would be advantageous to his attack. Tian Kuan was using his right hand to hold his master. If he could attack fast enough and hack Tian Kuan's right shoulder, he might be able to save his master.

He was not feeling too well. His body was extremely weary and his elemental energy was almost depleted. Despite this, he still decided to get close to Tian Kuan first.

Only by getting close to Tian Kuan would he then have the opportunity to strike.

Ai Hui suppressed his last trace of anger. Like an experienced hunter, he started to close in on his prey.

He did not think about what would happen if he failed. Various plans appeared in his mind and he tried to find the loopholes in each plan.

There was only one chance with no room for failure.

He lowered his waist and used the debris as cover, beginning to execute his plan.

"We have nothing to talk about."

Han Yuqin’s facial expression returned to normal and her tone was tranquil and calm.

"My husband might be in your hands, but if you think that you can use him to threaten me, that would be a big mistake. We have lived for many years and as long as we can save Central Pine City, we don’t mind sacrificing our lives. Let him go and I promise to let you leave this place."

"Let me leave this place?" Tian Kuan smirked. "I think Master Han has mistaken my intention. I’m the one who would let all of you leave this place. You see, all along we haven’t had many conflicts between us, so why bother fighting amongst ourselves? As long as all of you are willing to retreat from Central Pine City,

you all will be able to leave this place safely and Teacher Wang will also be safe and sound."

His tone was calm and unhurried. Even though he was facing a Grandmaster, he did not show the slightest bit of fear, displaying an elegant demeanor. He could feel the blood spiritual force in his body transforming. An endless stream of energy was flowing into the depths of his body.

A feeling of euphoria gushed into him.

He was overjoyed. If he could obtain victory, he would definitely attain a breakthrough in his base level.

"Since you're so arrogant, there's nothing for us to talk about," Han Yuqin replied with a solemn tone. "My husband and I each have one foot in the grave. If we die, then so be it."

"Die?" Tian Kuan put on an astonished face, as if he'd heard something incredible. "Why would I let both of you die? How can a dead person have value? Furthermore, there are many things in this world that are more terrifying than death, and I happen to be specialized in them."

Following which, his left hand pulled up Wang Shouchuan's left palm and spread his fingers.

Crack!

One of Wang Shouchuan’s fingers had been crushed.

Wang Shouchuan’s body squirmed. The intense pain made him want to struggle, but the hand grabbing his throat was like a metal pincer, rendering him immobile. He could not make any sound and his body trembled uncontrollably.

"Bastard!" Anger erupted upon Han Yuqin’s face. Her aura of killer intent pervaded the air.

"You see, it’s just the beginning and Master Han already can’t take it," teased Tian Kuan. "Do you wish to kill me now? It seems giving your husband some enjoyment is a good idea. How? Do you want to give it a try?"

Crack!

Another of Wang Shouchuan’s fingers was crushed.

Han Yuqin’s entire body trembled and the elemental energy around her began to undulate. Her cape fluttered and the heavenly glow that was shining on her became unstable.

"You have been husband and wife for so many years, it would be too cruel if you were to kill him with your own hands, but what can you do about it? This world is supposed to be cruel. You can’t do it, right? Actually, if you think about it, how can the life of an old fogey be compared to the lives of the many people here? If he dies, then so be it. Doesn’t everything come with a price?"

Han Yuqin trembled even harder. The glowing, multi-colored stairs beneath her feet started to dim.

The cracking sound rang across Ai Hui's ears. Ai Hui stopped in his tracks, but quickly recovered his pace. His facial expression did not change and his movements remained silent, appearing as though he was unaffected by what was going on.

He reached his target's position.

He raised his head and looked at Tian Kuan in the sky.

Right now, Tian Kuan was not only holding his master's neck with his right hand, his left hand was also holding his master's left hand. There was no point in only hacking off Tian Kuan's right arm.

The worst thing was that the elemental energy in Ai Hui's body had depleted.

When the golden needle was being nailed, the A-1 unit had encountered several blood fiends and had fought an intense battle. Everyone, including Ai Hui, was extremely exhausted.

There must be a plan.

Ai Hui told himself.

"Do you need help?"

A faint voice suddenly came from behind Ai Hui.

Ai Hui froze. He abruptly turned around and the beautiful image of a red-dressed girl appeared before him. Her long red sleeves were drifting like two traces of red smoke. Her beautiful eyes looked deeply at Ai Hui and her luscious red lips curled into an alluring smile.

It was her!

One Thousand Yuan!

Ai Hui’s eye pupils dilated.

"You’re the first one to compliment me and say that I’m beautiful, even though I paid one thousand yuan for it." the red-dressed girl blinked her eyes intently. "Perhaps we can make a deal."

Ai Hui stared at her, not saying a single word.

"Don’t stare at me like that, you look so fierce." the red-dressed girl put on an innocent look and stuck out her tongue. "You don’t have much time left."

Suddenly, a ravishing scarlet plum blossom appeared on her snow-white forehead. The blood plum blossom drifted out of her forehead and landed in her palm. Its bright shine resembled that of her red lips.

"This costs more than one thousand yuan. Once you eat it, you will become capable of killing him off. Of course, since this is a deal, there's a price to pay. I will collect some interest from you." The red-dressed girl's face turned white while her gaze seemed to be in stupor.

Ai Hui did not respond.

"Even though I am somewhat taking advantage of your current situation..." The red-dressed girl's smile became increasingly sweet. "You don't have many choices left. This is your only way out."

The glistening plum blossom displayed an indescribable demonic aura.

Tian Kuan's excited voice resounded through the air, sounding as if he had thought of something fun. "I have just thought of a better way."

He squinted his eyes and a sinister sneer appeared on his face. Han Yuqin's reaction was far more intense than he'd expected. The elemental energy surrounding Han Yuqin was becoming chaotic. From this, Tian Kuan had come up with a conjecture, that Han Yuqin's status of Grandmaster was a temporary one. She did not go

through a legitimate breakthrough!

She must have used some special technique to temporarily raise her base level.

Right now, her emotions were under intense provocation, causing her to lose control of her temporary base level and elemental energy. On the contrary, the blood spiritual force in Tian Kuan's body continued to rise. He was excited as he sensed that he was about to achieve a breakthrough.

In his eyes, Han Yuqin was like a whetstone. One could only come across a pseudo-Grandmaster level whetstone serendipitously.

Achieving victory in this confrontation was the key to his breakthrough!

It would be a memorable event for him to use the corpse of a pseudo-Grandmaster as a stepping stone to achieve his breakthrough.

He gave a pondering smile, resembling an executioner tightening the noose on a prisoner's neck.

"How about I turn him into a blood elementalist?"

A drop of blood seeped out from Tian Kuan's fingertip and stayed there like a dewdrop.

Pfff. Along with the drop of blood, Tian Kuan’s taut finger suddenly plunged into Wang Shouchuan’s shoulder.

"I’m actually doing this for his own good. His vitality is weak and he doesn’t have many days of life left. Becoming a blood elementalist will allow him to live a bit longer. You see, both of you can still spend the rest of your lives together. Such a heartwarming scene. An elementalist and a blood elementalist living together to a ripe old age in conjugal bliss."

Han Yuqin’s face was filled with agony. The dazzling rainbow stairs below her feet had completely collapsed. The elemental energy around her body started burning with a crackle.

Even her hair looked as if it was burning, gradually disappearing.

"Shouchuan, you must help me."

This was her favourite sentence that she had always said to Wang Shouchuan when they were young. She was always arrogant and brash, but as long as she said this sentence, he would never reject her. Countless memories swept through her mind like a tidal wave. The more heartwarming they were, the more pain she felt.

It was because of her that he ended up like this.

Ignited by the chaotic elemental energy, her overflowing tears were mixed with blood and fire, flowing down her cheeks.

Tian Kuan released the hand that was grasping Wang Shouchuan’s neck and held his arm instead.

Terrifying streaks of blood traces appeared on Wang Shouchuan’s face. He shrieked in pain, "Kill me, kill me!"

"Kill you?"

"We will have to see if Master Han is ruthless enough to do it or not." Tian Kuan sneered as he tightly held Wang Shouchuan’s body.

"Kill me..."

Wang Shouchuan’s scream became a blur.

Upon hearing his master’s scream, Ai Hui emotionlessly took the glistening blood plum flower and popped it in his mouth.

Just as the red-dressed girl revealed an insidious smile, Ai Hui said coldly, "I will destroy the Blood of God."

The red-dressed girl’s smile froze.

Blood of God... How did he know about the Blood of God?

Ai Hui did not look at her anymore. Clenching the Dragonspine in his hand, he turned around and faced Tian Kuan's direction.

His body was filled with a mysterious power, emitting an unusual ice-cold aura.

His craggy face had deep and distinct lines, looking grave and stern. He appeared as if he was witnessing a farce that had nothing to do with him, completely emotionless.

Mistress was on the brink of collapse…

An image of his master flaunting his plan like it was some kind of treasure appeared In Ai Hui's mind. The pride on his master's face seemed to tell Ai Hui that he had no regrets if he died as long as he could help his wife.

His master's body was struggling non-stop. His low, deep shriek was filled with agony, despair, and the desire to die.

Since he desired death, would he have no regrets only if he died? He would rather be dead than see his works destroyed? He would rather be dead than see his pride crushed?

Just yesterday, Ai Hui had still been thinking about bringing his master and mistress to the Old Territory and opening an embroidery workshop there for them, to accompany them through their twilight years.

There were no more twilight years.

Ai Hui felt that he had fallen into an endless abyss. The freezing darkness engulfed him, but he knew that there was one last thing he had to do.

He had to defend the pride of his master and mistress.

The red-dressed girl's eye pupils shrunk abruptly when Ai Hui disappeared into thin air. Given her strength, how could she not see how Ai Hui disappeared?

The sky suddenly darkened as night fell upon the city.

Splendid radiance blossomed in the dark night.

When the Night Epiphyllum blossoms, the dark night shall descend.

Numerous epiphyllum flowers floated down from the sky, forming a rain of light that resembled a poignant painting.

Tian Kuan's eyes suddenly shrunk. The blood spiritual force in his body erupted. Just as his body was about to go to work, it froze abruptly.

He lowered his head and looked at his chest. A sword had pierced through his chest. His eyes were filled with disbelief.

Wang Shouchuan’s body relaxed and looked at the blade sticking out of his chest. He recognized it as Ai Hui’s sword. The struggle on his face faded like a receding tide. A peaceful look appeared upon his face as blood foam spurted out from his mouth.

His mouth curled into a smile. He could not see Ai Hui, but he still spoke with an unclear tone. "Good boy."

Han Yuqin stared blankly at Wang Shouchuan.

Wang Shouchuan turned his head with difficulty. His vision was blurry and he could only see a vague figure. He felt as if he had returned to the day he’d first met her when he was just eighteen years old. The timid young man had not dared to look her straight in the eyes.

They’d walked together and grown old together.

But it was a pity that they couldn’t die together.

He used his last bit of strength and waved goodbye to her.

Upon seeing Wang Shouchuan closing his eyes peacefully, Han Yuqin’s tears once more flowed out uncontrollably. A long whistle resounded through the air. Intense, sword-like sunlight pierced through the thick layer of cloud and darkness once more. Flames started to burst into existence around her body. The Five Elements Bracelet hovering above her head started to spin.

The elemental energy burned her body. She looked like a phoenix standing in the midst of blazing flames, serene and majestic.

Her delicate hands glided through the air and a beam of light shot out. That was her thread and needle.

Numerous beams of light gathered from all directions and swirled around her body, resembling a shoal of fish that frolicked in the sea.

Her slender, snow-white arms rose above her head as she spun her body, looking as if she was dancing and singing.

Shouchuan, this is what you taught me.

Shouchuan, this is the work that you put your heart and soul into.

The light beams swirled along with her body, then shot up into the sky, flying swiftly towards every corner of Central Pine City, and plunged into the ground. Central Pine City was like an enormous piece of cloth while the light beams were throbbing needles and threads, shuttling back and forth through the city.

The red-dressed girl’s facial expression changed dramatically and she hurriedly retreated.

The color of blood that had engulfed Central Pine City faded. Plants and trees emerged from the ground and grew rapidly at visible speeds, spreading the color of lush green throughout Central Pine City. The debris and ruins began to wiggle. Then, as if there were a pair of invisible hands moving and repairing them, the debris disappeared and the buildings returned to their initial state, as good as new.

Time seemed to be turning back.

Central Pine City had returned to its former glory.

A dazzling glow engulfed all of Central Pine City.

Tian Kuan, who was pierced by the Dragonspine, disintegrated into ashes before he could even scream in pain. Wang Shouchuan’s body also disintegrated into ashes, leaving one intact arm behind.

Ai Hui instinctively caught his master’s arm and descended from the sky.

A lustre landed beside Ai Hui. It was Han Yuqin. Her body was engulfed in flames and her flesh continued to melt. She looked at Ai Hui and said, "Good boy, Master and Mistress need to thank you."

Her gaze contained an array of emotions. Gratitude, thankfulness, pity, and worry.

If not for Ai Hui, everything that they had worked so hard for would have gone down the drain. All the lives that were sacrificed would have been meaningless. The pain and suffering Ai Hui had to go through for making this decision far exceeded what anyone could imagine.

Ai Hui pursed his lips tightly.

"Ai Hui, you are very capable, help Mistress to take good care of your Senior Mingxiu."

"Master!" Mingxiu sobbed.

Han Yuqin took Wang Shouchuan’s arm from Ai Hui. As usual, she tightly interlocked her fingers with Wang Shouchuan’s. With a gentle look on her face, she reminded Ai Hui, "Mistress has to go now. Ai Hui, Mingxiu, bury me and your Master together."

A burst of flames shot up into the sky. Her body was completely devoured by the flames. Only the hand that was holding Wang Shouchuan’s hand did not burn.

When the flames had extinguished, two tightly clasped hands remained.

Ai Hui was stupefied. He carefully picked up the pair of tightly interlocked hands.

A bean-sized drop of rain landed on his hand. In the blink of an

eye, torrents of rain came pouring down. In a short period of time, the city was shrouded by rain and fog.

The plan of ‘treating the city as a piece of cloth’ was a success. The five elemental energies in Central Pine City had united. Blood fiends and blood elementalists could no longer stay in the city. Central Pine City was finally safe. However, not a single bit of joy could be found on anyone’s face. No one had expected the last battle to be so devastating.

Upon witnessing how Wang Shouchuan and Han Yuqin sacrificed themselves and died in such a manner, everyone was filled with complex feelings.

Shi Xueman looked at Ai Hui with concern; he was digging a grave in the rain. He rejected everyone’s help and dug the muddy, water-filled grave together with Mingxiu using their bare hands.

Shi Xueman simply could not imagine the pain and grief Ai Hui was feeling now.

Fatty suddenly blurted out, "In the Wilderness, whenever I dug a grave, Ai Hui would never help me. He doesn’t help dead people dig their graves. He always said that it doesn’t matter if a dead person is buried or not."

Everyone was speechless.

Ai Hui carefully placed the pair of tightly interlocked hands into

the grave and then properly covered them up with soil. Mingxiu handed over a wooden tablet and Ai Hui wrote the inscription ‘The Grave of Master and Mistress’ on the wooden tablet in crooked handwriting.

He carefully stuck the wooden tablet into the soil.

He kneeled before the grave and stared at it, allowing the rain to smack him across his face like a stone statue.

He had lost his master and mistress.

Chapter 270: Three Years Later

Three years later.

Silver Mist Sea, Peace City.

Peace City was a new and developing medium-sized city at the lower reaches of the Silver Mist River.

Ninety percent of the cities in the Silver Mist Sea were distributed across the Silver Mist River. The size of a city depended on the reach of the river it was located at. There were a total of forty-two cities in the upper reaches of the river and more than half of them were large-sized cities. The city located at the far end of the river's upper reaches, which was also considered the center of the Silver Mist Sea, was called Silver City. This city was the largest city in the entire Silver Mist Sea.

At the middle reach of the river, the number of large-sized cities reduced sharply. They were replaced by dispersed small-sized and medium-sized cities.

At the lower reaches of the river, it was hard for one to even see a medium-sized city. The river's lower reaches were mainly filled with small towns.

There was nothing weird about this. Towards the lower reaches of the Silver Mist River, the metal elemental energy in the river became extremely thin. After the metal elemental energy was divided among numerous cities in the middle reaches and upper

reaches of the river, only leftover metal elemental energy was leftover for the river's lower reaches. Naturally, capable and experienced elementalists were not willing to stay in such an area.

Nowadays, the water level of the Silver Mist River was continuing to drop. The successive battles over the last three years had caused the collection of artifact remnants to become increasingly difficult. Without a large supply of artifact remnants, the amount of metal elemental energy in the Silver Mist Sea declined sharply every year. This could be verified by the number of times the Silver Mist Sea opened its sea lock per month. Before the blood catastrophe, the sea lock would open twice, once at the start of the month and again at the end of it. Surging metal elemental currents would carry a huge amount of artifact remnants and flow along the expansive river channel that led to Palette Cloud Village. Nowadays, however, the sea lock of the Silver Mist Sea would only open once a month. Today's metal elemental currents could not be compared to those of the past.

Peace City's flourishing had started two years ago.

In the past, Peace City was rather famous for its special local product, blackshell mica. Blackshell mica was a unique cross-bred species between mica species from the Silver Mist River and Peace City. As they were black in color and contained the gloss of shellfish, they were named blackshell mica. Blackshell mica was a fantastic dual-type material; it was both metal attributed and water attributed.

The reason why Peace City could become the only medium-sized city in the lower reaches of the Silver Mist River was its strategic

geographical location. It was located on the border of the Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village.

During the three years of war, instead of withering, Peace City prospered. It had jumped from a small-sized city to a medium-sized city, all thanks to its strategic location

Compared to the Silver Mist Sea, Palette Cloud Village was less affected by the war.

Unlike the Silver Mist Sea, which needed a huge amount of artifact remnants to generate metal elemental energy, Palette Cloud Village's cloud spring did not need man-made means to increase its supply.

The Avalon of Five Elements was only left with the Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village. Between these two places, their relationship had become much tighter and their trade ties had strengthened significantly.

Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner had fallen into the hands of the Blood of God. Due to the enmity between the Avalon of Five Elements and Blood of God, the possibility of them having trade relations was zero.

It was a different scenario for the Jadeite Forest. When the Jadeite Forest first established independence, the Avalon of Five Elements reacted strongly. However, with Grandmaster Dai Gang overseeing the place, the Duanmu family's support, and the completely intact Deathgrass and Truewood Divisions, the Avalon

of Five Elements, whose power had been greatly reduced, could not do anything about the Jadeite Forest.

The higher-ups of the Avalon of Five Elements also realized that it would be disastrous if they were attacked from both sides. Hence, they took the initiative to display goodwill towards the Jadeite Forest.

Similarly, the Blood of God also did not want to be attacked from both sides and thus also needed to get into Jadeite Forest's good books.

Reportedly, the Blood of God and Avalon of Five Elements had sent out their own diplomatic missions to win the support of Jadeite Forest. Even if they could not win Jadeite Forest's support, they could at least prevent them from supporting the other side.

The Jadeite Forest was benefitting from both sides and did not have to worry about its trade being cut off.

The products from Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner were transported to Jadeite Forest, then from Jadeite Forest to Palette Cloud Village, and finally to the Silver Mist Sea. Despite the relations among the three factions, this trade route was unusually busy.

Being situated at a spot the trade route must pass through, Peace City flourished rapidly.

Numerous companies would set up branches and warehouses in these small towns where trading caravans would pass.

Sea Pacific Enterprise was considered a rather powerful company.

Not having many customers in the afternoon, Su Qingye felt extremely sleepy.

A shop assistant walked over and said, "Qingye, I heard that Dragonrise Training Hall has opened a branch here. Tomorrow is its opening day and there's going to be a performance. Do you want to go together to take a look?"

"Dragonrise Training Hall? The one in Silver City?" Su Qingye became slightly awake.

"Other than the one in Silver City, where else is there a Dragonrise Training Hall?" The shop assistant sneered.

"I'm not going." Su Qingye shook his head. "Tomorrow I'm going to the training hall to practise my swordplay."

"Qingye, don't you intend to switch to a different training hall? Given Dragonrise Training Hall's capability, you will definitely be better off there!" The shop assistant egged Su Qingye on.

"I'm not switching," Su Qingye mumbled.

"Alright then, I shall go myself." The shop assistant shrugged his shoulder.

Su Qingye was an elegant and handsome young man. He was kind-hearted and affable. He was not harsh and snobbish towards his subordinates and hence, everyone liked him and behaved more casual around him.

After being disturbed by the shop assistant, Su Qingye's sleepiness had completely disappeared.

At his age, he should have been attending school at the Induction Ground, but after the start of the blood catastrophe three years ago, the Induction Ground had become a disaster area. There were not many survivors from that place. In the past, children that were of appropriate age had to study at the Induction Ground. With the loss of the Induction Ground, everyone had no place to attend school.

The Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner had fallen into the hands of Blood of God, the Jadeite Forest had become an independent faction, and the Thirteen Divisions had undergone assassinations, mutinies, ambushes, terrible losses, and many rebuilding processes. Given these successive major events, coupled with the three consecutive years of war, how would the higher-ups have the time to think about rebuilding the Induction Ground?

The loss of the Induction Ground had resulted in the rise of training halls. Unlike those influential aristocratic families, most

families did not have an abundance of resources and famed teachers. Training halls had become their only option.

Even though these training halls could not be compared to the Induction Ground, they were still able to teach the students a lot of things. Furthermore, these training halls taught their students very practical techniques that could be used in an actual battle, which was extremely suitable for the current situation.

The flourishing of Peace City attracted many elementalists to set up training halls. Right now, there were hundreds of training halls in Peace City. Every month, prominent training halls would set up branches there.

In many people's eyes, Peace City's market possessed great potential.

Initially, Su Qingye had not attended a training hall and instead worked at his family-owned company. Sea Pacific Enterprise was not really huge and did not have many customs. His parents felt that it would be best if he did not fight on the front lines and inherit their business instead.

However, the war did not show any sign of ending and instead became increasingly intense as the days went by.

The war between the Avalon of Five Elements and Blood of God had extended from Yellow Sand Corner and the Silver Mist Sea to the Old Territory. The huge population of the Old Territory and the enormous amount of artifact remnants there had become the

resources that both sides fought for desperately. The unresolvable enmity between the two sides reached a boiling point.

The internal situation of the Avalon of Five Elements had also become unstable. The conflicts between the new citizens and the aristocratic families became increasingly fierce. During the process of rebuilding the Thirteen Divisions, there were rumors that the candidates for division leaders were being selected from aristocratic families. This had stirred up strong resentment among the new citizens. Jadeite Forest seized the opportunity to bring in a prominent figure selected from the new citizens.

In such unstable times, the livelihood of businesses was severely threatened. Trade routes were no longer safe, the number of desperate crime-doers increased, and public security began to worsen.

The worst thing was, it was very difficult to hire guards.

Lives were lost at a terrifying rate on the front line. Those who were capable would be deployed there. The Thirteen Divisions, which held an abundance of resources, also held a huge captivating power over those talented and ambitious young men.

Joining the war was the fastest way for one to progress in power and status. Those who stood out during the blood catastrophe three years ago had become powerful and prominent individuals in the Avalon of Five Elements.

This was something that one could not achieve during peacetime.

Blood-filled war provided ambitious individuals with a grand platform on which they could perform.

Those capable elementalists were not willing to stay in a small place like Peace City. Those companies that were under the wings of the aristocratic families did not need to worry about these problems. Those small-sized and medium-sized companies like Sea Pacific Enterprise, on the other hand, needed to settle these problems by themselves.

In chaotic times, those who were rich but did not have the ability to protect themselves would become targets for covetous people.

On a particular day, a terrifying crime occurred in Peace City that shocked the entire city.

Red Jewel Enterprise had hired a batch of guards, but it turned out that the guards were bandits in disguise. Their company was robbed of everything and all of the three hundred members in their clan were killed.

The next day, Su Qingye found himself a training hall to enroll into.

The safest way was to train and nurture their own guards.

The training hall that Su Qingye had enrolled in had a very weird name. On the first day of his enrollment, he'd already felt that the

teacher was someone who had an eccentric temperament.

That training hall was opened three years ago in Peace City, not too long after the blood catastrophe broke out. It was one of the first few training halls that were set up in Peace City.

It was a small training hall, with only one teacher and a sand puppet.

The teacher was very young, around twenty-plus years old. It was likely that that he'd come to Peace City to set up a training hall after he'd been injured during the blood catastrophe. That was before Peace City had flourished.

There was also a workshop in the training hall. Su Qingye felt that the teacher was more interested in the workshop than the training hall itself.

Perhaps the workshop was the teacher's full-time job and the training hall was his part-time job?

Su Qingye was not in the mood to look after the shop. After saying goodbye to one of the employees, he left. When the young master wanted to slip away from his job, the employees of course did not dare to complain.

Su Qingye stepped onto the street and summoned his sand puppet, which then transformed into a sand leopard. Su Qingye mounted the sand leopard and rode it.

Three years ago, when Su Qingye's father saw that the teacher had a sand puppet, he mistook him for an earth elementalist and paid a considerable amount of tuition fees for his son to enroll in the training hall. When Su Qingye's father found out that the teacher was a metal elementalist, he was extremely vexed, but since the tuition fees had been paid, his father had no choice but to give the training hall a try.

Su Qingye had stayed in that training hall until today.

Actually, the sand leopard was not really suitable for riding as its movements were extremely jerky. Despite that, Su Qingye felt that riding on a sand leopard was cool.

The streets were bustling with activity. The prosperous Peace City did not have any trace of having been through a war. Other than the fully-armored elementalists that flew through the sky, bringing about the smell of war and blood, this place was like Xanadu.

Su Qingye had asked the teacher before, what was war like? In the end, he'd been punished by the teacher to do six hundred sets of quicksand lunges, causing his legs to turn numb. He almost had to crawl home.

From that day onward, he did not dare to ask about this kind of thing anymore. He became even more curious. After all, his teacher was only twenty-plus years old.

After making several turns, he finally arrived at a secluded area and a dilapidated warehouse-transformed training hall appeared before him.

Beside the main entrance of the training hall, there was a huge wooden signboard that had three words written on it.

Swordsman Training Hall.

Chapter 271: The Lost Time

The crude bathtub was filled with a black medicinal water, giving off a pungent smell that pervaded the air.

Suddenly, the tranquil water surface bubbled as a craggy, stern-looking face slowly floated up. The black medicinal water slid off both sides of the face, resembling a sea monster that emerged from the sea.

Splash.

A half-naked guy sat up from the bathtub.

"Ai Hui, how do feel?" Lou Lan asked as the dark red glow in his eyes kept on flickering.

"Very terrible," a lazy voice replied.

As Ai Hui stood up from the medicinal water, the black liquid trickled along his well-defined muscles as it flowed. His body was not powerfully built and even looked somewhat lean. However, any movements he made or any slight twitches of his muscles would involuntarily release a dangerous aura.

On the left side of his dripping wet chest, there was an image of a glistening, beautiful, blood-colored plum blossom.

"25% of my elemental energy has been devoured by it."

Ai Hui stepped out of the bathtub, picked up a clean towel from the wooden rack, and wiped off the medicinal water on his body. With a casual tone, he said, "One Thousand Yuan must have been a loan shark in her previous life. The interest she collects is even more ruthless than mine."

"Lou Lan believes that student Bangwan wouldn’t think so," Lou Lan replied with a serious look on his face.

Ai Hui, who was putting on his clothes, laughed out loud. "An immoral fellow like him has no right to criticize others. How’s our ingrate doing recently?"

"From the news, he doesn’t seem to be doing well." Lou Lan continued, "Recently, there has been quite a lot of news regarding student Bangwan."

Immediately, Ai Hui became excited. "Choose some headlines and tell me."

With a bang, Lou Lan transformed into a row of rolling words made of sand.

"The Jadeite Prince Spent His Whole Night In A Brothel!"

"The Jadeite Prince Heavily Drunk!""

"The Jadeite Prince Drowning His Sorrows With Alcohol!"

Ai Hui was slightly shocked. "He owes someone money again?"

With a bang, Lou Lan transformed into another row of rolling words.

"Duanmu Kang: My Son Is A Prodigy!"

"Dai Gang: Huanghun Is A Genius, He Needs To Find A Girl That Can Match Up To Him."

"The Avalon Of Five Elements: Jadeite Forest And Avalon Of Five Elements Are Of The Same Roots, We Ought To Cement The Old Ties By Marriage."

"Blood Of God: In This New Era, The Duanmu Family Needs To Bring In A Contemporary Young Mistress."

"Jadeite Forest: We Will Take These Opinions Into Serious Consideration."

Ai Hui could not help but laugh when the image of Duanmu Huanghun drowning his sorrows with alcohol appeared in his mind. He was rejoicing in Duanmu Huanghun’s misfortune. "Hahaha, he has to pay for whatever mistakes he made."

"Qingye is here." Lou Lan transformed back into his usual form with a bang.

When Su Qingye walked into the training hall, the first thing he saw was an eye-catching message tree that looked extremely ancient. Every time he saw this message tree, he could not help but purse his lips. The teacher was so young, but why was he so old-fashioned?

This message tree looked like a defective product that was picked up from a rubbish heap.

Nowadays, there were various types of cool and trendy message trees. Some were decorated with dazzling lights, while others could even simultaneously project images and talk. His teacher’s ancient message tree, which only allowed written messages, had been outdated for an unknown number of years.

His teacher was like an old man.

Su Qingye cursed his teacher silently in his heart. However, when he saw his teacher, he quickly straightened his body and greeted him respectfully, "Teacher."

Ai Hui glanced at him and asked, "There’s no lesson today, so why are you here?"

"Teacher, Dragonrise Training Hall is setting up a branch in this city," Su Qingye replied enthusiastically.

"Dragonrise Training Hall?" Ai Hui shook his head. "Never heard of it before."

Su Qingye widened his eyes and stared at his teacher. However, his teacher's facial expression remained calm, appearing not to be lying at all. Su Qingye raised his voice and asked, "Teacher, how come you don't even know about Dragonrise Training Hall? It's one of the biggest training halls! It's a mega training hall that has more than 50 branches!"

"Is it? Wow, they are really powerful!" Ai Hui raised his eyebrows and put a surprised look on his face. However, his acting skills were too poor, and he did not seem sincere at all.

"Teacher, how can you be so unambitious?" Su Qingye was slightly annoyed.

"It seems that you are very free." Ai Hui looked at Su Qingye intently. "Today is such a beautiful, sunny day. Let's see, what would be the most suitable thing to do on such a day?"

The moment Su Qingye saw his teacher's gaze, he could sense that something was not right. Then, upon hearing his teacher's question, he immediately turned listless. He lowered his head and replied listlessly, "Training."

"That's right!" Ai Hui's face brimmed with approval.

He turned around to Lou Lan and instructed, "Lou Lan, give him 200 drill sets of the sand puppet counter technique. He can go home and have his dinner only if he successfully counters more than half of the attacks."

"No problem, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied cheerfully.

The sand puppet counter technique was one of the most commonly-used survival techniques for earth elementalists. This technique involved using the sand puppet as a shield to block an enemy's attack before carrying out a counter-attack.

The difficulty of this technique was very high. Whenever a sand puppet was attacked, especially when the attacker was very powerful, the connection between the sand puppet and the earth elementalist would be broken. Hence, it would be very difficult for the earth elementalist to use the sand puppet to carry out a counter-attack afterward.

He had to successfully counter more than half of the attacks...

Su Qingye's face turned ashen, and he stammered, "Teacher, tonight there will be guests coming over to my house, so I can't be late..."

"For the sake of your guests, you must put in more effort!" Ai Hui made an encouraging gesture and cheered him on.

"Qingye, come on!" Lou Lan happily cheered for Song Qingye as

well.

Ai Hui waved his hand and left the training hall.

Peace City had changed significantly since the day he first arrived. When he had just arrived, Peace City was just a small town like Central Pine City. Now, it had become a prosperous city that bustled with activity.

The city was mostly made up of water elementalists and metal elementalists. Most wood elementalists had chosen to seek refuge in the Jadeite Forest with the Duanmu family as their leader. Meanwhile, the ambitious Deep Sea Enterprise, which was mainly established by new citizens, was trying to build a commercial empire.

As for fire elementalists and earth elementalists, their situation was now extremely dire. After the Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner fell into the hands of the Blood of God, materials that could be easily bought in the past were currently very hard to find on the market. The dire situations of the fire elementalists and earth elementalists had even affected the Avalon of Five Elements' rebuilding plans for the Thirteen Divisions.

This was also why the higher-ups of the Avalon of Five Elements tacitly allowed trade between the Blood of God, the Jadeite Forest, and the Avalon of Five Elements.

Even though trade existed, the prices of various materials had become much more expensive than before. The less affluent earth

elementalists and fire elementalists could only go to the Wilderness and hunt for dire beasts.

For the past three years, Ai Hui had been observing the Blood of God from the shadows.

The Blood of God's methods were far more vicious that he had anticipated. The surrender of the Icy Flames Division had also exceeded everyone's expectations. The Icy Flames Division's division leader, Ye Baiyi, used to be everyone's idol in the Avalon of Five Elements. No one had foreseen him leading the Icy Flames Division to surrender to the Blood of God.

Nowadays, whenever Ai Hui thought of how people in Central Pine City used to call him "Ai Baiyi," he could not help but sigh.

The Ardent Flower Division was an unyielding division, but they eventually came to a grisly end. Everyone in the division, including the division leader and vice division leader, was killed.

The Mountain King Division and Lordsand Division fell into the hands of the Blood of God almost without any resistance. When the Blood of God brought the family members of the two divisions onto the battlefield, both the divisions crumbled effortlessly.

However, after the unscrupulous and ruthless Blood of God conquered the Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner, their style of operation changed.

The Blood of God began to actively promote god elementalists, provided free materials, and built God Academy. Every child that was of a certain age had to start practicing god elementalism. They opened official positions to the public and groomed those talented god elementalists. They disregarded the family backgrounds of the candidates and attracted a lot of citizens from the Old Territory. In addition, they also banned their people from using elementalists to practice god elementalism and replaced the source with blood fiends so as to obtain blood crystals.

In three years' time, the public perception of the Blood of God had changed completely.

The higher-ups of the Blood of God were extremely mysterious. The one who usually took care of the Blood of God's daily matters was a young man named Bei Shuisheng. Reportedly, he was frequently sick since young and was an extremely fragile individual. Nonetheless, he still managed to gain the trust of the emperor of God Nation.

All of the bold and decisive measures were carried out by him. In the Blood of God, he was known by many as the "little advisor." In the Avalon of Five Elements, he was known as the "sick tiger." Most elementalists feared of him. In the Blood of God, Bei Shuisheng enjoyed high prestige and was revered by many. Even though there were countless talented individuals in the Blood of God, all of them still obediently followed his orders.

Under the management of Bei Shuisheng, the Blood of God was becoming more prosperous with each passing day.

On the contrary, the Avalon of Five Elements was on the decline. The conflicts between the new citizens and the aristocratic families were growing increasingly intense as the days passed. The lack of training grounds for earth elementalists and fire elementalists had become a serious problem. The estrangement between the Old Territory and the Avalon of Five Elements, caused by the thousands of years of aloof and remote regard by the latter toward the former, had put the Blood of God in an advantageous position over the Avalon of Five Elements in their war. The Avalon of Five Elements could not win the trust and support of the Old Territory's citizens. The proclamation of independence by the Jadeite Forest and Avalon of Five Elements' compromise on this issue had encouraged many powerful aristocratic families to work toward their own independence as well. Even the notion of expanding and becoming an independent state in the Wilderness had attracted many families. No matter where or when, the notion of occupying and becoming the king of a piece of land would always hold a captivating power over anyone.

When compared to the thriving Blood of God, the Avalon of Five Elements was like a critically damaged wagon.

Whether or not the Avalon of Five Elements emerged victorious or defeated, Ai Hui did not care at all. His enemy was the Blood of God.

Compared to three years ago, the Blood of God had now become a colossus. Its resplendence outshone the Avalon of Five Elements, but Ai Hui had not forgotten about the Battle of Central Pine City,

There was still a lush and verdant city that stood empty and

alone amid the sea of blood.

Initially, the Avalon of Five Elements tried to propagandize the Battle of Central Pine City. As the war progressed, however, there were more and more epic battles as well as more and more emergent heroes. The Battle of Central Pine City was soon forgotten by many. Few people still remembered the lone city situated in the war-torn, blood-filled Induction Ground.

Only when Shi Xueman's name was mentioned would people remember the existence of Central Pine City. After all, that was the battle that made her famous.

Shi Xueman's greatest achievement in the Avalon of Five Elements during the past three years was becoming the disciple of one of the last extant great Grandmasters, An Muda.

Besides the iron lady, the rest of the A-1 unit was also doing quite well. Occasionally, Ai Hui would see their names appearing in the news. The Blood of God was extremely vicious in attacking the Induction Ground to directly exterminate the younger generations of the Avalon of Five Elements, cutting off their reserves. The A-1 unit, which had the best war achievements among all student units, became the Avalon of Five Elements' main target to nurture and foster. One could anticipate that the members of the A-1 unit would become the backbone of Avalon of Five Elements in the future.

Ai Hui felt happy for them.

As for Fatty, after he returned to the Old Territory, he had been leading a satisfying life. He was still a kind soul after all, gathering the family members of the laborers that died during their three year stint in the Wilderness. He then formed a stronghold with them and started a business.

Reportedly, his business mainly dealt with artifact remnants and had expanded significantly, becoming rather lucrative.

On account of Duanmu Huanghun, the Blood of God did not seek trouble with Fatty either. Thus, he had been leading a comfortable life.

After knowing that everyone was leading a rather good life, Ai Hui was very happy.

Chapter 272: See You Later

Ai Hui casually waltzed into a particular shop.

When the boss of the shop saw Ai Hui, he immediately yelled, "Brother Wang!"

"Has the thing I want arrived?" Ai Hui asked amicably. His fake name was Wang Han, which he came up with to commemorate his master and mistress.

"It has arrived, it has arrived. Whatever Brother Wang wants, I will rack my brains to get it for you," the boss replied excitedly. The boss had a round face and a pair of pea-sized eyes that were filled with cheerfulness. Whenever he talked, his entire face would become unusually animated.

However, Ai Hui did not dare to underestimate the boss based on his jovial character. After staying for nearly three years in Peace City, he had yet to have an adequate understanding of the boss.

There were numerous companies in Peace City, and none of their backgrounds were simple. It was a pity that Qingye's family only dealt with big businesses, else he would patronize the Sea Pacific Enterprise.

The boss took out a box, placed it on the counter, and pushed it toward Ai Hui.

Ai Hui opened the box, and a chilly gust blasted his face. In the box, there was a square-shaped ice brick. The ice brick was sparkling and translucent, a bit smaller than the box itself, and gave off wisps of frosty white gas. Inside the ice brick, there was an ink-black cloud frozen within.

"Star-sinking Ink Cloud, one of the best ink clouds. It is stronger and more durable than black clouds. Since it is very heavy, it can't be used to make azure wings, yet it's very suitable for making small-sized shields, such as buckler shields or arm guards. Its strength lies in its malleability, but its weakness lies in its low defensive rating when compared to those customized defensive materials."

The boss talked nonstop. He was familiar with all kinds of materials. What impressed Ai Hui the most was that the boss would not only praise the strengths of a particular material, he would also elaborate on its weaknesses. He was a businessman with a good conscience.

"How much?" Ai Hui closed the box and asked bluntly.

"200,000 metal elemental energy points or water elemental energy points. If you have fire elemental energy points or earth elemental energy points, then it will be 100,000 points of each."

"All right, do I pay now or can I use weasel bristle arrows as mortgage?" Ai Hui nodded his head. The price was reasonable. Peace City was very close to Palette Cloud Village, and there was an endless stream of trading caravans that travelled to and fro between these two places. As such, the local products from Palette

Cloud Village were not that expensive.

Nowadays, the Avalon of Five Elements used elemental energy and blood crystals as its currency.

After the war broke out, the previous currency had completely collapsed. Elemental energy storage bean pods allowed elemental energy to quickly replace the traditional yuan as currency. Training, war recovery processes, workshop machinery, and everything else needed enormous amount of elemental energy. This was why elemental energy could be used as currency.

Since the Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner had fallen into the hands of the Blood of God, there was a scarcity of fire elemental energy and earth elemental energy. Therefore, these two energies were worth a lot more.

After the Blood of God promoted the rearing of blood fiends and started the mass-production of blood crystals, blood crystals quickly became their currency.

Sometimes, life worked in a funny way. Even though the Blood of God and the Avalon of Five Elements were arch-enemies, both of them used the other’s currency as well. Blood crystals play a significant role in elementalist training and the god elementalists needed to use elemental energy for their training as well.

"Weasel bristle arrows!" the boss answered without hesitation as a wide smile spread across his face. He had been waiting for Ai Hui to say this.

"20 weasel bristle arrows. I will have them sent to you in a few days' time," Ai Hui replied.

Weasel bristle arrows were actually an upgraded version of the bunny hair arrows. Since they were more powerful than bunny hair arrows, their price was higher as well.

"No rush, no rush." The boss beamed. "Brother Wang's weasel bristle arrows are really powerful. It's just that its name is somewhat awkward-sounding. 'Weasel bristle' sounds common. Right now, everyone has given it another name, See You Later"

"See You Later?" Ai Hui was baffled.

"Hahaha, weasel bristle arrows are known as '10,000 point arrows'. When you buy this arrow, you will lose tens of thousands of points. It's so expensive, so who would use it unless it's the most critical moment? Even if one wants to use it, he or she will only use it during the later part of the fight. Hence, the arrows were renamed as See You Later," the boss chuckled.

(Note: In Chinese, See You Later sounds like 'ten thousand point arrows. It's a pun)

"See You Later, this is a good name." Ai Hui found it funny as well.

"Brother Wang, can you give me slightly more arrows?" The boss

whined, "Every month you give me so few arrows, and I don’t even have enough for my regular customers. Nowadays, I don’t even think about how to make money off these arrows, but rather, I think about how not to offend my customers. Last month, there was a regular customer that I have known for 10 years, and he almost destroyed my store just because I didn’t have enough of these arrows to sell to him. I really can’t offend anymore customers."

"Don’t think I don’t know how much you sell one arrow for. You can earn at least 10,000 points for one arrow, which is a lot more than what I received. Boss, put yourself in my shoes, I still have to take care of a training hall." Ai Hui cast a look of disdain at the boss.

"Your training hall?" A disdainful look appeared on the boss’s face this time around. "How much money can you make with that training hall? How many students do you have? You’re not doing a decent job! Why don’t you take advantage of the ongoing war and earn more elemental energy points? Nothing is more practical than elemental energy points. The more you have, the sooner you can heal the injury in your body. You’re still so young, and you can’t continue wasting your life like this."

Ai Hui had bought a lot of medicines from this shop and did not hide the fact that he was injured.

Ai Hui merely smiled and did not retort the boss. The wound to his body could not be solved with elemental energy points alone. Even now, he and Lou Lan had not yet determined what exactly this blood plum blossom was. It appeared to be a parasite that was

devouring Ai Hui’s elemental energy, greatly slowing down Ai Hui’s training progress. However, the surprising thing about the blood plum blossom was that it kept on improving Ai Hui’s body.

Ai Hui’s strength, reaction time, level of sensitivity, and other physical attributes had improved significantly. The weirdest part about this whole process was Ai Hui’s recovery ability. His recovery ability was similar to that of a blood elementalists. Any open wounds he had would rapidly close up and heal without leaving a single scar.

As long as he could not get rid of the blood plum blossom, half of his life would be in the hands of One Thousand Yuan.

At this moment, a lightly armored woman entered the shop and asked, "Boss, do you have See You Later?"

Upon hearing this, the boss winked at Ai Hui. Ai Hui smiled, picked up the box, and prepared to leave.

"I’m very sorry, you have to make a reservation for See You Later. The process of making the arrows is very difficult and complicated, so there’s a limit to how many can be produced in one batch."

The boss spread out his arms with a helpless look on his face.

As Ai Hui walked past the woman, he was able to take a closer look at her. She wore purple light armor, and her short hair made

her looked neat and tidy. She looked somewhat pretty, but seemed a bit arrogant.

"30,000 points per arrow, do you have it or not?"

Ai Hui stopped in his tracks as his face turned red.

"Umm... Customer, please come in and we will talk about it." The boss immediately conceded to the woman.

Ai Hui cursed in his heart. This bastard obviously still had a stock of the arrows, yet he dared to say that he did not enough even for his regular customers. Bullsh*t!

After Ai Hui walked past the woman, he turned around and silently mouthed two words at the boss.

Price increased!

The boss's face turned white as he understood what Ai Hui meant.

Feeling pleased with himself, Ai Hui pushed open the door and left the shop.

After leaving the store, Ai Hui did not immediately go back to the training hall and walked toward the river bank.

By the time the Silver Mist River flowed to Peace City, the river water had become very thin. The silver river water began to turn halfway transparent as well. This was something that could not be helped. The Silver Mist River flowed through countless cities in the upper reach. It was already considered lucky that the river was not totally cut off by the time it reached Peace City.

An elevated passageway that connected the two opposite riverbanks was built to make things easier for people that wanted to collect water or fish artifact remnants from the river.

People no longer called the discarded artifacts "sea remains." They just called them "artifact remnants." Artifact remnants could be used to make things such as weapons, defensive equipment, armor, or azure wings. The emergence of blood crystals immediately made artifact remnants extremely valuable.

The shores on both sides of the river were filled with people. Today was the day that the sea discharge was supposed to arrive.

In the past, the sea lock of the Silver Mist Sea was opened on the first day and the fifteenth day of the month. Now, the sea lock was only opened once a month on the first day. Since Peace City was located on the lower part of the Silver Mist River’s lower reach, it was already the seventeenth day of the month by the time the sea discharge arrived.

Usually, there were few artifact remnants in the Silver Mist River. Despite the dilution of the sea discharge by the people living in the upper reach, this was the only chance for the people living in Peace City to make profits off of it.

Luckily, the metal elemental currents in the Silver Mist River were razor-sharp. There was no way people could throw a fishing net into the river to haul up artifact remnants. Otherwise, there would be nothing left for the citizens of Peace City.

Naturally, the Silver Mist Sea contained the greatest number of artifact remnants. However, the Silver Mist Sea was extremely deep, making it difficult for one to angle for these artifact remnants. Furthermore, the entry fee for the Silver Mist Sea was very expensive because only Heavenly Merit Points would be accepted. 200 Heavenly Merit Points would allow one to stay in the sea for a day and a night. How much profit an individual could make would depend on his or her capabilities. Regardless, not many people would do such thing since 200 Heavenly Merit Points was a huge sum of money.

Instead of finding a place to sit down, Ai Hui walked up the flight of stairs leading to the mountain beside the elevated passageway.

This flight of stairs was not that tall, only around 50 meters. After walking up this flight of stairs, there was a leveled hillside with various sized Three Leaves Bamboo Carts parked upon it.

Ai Hui walked up to the smallest Three Leaves Bamboo Cart and yelled, "Hey, Old Gao!"

A tall and very skinny man, Old Gao had a small pinch of a goatee under his chin. His eyes were squinty and slanted, resembling the eyes of a thief. When he saw Ai Hui, he chuckled. "Ha, I knew you

would come. Just now, I rejected a few guys who wanted to rent my cart just to wait for you to come."

"Great! Don’t worry, I will pay more for the fare," Ai Hui smiled.

Old Gao had excellent driving technique. His control over the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart was unusually stable, and Ai Hui was his regular customer.

"It’s okay if you don’t pay for the fare." Old Gao laughed. "With a single glance, I could tell that the few guys who wanted to rent my cart just now are newbies. They can’t be compared to you, you’re the legendary King of Anglers. Every month I have to depend on your red packet to survive. Recently, my business has not been too good. If it was in the past, when there were two sea discharges per month, I would have led a comfortable life."

According to the custom here, anyone who was able to haul up artifact remnants would have to give a red packet of money to his or her driver. This meant that these wood elemental drivers would benefit from their customers’ good luck as well.

Among the artifact remnant anglers here, Ai Hui was a rather famous one. He would only appear when the sea discharge arrived and would have a good haul every time. All the anglers called him the King of Anglers, which implied that he would never go home empty-handed.

Upon seeing Ai Hui, many people standing nearby began to walk over and greet him. These people were mostly businessmen that

bought the artifact remnants that were hauled up. Every time, Ai Hui would sell the artifact remnants directly to them if he did not need the remnants.

Since Ai Hui was renowned for angling up artifact remnants, these businessmen paid great attention to him.

Ai Hui mixed easily with these people. Even though these businessmen were not tycoons, they were still travellers who frequently obtained bizarre and fantastic artifacts.

There were also a few unfamiliar young men that took a second glance at Ai Hui.

After Old Gao finished smoking, he patted his cart and said, "Brother Wang, get ready. It’s about time."

Ai Hui plucked a grass straw from the ground and put it in his mouth to chew. Then, he jumped into the bamboo cart with the box in hand. His ears were extremely sharp as he could already hear the roar of the sea discharge coming from afar.

The moment Old Gao stepped into the cart, his jovial demeanor disappeared and was replaced by solemness.

The Three Leaves Bamboom Cart gracefully flew up from the ground, resembling a lithe and agile swallow.

The rest of the Three Leaves Bamboo Carts on the hillside started

their engines as well. The whooshing sound from the spinning clover above the roofs of the carts started to blend together. Like a pitch-black colony of bees, they flew above the river.

As Ai Hui's cart soared above the river, he could clearly see a dazzling silver tidal wave surging toward them from the upper reach of the river.

Chapter 273: King of Anglers

Old Gao's Three Leaves Bamboo Cart was a cheap, two-seater model. In his hands, however, it was unusually lithe.

Not a single bit of the upward thrust force generated by the high-speed spinning clover on the cart's roof was wasted. As the body of the cart leaned forward slightly, the cart flew forward like a dragonfly skimming across a pond.

Old Gao did not gather with other people and flew toward the upper reaches of the river.

Ai Hui noticed that a Three Leaves Bamboo Cart was following behind them. The people on the cart were the unfamiliar ones from earlier, but he did not really care about them. Ever since he became the King of Anglers, there would be people following him whenever he was angling for artifact remnants. Some felt that he was lucky while others felt that he knew where all the good spots were. Hence, they thought that nothing could go wrong as long as they followed him.

Ai Hui did not really mind these people following him. After all, he did not own the river and the river was so huge. Where they wanted to go had nothing to do with him.

After a few times, however, these 'stalkers' realized that their profits did not increase much and so the number of people following Ai Hui decreased significantly.

This must have been the first time that these unfamiliar-looking youths had come to Peace City. The rumors about Ai Hui must have piqued their interest. Ai Hui knew their driver, Old Li, who was a well-known blabbermouth in the area. The quality of his bamboo cart was much higher than Old Gao's, but his driving techniques were inferior.

Ai Hui withdrew his gaze after taking a glance. He was happy to see these kinds of spectators. People like them were usually potential buyers. They were willing to part with their money and would buy anything that piqued their interest.

They were getting closer to the sea discharge. The deafening roar of the sea discharge resounded through the river, masking all other sounds.

"Get ready!"

Old Gao yelled at the top of his voice.

Ai Hui remained silent. All the distracting thoughts in his head disappeared in an instant.

At this moment, the people on Old Li's cart broke out in discussion.

"If you all want to watch people angling for artifact remnants, it's much better to do it in Silver City. Such a small wave, it's so boring," grumbled a youth that was around fifteen years old. As he

grumbled, he rolled his eyes as well, revealing his impatience and arrogance.

"Shut up, you're the only one who grumbles. If you don't want to watch, then get lost," an older guy berated that youth.

The youth quickly shut his mouth. Clearly, he was afraid of this older guy.

The leader of this group was a girl. She was beautiful, graceful, and gentle-looking. Like a bright moon surrounded by a myriad of stars, she sat in the center of the group of people. She spoke gently with a smile on her face. "As compared to the elders in the family, we are of very little value. If we know of any way to help the family, then we should do it. There are so many talented individuals hidden in this world. Wouldn't it be a good thing to serve our family?"

"I can't see anything special about this guy," the youth continued to grumble, refusing to admit his mistake.

"Peace City is located at the lowest part of the river's lower reaches. This is where the number of artifact remnants in the river is at its smallest. Despite this, that person is still able to obtain the nickname 'King of Anglers' and is known by many as an extraordinary talent. If we can hire him and bring him to Silver City, how big of a haul would he have? If we bring him to the Silver Mist Sea, how big of a haul would he have? It's easy to obtain blood crystals, but it's difficult to obtain artifact remnants. Tell me, did your weapons and armor drop from the sky?" The girl laughed softly, not feeling annoyed at all.

The youth was speechless. After a while, he then apologized. "All right, I was wrong."

A look of admiration appeared on everyone’s faces.

The girl continued, "In chaotic times like these, we are like a boat sailing against the current. If we don’t forge ahead, we will be driven back. If we don’t strengthen and distinguish ourselves from the rest, we will be eliminated and devoured by society. There are many reputable talents in this world, and it’s very difficult to hire them. These extraordinary individuals keep a low profile, which is actually good for us. Good preparation is the key to success. The elders are racking their brains for the family. We, as the younger generation, should do everything to the best of our ability and not slack off."

"Big Sister is right!"

A look of embarrassment appeared on everyone’s faces.

The girl chuckled when she saw everyone’s reactions. At that moment, Old Li cast a glance at them and blurted out, "I can tell that all of you are the descendants of prestigious families. However, it’s not that easy to hire Brother Wang."

Upon hearing this, a few young ones among the group became unhappy. The girl, however, did not show any sign of anger. On the contrary, she asked with curiosity, "Oh? What do you mean by that?"

Old Li remained silent.

Upon seeing Old Li's reaction, the older guy immediately understood what was going on. He threw an elemental energy bean that was worth 500 points at Old Li and said, "You better not entertain us with some rumors you heard from other people."

While controlling the bamboo cart, Old Li turned around and caught the bean, appearing as if he had eyes in the back of his head. Following which, he chuckled. "I definitely wouldn't dare to do that. Let's see, everyone in this area knows about Brother Wang. Of course, today isn't the first day that everyone knows him as the King of Anglers. Previously, there were a lot of people trying to hire him. Reportedly, betting on anglers is getting popular among the cities in the upper reaches, and a lot of people from those cities took an interest in Brother Wang's angling skills. They were willing to pay him 200,000 elemental energy points per month, on top of which there would have been a red packet for every artifact remnant that he hauls up. Even outsiders like us were green with envy when we saw what was being offered to him."

"He rejected them?" Astonishment flashed across the girl's eyes. For an elementalist that had merely attained elemental internalization, a month's salary of 200,000 elemental energy points was a huge amount. Such a salary was enough to hire a veteran elementalist who had attained elemental externalization.

It was very difficult for an elementalist who had merely attained elemental internalization to draw such a salary.

There were many elemental-internalized elementalists who earned more than 10,000 points. The average starting salary for an elemental-externalized elementalist was around 80,000 points. For those elementalists who were veterans or had unique skills, they could draw a monthly salary of 200,000 points. Some powerful individuals could even draw a monthly salary of more than 500,000 points.

"He rejected them." Old Li shook his head and looked somewhat proud. "He comes here once every month and every time he has a haul. If he’s lucky, he can make around tens of thousands of points off the artifact remnants. He has a training hall and a workshop, so he doesn’t need to put himself under that kind of restriction."

"That’s true." Not only did the girl not retort to Old Li, but she also nodded her head in agreement. Then, she changed the topic and asked, "He has a training hall?"

"Yes, he opened his training hall before Peace City became so prosperous; it was actually the first training hall in the city, but he doesn't really put much effort into it. The enrollment fee is expensive, so he doesn’t have many students." Old Li sighed. "Even though he doesn’t take my cart, I’m not angry with him. There’s nothing I can do about it. After all, Old Gao has better driving skills than me. Brother Wang is a nice person. Oh? He’s going to start soon."

Old Li’s words caught everyone’s attention. They shifted their gazes in unison toward the front.

They were still skeptical of the rumors about Ai Hui.

Old Gao’s driving techniques were extremely good. He could fly the cart very low and still maintain its stability. The surging metal elemental energy in the Silver Mist River was razor-sharp. As the cart got closer to the surface of the river, the metal elemental energy’s effect on the cart would become stronger, significantly increasing the difficulty of controlling the cart.

Ai Hui was wearing very weird-looking gloves on his hands. On every one of the glove’s fingers, there was an extremely fine silver thread. The silver threads were very long and all of them were rolled up. The tip of each silver thread was split into five hooks, resembling a soft claw.

Wearing the gloves, Ai Hui began to throw down the silver threads.

Ai Hui was extremely focused as the ten silver threads entered the river. At this point in time, the height of the sea discharge was less than 100 meters.

The bamboo cart was flying extremely low, appearing to be level with the peak of the sea discharge.

On Old Li’s cart, the older boy nodded his head and said, "He’s snatching the peak. He’s rather skillful."

The peak of the sea discharge had the biggest impact and

contained the most artifact remnants. However, the metal elemental energy at the peak had the highest volatility, so the difficulty of hauling artifact remnants out of it was also extremely high.

Those who dared to "snatch the peak" were usually skilled anglers.

Ai Hui was fully concentrated as the sea discharge was about to crash into him. The razor-sharp metal elemental energy was like numerous daggers whizzing in the air. The bamboo cart was almost level with the sea discharge and looked as if it would be hit.

If they were to get hit by the sea discharge, they would definitely die.

Only those whose base levels were above the Master level would survive a fall into the Silver Mist River. The razor-sharp metal elemental energy could easily shred one to pieces.

Boom!

The shiny sea discharge resembled a tidal wave of countless knives that were dazzling in the light. It brushed past the bottom of Old Gao’s bamboo cart with a distance of merely a few centimeters.

Ai Hui did not lose the slightest bit of his concentration. He was extremely confident in Old Gao’s driving skills.

Suddenly, the 10 silver threads that were connected to his gloves tightened as an enormous force passed through them. Ai Hui's hands remained motionless.

Within the sea discharge, the hooks on the tip of each silver thread spread open and transformed into powerful claws. The ten claws were very close to each other, lining up in a row. Ai Hui slowly channeled his elemental energy into the silver threads. The spread-open hooks on the tip of every silver thread resembled the flexible tentacles of an octopus.

Suddenly, one of the tentacles made contact with an object. The silver thread the tentacle belonged to immediately shot upward with the claw tightly holding onto the object.

Following this, another silver thread made contact with an object and Ai Hui instantly reacted to it, grabbing it with the claw of that particular silver thread!

Boom!

The sea discharge whizzed past Old Gao's cart. After waiting a while longer, Ai Hui did not haul up anything else.

After procrastinating for a while, Ai Hui flicked his wrists upward and the 10 silver threads rolled back up to him. Two artifact remnants were caught by the silver threads.

"Haha, two red packets!" Old Gao whistled.

Ai Hui took a look at the artifact remnants in his palms. Both of them were not really huge, around the size of his thumb. One was bronze-colored while the other one was black. Ai Hui shook his head and said, "The artifact remnants are getting smaller and smaller."

"It's considered not bad that you still managed to haul up some artifact remnants," Old Gao replied. "It's getting increasingly difficult to collect artifact remnants these days. In the past, they used to be rubbish that no one wanted, but now they have become so expensive. If this goes on, I think that all the artifact remnants in the river and the sea will be gone. Reportedly, people are throwing metal elemental ores into the Silver Mist Sea. How can that be compared to artifact remnants?"

Ai Hui carefully put down the two artifact remnants and threw two elemental energy beans toward Old Gao. The color and luster of these elemental energy beans were different from the usual ones. These beans were dazzling with a golden radiance. These were the elemental energy beans that were worth 10,000 points each.

Before the blood catastrophe, elemental energy beans were rare objects that could only be exchanged with Heaven Merit Points.

As the war progressed, the supply of elemental energy beans was completely used up. The Elders Guild spent a huge amount of manpower and resources into developing the technology to mass-produce elemental energy beans. Even though they did not manage

to develop consumable elemental energy beans in the end, they did manage to develop elemental energy beans that could store energy.

This type of elemental energy bean could not replenish elemental energy simply by eating it; however, they could store elemental energy that had been refined. The elemental energy in these beans could then be transferred into one's body through the Circulatory Cycle Revolution when he or she was training or resting.

Even though the beans could not be used directly during battles, they were still very practical. Initially, a lot of elementalists channeled their elemental energy into the beans during peacetime and then used the beans to replenish their elemental energy when they rested during battles.

Eventually, everyone began to use the beans to exchange for items. Eventually, this practice was popularized and the elemental energy beans became a form of currency in the world of elementalists.

Old Gao was grinning from ear to ear. He'd made 20,000 elemental energy points in a day, an achievement that everyone would be envious of.

"Let's go back now."

"Alright!"

The people on Old Li's cart were dumbstruck.

How could it be possible?

The girl was also shocked. Angling for artifact remnants was seen by many as a job that required a lot of patience. Before one could have a haul, he or she must wait for a long period of time.

Given Ai Hui's speed... was he snatching the artifact remnants?

The girl could not help but take a look behind her. On both river banks, densely-packed anglers had not even started angling, and yet, Ai Hui had already gone home.

King of Anglers!

Chapter 274: Demonic Remnant and Unyielding Bamboos

Ai Hui was slightly disappointed that the group of people on Old Li's bamboo cart did not approach him to buy the artifact remnants. He had no idea that they had not yet recovered from the shock of seeing his performance just now.

On the contrary, the businessmen waiting on the hillside were used to seeing such a performance. They crowded around Old Gao's bamboo cart before it even landed.

For a large city like Silver City, there were many more artifact remnants in the market. The pavilion closest to the water enjoyed the moonlight first. Ever since people discovered the value of artifact remnants, the contest over artifact remnants had become increasingly intense.

The Silver Mist Sea was under the tight control of the Elders Guild and various aristocratic families could not get a share of it. As such, whenever the sea lock was opened and the sea discharge was released, various families would come forth and plunder the river. The most lucrative part of the vast Silver Mist River's upper reaches had been divided among the various aristocratic families. If one was to look down from the sky, he or she would realize that this part of the river was marked with various aristocratic families' labels, forbidding outsiders from angling for artifact remnants.

Similarly, the middle reaches of the Silver Mist River could not avoid facing the same fate. The most lucrative parts of the middle reaches were being occupied by various local tyrants.

The Silver Mist River was like a mouth-watering cake. The aristocratic families took the larger portions of the cake while the tyrants took the smaller portions.

Even the Elders Guild had their hands bound and could do nothing about this situation. After all, they had the entire cake in the Silver Mist Sea.

It was very difficult for even adept anglers to base their livelihood on artifact remnant angling if they did not join the aristocratic families or the local tyrants.

There were also some new citizens uniting together to take part in this contest. They might be able to put up a fight against the local tyrants, but against the powerful aristocratic families, they simply stood no chance at all.

For the past three years, countless bills to ban aristocratic families and tyrants from hegemonizing the river had been submitted to the higher-ups, but none of them had passed.

The new citizens were very unhappy, but could not do nothing about it.

Peace City, the city located at the lowest part of the river's lower reaches, had even fewer artifact remnants available to them. Most of the artifact remnants sold on the market were acquired from the cities at the upper reaches. Naturally, their prices were exorbitant.

Every time, the artifact remnants that Ai Hui hauled up would fetch pretty good prices.

Eventually, he sold the bronze-colored artifact remnant for 120,000 points. As for the black artifact remnant, he kept it as he could sense a cold aura of killer intent coming from it.

That was a demonic remnant!

A demonic remnant was an artifact remnant that possessed a vicious aura of killer intent. Demonic remnants were the remnants of ancient sanguinary weapons and the murderous aura they possessed was highly concentrated.

Demonic remnants were highly favoured by god elementalists. If a god elementalist was to possess a demonic remnant, he or she would save effort and produce better results in nurturing blood demons. There were also some god elementalists who increased their blood demons' strength by feeding them demonic remnants.

The rising Blood of God was rich and powerful. They had numerous nouveau riche and could directly increase the price of demonic remnants, making them extremely expensive.

Demonic remnants were also equally very useful and important to elementalists, especially in the aspect of weapon forging. Currently, the most popular weapon forging technique was to fuse artifact remnants and blood crystals.

"Brother, can I take a look at the artifact remnant in your hand?"

An unfamiliar voice suddenly rang through the air, raising the eyebrows of the surrounding artifact remnant businessmen. Excitement flashed across some of their faces. They knew Ai Hui's temperament very well; he would only sell things that he did not need.

Ai Hui cast a glance in the direction of the voice and to his surprise, it came from that group of people that were following him just now. They had returned to the hillside while he was trying to sell his bronze-colored artifact remnant.

The voice belonged to a seemingly earnest man.

"I'm sorry, this is not for sale."

Ai Hui shook his head at the man.

"Is that a demonic remnant? I need a piece of demonic remnant urgently. If Brother can part with it and sell it to me, I will be extremely grateful to you. You can quote me a price, be it elemental energy points, blood crystals, or materials." The man did not give up on Ai Hui's demonic remnant.

Demonic remnant!

Upon hearing these two words, the surrounding businessmen broke into a commotion. Everyone’s eyes lit up. A demonic remnant was actually hauled up in Peace City! They knew about the value of demonic remnants very clearly.

Ai Hui was slightly vexed. He did not expect the other party to be so persistent and even recognize it as a demonic remnant.

The burning gazes from the surrounding businessmen gathered on Ai Hui. He calmed down and replied, "Yes, this is indeed a demonic remnant."

The surrounding businessmen exploded into a frenzy.

"Brother Wang! You have to sell it to me! I want this piece of demonic remnant! Give me a price!"

"What do you mean by you want it? Brother Wang, how long have we known each other? Today, you do as you see fit. Regardless of how much money you quote, I want this piece of demonic remnant! Give me a price!"

"300,000 points!"

...

The scene descended into chaos.

"Everyone shut up!"

An arrogant roar exploded like a thunderclap in everyone's ears. Everyone was overwhelmed with shock. This roar was surging with elemental energy. Whoever let out this roar was extremely powerful.

A teenager who was around 15 years old pushed the crowd aside and spoke in an arrogant and unhappy tone. "How dare you all vie with us? Are you all tired of living!?"

Even though he was very young, he was adept in his mastery over his elemental energy. His background was definitely not simple. Everyone who did business here was a shrewd individual and could tell that the group of people was not to be provoked.

The teenager walked toward Ai Hui and snorted. "I want this piece of demonic remnant!"

Ai Hui unhurriedly kept the demonic remnant into his clothes.

Upon seeing this, the teenager's face flushed with anger. Just as he was about to open his mouth and say something, an older boy beside him stopped him and pulled him behind his back. With an apologetic look on his face, the older boy told Ai Hui, "I'm really sorry, I have failed to discipline this kid. This demonic remnant is really important to me and my younger brother is just being anxious for me. Sir, please forgive him if he has offended you. I am willing to pay 500,000 elemental energy points for this piece of demonic remnant. Sir, are you willing to part with it and sell it to

me?"

The surrounding businessmen did not say anything. 500,000 points for a piece of demonic remnant was a reasonable price.

Rich and powerful!

Everyone was glad that they had not offended this group of people just now.

Ai Hui's face relaxed slightly. This older boy did not seem too irksome, and 500,000 points was indeed a pretty good price.

Ai Hui thought for a while and replied, "Forget about the elemental energy points. If you want this piece of demonic remnant, exchange it for 12 unyielding bamboos."

Unyielding bamboo was an extremely rare and high-grade material. Its biggest strength was its sturdiness and durability. It could withstand a terrifying amount of force without bending at all. The bamboo got its name from its unyielding nature.

One unyielding bamboo was usually priced at around 40,000 points. 12 unyielding bamboos would amount to 480,000 points. It might appear that Ai Hui was suffering a loss—in actual fact he was making a gain. Occasionally, one could find two or three unyielding bamboos on the market, however, it was nearly impossible for one to buy 12 unyielding bamboos in one go.

Unyielding bamboos needed to be grown in an extremely harsh natural habitat and the success rate of the ordinary elemental externalized wood elementalists who produced them was very low. They could only be produced by wood elementalists that were well-experienced and adept in the mastery of elemental energy.

Upon hearing Ai Hui's request, the surrounding businessmen did not say a word. They could afford to pay 500,000 points, but 12 unyielding bamboos were not something they could fork out in such a short period of time.

The older boy was slightly startled by Ai Hui's request. but he nodded his head without any hesitation. "No problem. However, I don't have the unyielding bamboos with me now. I'll have to trouble you to come along with me to the Evergold Enterprise."

To other people, getting 12 unyielding bamboos might be a problem. To him, however, it was a piece of cake.

At this moment, realization dawned upon the surrounding businessmen. Evergold Enterprise was the number one enterprise in Peace City. It had strong, robust financial resources and an enigmatic backer. Reportedly, the enterprise was tightly linked to some influential figure in Silver City.

Everyone broke into a discussion. Could these people be the young masters of Evergold Enterprise?

Ai Hui did not expect them to be from Evergold Enterprise. He had stayed in Peace City for nearly three years, and he definitely

knew about Evergold Enterprise. Evergold Enterprise had a rather good reputation, and he did not really hear many scandals about them.

"Okay." Ai Hui nodded.

Along the way, the older boy kept making insinuations, but Ai Hui remained unmoved. Ai Hui, however, managed to learn something. The older boy's name was Fu Renxuan and the seemingly arrogant teenager's name was Fu Yongwu. According to Ai Hui's observation, the decision-maker of the group was the girl who had not spoken a single word the whole time.

He caught Fu Renxuan shifting his gaze to the girl a few times.

This group of people should be from Silver City.

There were a few times where Fu Renxuan hinted at hiring Ai Hui, but when he saw that Ai Hui remained unmoved, he shut his mouth and did not talk about it anymore.

When they reached Evergold Enterprise, Ai Hui received the 12 unyielding bamboos, bid them farewell, and left the place.

When Fu Yongwu saw Ai Hui walk out of the main entrance, he asked puzzledly, "Big Sister, I thought we wanted to hire this fellow?"

The girl laughed bitterly and replied, "All the while, he didn't

show any sign of interest and did not lower his guard. There's no way we can persuade him. Furthermore, it might not be a good thing if we do manage to hire him."

Fu Yongwu was even more puzzled and asked again, "Why? Given his artifact remnant angling skills, I think he's even better than that old fogey!"

The girl sighed softly and replied, "Precisely, he is too good. How much money would we have to give him until he finds it appropriate? If he hauls something every time in Peace City, then the number of artifact remnants he would haul up in our part of the river would definitely be a lot. If we don't give him enough money, he will not be happy. If we give him too much money, our family will not agree to it. We can never pay an angler too much money. What about other anglers? Once the status quo is broken, the other anglers will definitely complain about it. Don't tell me we have to solely depend on him in the future? What if he leaves us? We have such a big family and we are like a huge boat that needs stability to last a long time. Breaking the customs for a short-term gain is like suddenly breaking the oars of a boat after having travelled thousands of miles. We would be mixing up our priorities."

Fu Yongwu was speechless. Even though he was an impulsive individual, he was not stupid. He was clever enough to understand what the girl was trying to say in an instant.

"This person is very smart. He knows that his capabilities will bring him troubles in Silver City. No one will dare to hire him or let him fall into the hands of others. That's why he came to a place

like Peace City. Every month, he will not make a huge profit or attract attention to himself. His age is around the same as mine. He is an experienced and cool-headed individual. We can’t underestimate him."

"How is he experienced and cool-headed? I can tell with a single glance that he is a boring person. He never talks at all," Fu Yongwu mumbled.

"Even if we can’t hire this capable individual, we can still befriend him." The girl smiled.

"I will pass down the instruction." Fu Renxuan nodded.

After leaving Evergold Enterprise, excitement was written all over Ai Hui’s face. Today was a lucky day. He had not expected to obtain the troublesome unyielding bamboos so smoothly.

Just the thought of the Star-sinking Ink Cloud and unyielding bamboos made him felt exuberant.

When Ai Hui reached the training hall, Qingye had already gone home.

"Lou Lan, let us get ready to work!"

"Ai Hui, have you gotten all the materials?"

"I have gotten the Star-sinking Ink Cloud and the unyielding bamboos."

"Lou Lan is coming!"

Chapter 275: Visitor

The workshop was ablaze with lights.

Ai Hui had spent a long time preparing for this, especially for the materials. The Star-sinking Ink Cloud and the unyielding bamboos were the last two important materials.

In the Heavy Sand Crucible that was purchased for a high price, nine red flowers, resembling the shape of flames, were piled up in order like a tower.

Those were fire flowers picked up from the black plain at the foot of the Calabash Mountain in the Fire Prairie.

Every September, the Calabash Mountain would spew out flames that covered the whole black plain like a heavy snow. Once the flames fell on the earth, they would take root and grow into delicate fire flowers.

The Calabash Mountain eruptions usually lasted for a whole month. When it was October, the immense black plain, that used to be desolated, would be covered with bright red fire flowers. The towering Calabash Mountain rose straight up in the distance, the peak of which was always shrouded by smoke and clouds. Together with the sea of red flowers, the whole picture was indeed a feast for the eyes.

Every year in October, many visitors would go to the Fire Prairie to enjoy the sight of the flower sea on the black plain.

Although desolate, the black plain contained fire elemental energy in its soil, which was exactly what the fire flowers needed for growth. The blooming period for fire flowers was not fixed. It could be as short as a few days, or as long as many years.

Flower pickers would start their work in October to look for mature blooms in the sea of fire flowers.

Although the Fire Prairie was now in the hands of the Blood of God, it kept erupting every year, and fire flowers could still be seen in the markets.

The quality of fire flowers was dependent on the number of petals it had. The flowers with three petals were of the lowest quality, while those with nine were of the highest.

What Ai Hui used were six-petaled fire flowers.

Water from Silver Mist River ran through the conduit of the crucible and dropped on the fire flowers.

The stacked fire flowers then began to burn. The flame was not intense, but very stable and quiet. Besides, it could burn for a long time – usually more than ten hours.

Lou Lan threw a green elemental energy bean into the flames. The bean contained one thousand points of wood elemental energy, and the flames began to turn a bit transparent in

the crucible. Then Lou Lan kept throwing the rest of the beans, and after he threw the twenty-secondth one into the crucible, the flames became completely transparent and could hardly be seen with naked eyes.

But Lou Lan could still see it clearly. He reminded Ai Hui, "The fire is very stable."

Hearing what Lou Lan said, Ai Hui began to put the materials one by one into the crucible. He'd gotten the materials ready long ago.

Silverlight Iron, blackshell miica, blood crystals and so on.

Lou Lan's eyes kept flickering. Whenever Ai Hui put in some materials, he would throw in some elemental energy beans of different colors.

Elemental energy of different attributes surged in the crucible, and the color of the liquid inside kept changing too. It was sometimes deep blue, sometimes bright purple and maybe sometimes rust red.

They were very well coordinated, and everything had gone smoothly so far.

The liquid in the crucible became as clear and transparent as water.

"Perfect!"

Ai Hui licked his lips. He was a bit excited to see the clear fluid concoction inside the crucible. But he also knew that as for the whole plan, there was still a lot to do.

Lou Lan held the Heavy Sand Crucible and poured half of the concoction out into the ice tank.

Then he threw twelve of the unyielding bamboos into the crucible and kept boiling.

Blub blub blub.

Small bubbles came out of the unyielding bamboos now and then.

Starting from now, the unyielding bamboos needed to be heated in the concoction for six hours.

Ai Hui carried the box with the Star-sinking Ink Cloud inside to the ice tank.

Ai Hui opened the box. The dark and heavy Star-sinking Ink Cloud was quietly frozen in the ice cube. Star-sinking Ink Cloud was one of the clouds with the highest densities. Its name indicated that even stars would sink if they struck against the cloud.

The most common usage of Star-sinking Ink Cloud was to make

armors and shields, especially scale armors. Apart from its outstanding protective properties, Star-sinking Ink Cloud had excellent ductility like clay, and could be moulded into any form.

Ai Hui broke up the ice cube and threw the Star-sinking Ink Cloud into the ice tank.

Soaked by the fluid concoction, the Cloud began to diffuse like an ink stick, producing streaks of black substances in the liquid.

Ai Hui widened his eyes and stirred the liquid with a hair-thin silver wire. An extremely thin thread of black silk was lifted up.

Ai Hui quickly pinched the black silk and infused his elemental energy into it. The thin silk solidified in the air. Then he tied a knot at a spinning wheel with this ink cloud silk proficiently.

Next, he turned the spindle with one hand, and put the other hand softly on the ink cloud silk. Elemental energy flew along his fingers into the silk at a constant speed.

Ai Hui's metal elemental energy quickly hardened the ink cloud silk.

Anyone who saw this scene would be so shocked that their jaws would ricochet off the ground.

Reeling silk from cocoons was a skill that embroiderers were proficient at. And now Ai Hui had carried it forward. This was one

of Ai Hui's most familiar skills, and as soon as he'd thought of Star-sinking Ink Cloud, this idea occurred to him.

Since the Star-sinking Ink Cloud could be made into any form, like clay, why couldn't it be made into silk?

With Lou Lan's help, this bold idea was finally realized.

Ai Hui did it all with great accuracy, no matter if it was the infusing speed of elemental energy or the speed with which he turned the spindle.

Ai Hui was definitely an expert in reeling silk.

His masterpiece, the weasel bristle arrow that was called "See You Later", was an upgraded version of the bunny hair arrow and was more powerful. To make this kind of arrow, he also needed to keep reeling silks with even greater difficulty.

The shape of a gem cocoon was like a gemstone. After it was melted into liquid, complicated techniques would be needed to produce thin silks out of it.

But no one ever heard of someone reeling silk from Star-sinking Ink Cloud.

Ai Hui was focused. Neither his gestures nor his elemental energy had any fluctuation. Even his breath and his heart beat were so stable as if he was a machine.

Lou Lan was observing the flames carefully. The surface of the unyielding bamboos in the crucible began to turn crispy with many small holes like a honeycomb.

Time slipped away quietly.

When Ai Hui began his work, Su Qingye, exhausted, walked slowly step by step to go back home. His sand puppet was even more frazzled. It fell loose on the ground and was crawling like a turtle after him.

Suddenly, it occurred to Su Qingye that today was the day when his teacher would go to fish for treasures, upon which he was very vexed.

Watching his teacher fishing for treasures was always his favourite. Although he had watched it many times, he never felt bored. His teacher was different from anyone else - the treasure-fishing process was very short, but it was extremely amazing.

Especially when Qingye saw the jealousy on other anglers' faces, he would feel very complacent.

If he had remembered this earlier, he would never have mentioned the Dragonrise Training Hall. Now he was assigned more training courses, and he would even miss the treasure-fishing.

What bad luck!

His teacher was definitely a demon. The amount of training he arranged for Su Qingye always made him reach his physical limit. Even his sand puppet would be exhausted to the extent that it had no strength to maintain its form at all and fell apart every time.

His sand puppet was kind of disappointing. Su Qingye felt disheartened.

Just look at his teacher’s sand puppet. He was skillful and smart. When practicing with Lou Lan, Su Qingye always felt like he himself was the sand puppet.

So far he hadn’t had the chance to practice with his teacher, not even once. His teacher said he could practice with him when Su Qingye could defeat Lou Lan.

Okay. This was something too far away, and he didn’t need to think about it for now.

When he saw the signboard of his family’s enterprise "Sea Pacific Enterprise", he was so happy that he almost burst into tears.

Su Qingye moved slowly into the gate. Seeing his miserable look, the assistants were all delighted and guffawed loudly. Although Su Qingye was their young master, he was so good-tempered that no one was afraid of him. He himself was not angry either, as he knew in fact they were just envying him.

The school fee was very expensive, and out of the whole enterprise, he was the only one who could afford it. The swordsman school had been open for a long time since there was no other training hall in Peace City. Therefore, its business was supposed to be flourishing, but the name, "swordsman" made it sound unreliable. Besides, most people shrank back at the sight of its high cost.

Maybe it was because Su Qingye had arrived home, he felt his energy had more or less recovered.

Sea Pacific Enterprise was not a major enterprise in Peace City, so it was not large. The shop and their house was in one building connected by a passage, shop in the front and residence at back.

Su Qingye, who was still very tired, walked toward the residence.

He wanted to discuss with his father to ask if he could get a more powerful sand puppet. He had already been training so hard.

There was no one in the living room. If his father was not in the living room, he must be in the study.

It suddenly occurred to him that there would be guests today, and his father had told him to stay at home. Therefore, he decided to snoop around first to see what was happening. Just as he had walked stealthily to the door of the study, he heard the cold and clear voice of a woman from inside the room.

"Yellow Sand Corner and the Fire Prairie could hardly be taken back within such a short period of time, and the earth and fire elementalists were very dissatisfied. The Elders Guild was also badly battered. Some time ago, there was a proposal to establish a lesser Avalon of Five Elements within a scope of five cities, so that earth and fire elementalists can have somewhere to practice. And in this way we can retain some wood elementalists too. The earth and fire elementalists are still concerned about joining the Blood of God – after all, not very many people are eager to become god elementalists. The wood elementalists are more than willing to go to the Jadeite Forest."

"That means..."

Su Qingye clearly heard some wild excitement in his father's voice.

"Yes, it's Peace City. To build a lesser Avalon of five elements, we must first of all have two connected cities, one is of metal attribute and the other is of water attribute, which makes Peace City and Cloud Ridge City the only choices. As to the remaining three cities, we need to open up the Wilderness to build the cities of wood, fire and earth. In this way, the five cities will be connected end to end and once again a harmonious five elemental cycle will be created. Only by doing so will elemental energies be produced endlessly. Unless something unexpected happens, the possibility that the Elders Guide will pass the proposal is higher than seventy percent."

"That's why so many people came to Peace City recently..." Su's father suddenly understood why.

"They all have different sources, and came to take up a place for themselves. Sea Pacific Enterprise is one of the earliest enterprises, so you really have a head start..." suddenly the woman stopped talking, and shouted loudly, "Who?"

Su Qingye who was focused on overhearing their conversation shuddered from hearing the shout. In the next instant, the door of the study was totally pulverized, and Su Qingye was shrouded by piercingly cold light.

Su Qingye’s mind was blank, and he reacted by instinct.

The sand puppet that had fallen loose behind him suddenly jumped in front of him, and meanwhile he rolled away on the ground.

The ray of light pierced the sand puppet, leaving a deep hole on the ground. The sand puppet, with a big hole in his chest, abruptly transformed into a sand spear and stabbed toward the woman.

"Qingye!" Su Qingye’s father was startled.

A thin and white hand slapped the spear apart effortlessly, and then a short-haired woman’s neat and tidy face appeared in Su Qingye’s line of sight.

When she heard the name, her expression was relaxed, but she still looked surprised.

The sand puppet counter technique...was good!

Chapter 276: Work Completed

The black-colored ink cloud silk had a fine and smooth texture. Ai Hui tried to pull it hard but it didn’t break.

Then he put the ink cloud silk on a sheet of iron and chopped it hard with his Dragonspine. After a flash of sword light the iron sheet broke in two, but the silk was still intact.

"Ai Hui, this is a great success!"

Lou Lan said cheerfully.

"Yes, we’re half done." Ai Hui put the silk in front of him and observed it carefully. Seeing no marks on the silk at all, Ai Hui couldn’t help smiling.

Lou Lan’s eyes widened, "Ai Hui, you are really skillful. No one has ever reeled silk from a Star-sinking Ink Cloud. This is an extraordinary invention."

"Oh, really? Not even once?"

"Of course not! Ai Hui, I’ve never seen a record of it in any book."

"If so, how shall I price it to match its value?"

"You want to sell it? I thought you are going to use it yourself."

Lou Lan’s eyes widened in confusion.

"Oh, I mean in the future." Ai Hui closed his eyes and his expression indicated his self-satisfaction, "In the future, it will definitely sell for an amazing price..."

Lou Lan glanced at the crucible and interrupted Ai Hui’s imagination. "Ai Hui, the unyielding bamboos are ready."

Ai Hui abruptly came back to his senses.

Lou Lan picked out the unyielding bamboos from the crucible.

The surface of the twelve unyielding bamboos was covered with small honeycomb-like holes, and its original color of cast-iron black had turned grey.

Lou Lan held one unyielding bamboo in his left hand, making a fist with his right hand to hold the other end of the bamboo.

Hiss. His right fist suddenly transformed into quicksand that was revolving around the bamboo at a high speed. It was polishing the bamboo like a high-speed grinding wheel.

Sizzle, sizzle, sizzle!

The workshop was filled with stridulation and sparks.

Lou Lan looked down at the bamboo attentively. The light in his eyes flickered rhythmically. His moves were stable and well-ordered.

A thin, glittery, silver-colored bamboo appeared in Lou Lan’s hands.

The silvery bamboo now was as thin as a finger. It only weighed one-third of its original weight, but was six times stronger than before and could bear amazing power. Besides, its tenacity was greatly improved, and could be bent like a bow. All these features were totally different from what it originally was, and no one could associate this new kind of material with unyielding bamboos.

Ai Hui began his work too.

He wove the black-colored ink cloud silk along the thin bamboo sticks.

Ai Hui was very proficient and skillful as if he had done this many times before. It was true, as this scheme was decided after lots of discussion with Lou Lan. Compared with the previous material processing, the weaving technique was the easiest part because he could practice it beforehand.

Ai Hui had practiced many times, and was very confident he could finish it perfectly.

The bamboo sticks had successfully thinned out, taking shape in Lou Lan's hands, then they were given to Ai Hui and quickly disappeared in the black ink cloud silks.

Once he had started, Ai Hui's playful expression was all gone. Instead, he was fully focused and his eyes were glittering.

Having polished all twelve bamboos, Lou Lan began to enjoy watching Ai Hui's techniques. The ink cloud silks jumped here and there with Ai Hui's flexible fingers between the bamboo sticks moving aesthetically at an amazing rhythm.

Embroidery had a far-reaching influence on Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was not really an embroiderer, but the embroidery skills and theories were like fertile soil that kept producing nutrition for him.

A big black wing appeared in front of Ai Hui.

Even though the whole work was not finished yet, this wing alone had shown its distinguished qualities and glory. Different from ordinary azure wings which were light and agile, it was heavy and powerful like the wing of a demon from hell.

Ai Hui was so skillful!

Lou Lan's eyes were full of admiration and worship. Actually Ai Hui had bought several azure wings from markets before for

practice. As Peace City was the city of Silver Mist Sea that was the closest to Palette Cloud Village, it was convenient to buy azure wings here.

But Ai Hui was not satisfied with any of the wings he bought. So he finally decided to make a pair of azure wings himself.

As a result, Ai Hui and Lou Lan began to study the method of making azure wings. But Lou Lan didn't expect that Ai Hui would choose Star-sinking Ink Cloud as the raw material.

This was probably the last material one would use to make azure wings. But in Ai Hui's unconstrained design, it was perfect.

Woven together by the ink cloud silk, the twelve unyielding bamboos constituted the black skeleton of the wing. If it was fully stretched, the length of the wing was more than six meters. It now looked like the wing of a black bat that exuded an aura of ferocity and massacre.

Ai Hui sighed in relief. And fatigue appeared on his face.

He had been working for four hours before he finally finished weaving. This speed was achieved only after more than twenty sessions of practice beforehand.

"The skeleton is finally finished!"

Ai Hui stretched himself. The elemental energy within his body

was used up.

Lou Lan brought the elemental soup that he had prepared, and Ai Hui drank up every single drop before he wiped his mouth and began to admire his masterpiece.

Lou Lan said sincerely, "This is beautiful, Ai Hui!"

The thin, unyielding bamboos were like the skeleton of the stretched wing. If one took a closer look, he could see on the translucent surface of the wing many complicated but delicate patterns, some of which could only be seen at certain angles. These embroidery patterns were not for decoration only, but could also facilitate the flow of elemental energy.

Ai Hui named it elemental trace. It originated from his teacher, Wang Shouchuan's plan of "treating the city as a piece of cloth" that he designed for Central Pine City.

In this plan, there were a lot of carefully-designed patterns to dredge and guide the flow of elemental energy. Ai Hui had in mind every detail of the plan, and had been trying to perceive and understand its deeper implications for the past three years. With Lou Lan's help, he had gained a lot from it.

When making the See You Later that had been selling very well in the market, Ai Hui also utilized similar techniques – he wove the special patterns with gemstone silk which could significantly improve the power of the arrows.

Ai Hui knew that there were spiritual traces in Cultivation Era, and god traces for god elementalist. Therefore, he simply called this pattern elemental trace.

He also knew that the original copies of his teacher’s plan, including the structural drafts of the nine gold needles, were all sent to the Elders Guild.

Ai Hui felt his elemental energy was almost recovered when the day began to dawn. That was when they realized that they had been working for a whole night.

Ai Hui said with a high spirit, "Lou Lan, is the gemstone silk ready? Let’s finish altogether!"

"Yes, it’s ready!" Lou Lan brought out a box which was full of gemstone silks.

The gemstone silks looked like glass fibers but were more shiny and attractive. The silks in the box were all three inches long.

Gemstone silk was the silk produced by gemstone silkworms, and it was the main material needed to make [See You Later]. Gemstone silkworms were very ugly , and their skin surface was all grey with numerous black spots. But their cocoons were extremely beautiful like gems, hence its name.

The gem cocoon was very solid. After the silk took shape and hardened, it continued to crystalize. That was how the silk gained

gem-like luster and intensity. Gemstone silk was made through a process of melting gemstone cocoons into liquid, wire drawing and crystallization. That was why the length of gemstone silk was always short – usually no longer than half a meter.

For the next step, Ai Hui had to do it together with Lou Lan.

They both were proficient at weaving gemstone cocoons and ink cloud silk. Soon they both made a black leaf in their hand.

The leaf was about three-inch long and resembled the shape of a sword. The gemstone silk, which was harder, became the veins of the leaves, while the black ink cloud silk constituted their bodies. Even on the surface of the three-inch leaf, exquisite elemental traces could be clearly seen.

They didn’t stop at all, and continued to weave.

As time went by, there were more and more leaves like these. Finally, when the number reached three hundred and sixty, which was a lucky number, they stopped.

Then they attached the black-colored leaves to the translucent azure wing, which changed its appearance. As the number of leaves that were attached to the wing increased, the azure wing became more and more full-fledged.

"Done!"

Ai Hui and Lou Lan high fived.

Both of them were enchanted by their elaborate work.

Previously, the black yarn wing with a clear skeleton awoke a sense of danger, but now with the leaves, it became much milder. With the thickly dotted leaves, which looked like real feathers, the azure wing resembled an ordinary black wing of a bird. The luster of the gem silk also added to the brightness and delicacy of the dark Star-sinking Ink Cloud.

"Ai Hui, it’s beautiful!" Lou Lan admired.

Ai Hui also marveled, "Yes, for such a good azure wing, I’m wondering how much we can sell it for."

"Aren’t you going to give it a try?"

"I’m going to sleep!" Ai Hui stretched and yawned in fatigue, feeling quite sleepy, "Wait until I wake up. Lou Lan, no matter what happens, don’t wake me up."

"No problem, Ai Hui." Lou Lan said in a cheerful tone.

When the sun began to rise, the quiet Peace City gradually became bustling and lively. The assistants of the companies opened their gates and cleaned up their doorways. More and more people flowed into the streets. The fully-loaded bamboo carts took off one after another. They constituted mighty fleets in the sky and

started their journeys.

Huaijun looked up at the numerous bamboo carts in the sky and was actually enjoying the new experience. Compared with the Peace City, the Silver City was more prosperous. But it was too enormous and delicate. Everyone there was extravagant and everything was luxurious. In contrast, the Peace City was much simpler, but more lively.

She was glad that she came to Peace City.

Su Qingye was already used to this kind of scene, "It’s not the weekend today. Otherwise, there would be even more bamboo carts."

Huaijun turned her eyes back to him and asked, "Has your teacher woken up by this time of the day?"

"Of course!" Su Qingye glanced at his aunt, "In Peace City, even kids have woken up by now."

His father told him that she was his aunt. Su Qingye felt awkward, as they were of similar age. However, having witnessed the powerful fighting capabilities of this aunt, Su Qingye didn’t dare to say anything.

But last night Aunt Huaijun spoke highly of his sand puppet’s counter technique, which made his father very gratified. Besides, as his aunt had already destroyed the sand puppet, his father

finally agreed to buy him a new one.

Earlier this morning, his aunt said she wanted to pay a visit to his teacher.

Huaijun could sense from his tone that Su Qingye was not convinced. But she didn’t pay much attention. Instead, she asked, "Qingye, what kind of person is your teacher?"

At the mention of his teacher, Su Qingye immediately became excited. He began to brag about how skillful he was, and about his unparalleled swordsmanship and how he got the nickname of King of Anglers.

Light flickered in Huaijun’s eyes.

Chapter 277: Target

Su Qingye was never aware that he had an aunt.

And now, all he knew was that this aunt was from Silver City. His father told him that she was a capable person, and asked him to learn from her and follow her directions in training. She would give him training directions? Su Qingye didn't really take it seriously. He hadn't even finished half of the training tasks arranged by his teacher. Compared with Hua Xiaoyun and Zhou Wen, who were his companions in the training hall, he was already the slowest.

Hua Xiaoyun was a water elementalist who lived in the adjacent Cloud Ridge City and came to the training hall twice a week. She could always come up with cunning ideas, and Su Qingye believed she was the cleverest of them three.

Zhou Wen was a person of few words and he was of metal attribute. Ever since he learnt from his teacher that keeping his sword in hand could improve his proficiency, he had never put his sword aside, even when sleeping.

Of the three students, Su Qingye was the most unlucky one, as he was of earth attribute.

Nowadays earth and fire elementalists were fellow sufferers. Those without wealth and power could hardly survive in such an era. Su Qingye was the slowest in training of them three, for which he was always depressed.

Finally there was someone who would like to listen to his complaints, so he poured out his grievances all at once.

Huaijun was a bit curious, "Your teacher only teaches swordsmanship? Then how do you get trained? You all practice the same inheritance of sword?"

"Of course not. We are of different attributes." Su Qingye took it for granted, "I practice Sand Puppet Swordsmanship, Zhou Wen practices Heavy Swordsmanship, and Hua Xiaoyun Rosy Cloud Swordsmanship."

Huaijun was surprised, "Three inheritances?"

Su Qingye shook his head, "My teacher said they're not inheritances, but only training plans."

Huaijun uttered a sigh of relief, and thought to herself that she was probably thinking too much. Although swordsmanship was becoming increasingly popular and had attracted more students these years, there were still very few well-known inheritances of swordsmanship so far.

Su Qingye continued, "Our teacher said we are still young, and the most important thing is to lay a solid foundation, with which we can create our own inheritances of swordsmanship."

Speaking of this, Su Qingye's eyes were filled with longing.

Huaijun couldn’t help laughing out, "Create your own inheritances? That’s not as easy as you imagine. This is nonsense!"

Su Qingye was unhappy, "Nonsense?"

"Isn’t it?" Huaijun asked disapprovingly, "All the inheritances are passed from generation to generation and have gone through constant improvement during the process before they become what they are today. How can your teacher think it’s so easy to create an inheritance? Who does he think he is? At first I thought he was different. But now it seems that he is only a swaggerer. So forget it. Let’s go home."

"You go home yourself. I’ll go to the training hall." Su Qingye was extremely angry. But since his father had asked him again and again to listen to what his aunt said, he tried to calm himself down and replied coldly.

"You don’t need to go to a training hall with such a teacher." Huaijun said patiently, "You are still young, and haven’t seen the real world outside or a real expert. It’s easy for you to be cheated by someone’s blandishments. You can just learn from me. It will be much more effective than any deceitful teacher."

Su Qingye’s patience ran out and he said, "I’ll never learn from you!"

Having said this, Su Qingye ran away without looking back.

Huaijun was a short-tempered person without much patience. Seeing Su Qingye's obstinacy, she didn't even bother to persuade him. Although she had promised his father to help Su Qingye on his training, she was more than happy now that she didn't need to, since this was Su Qingye's own decision.

Therefore, she began to stroll through Peace City alone. The See You Later arrows she bought yesterday aroused her interest in this small border town.

The ten See You Later arrows had been packed and sent to the Silver City in a trade caravan. She bought them not for her own use, but on someone else's request. She'd never heard of such a weird name before. It was said that the arrows were popular within a small circle. It was always out of stock and very hard to buy. A noble who heard that she was coming to the Peace City specifically asked her to buy some for her.

Since it was a noble's request, she didn't dare to slight it, and began searching for it the first day she arrived.

Seeing the busy trade caravans, she thought to herself that maybe she could get some useful stuff here. Besides, she would stay here for a long time anyway, so it was necessary for her to get familiar with the city.

The Silver City and the Peace City were at the two ends of the Silver Mist River, but they were of totally different local customs and practices. She had abundant travelling experience, had been to

numerous places and watched the decline of many cities. The three-year war had a profound influence. While everywhere else was destitute and going through economic depression, the flourish and vigor of the Peace City cheered her up.

Suddenly, she noticed a group of people ahead. It was led by a graceful, pretty lady surrounded by her young companions.

They were also here.

She was surprised, and lowered her head, walking past them as if she was going somewhere in a hurry.

"...I never expected we could get a demonic remnant. We are so lucky!"

"Yeah. Fortunately Big Sister insisted on watching them fishing, otherwise we would have just missed the opportunity!"

"That King of Anglers is really skillful..."

Huaijun heard their conversation and laughter, and the words "demonic remnant" caught her attention. Before she came to her senses, the crowd of people had already left.

When Su Qingye, who was filled with anger, arrived at the training hall and heard the yelling inside, his rage suddenly disappeared.

Having been practicing like this for almost three years, he felt training was already a part of his life. All his rage and distracting thoughts were gone, and instead the only thing he was thinking about was – Zhou Wen was earlier than him again!

He felt a bit unhappy.

As soon as he walked into the training hall, he caught sight of a thin figure. Of all the three students, Zhou Wen had the most straitened family background. His parents had passed away. As an orphan, he couldn’t even afford the tuition, so he had to sell himself to their teacher for ten years to pay off the tuition.

Their teacher was too good-hearted.

Su Qingye was born in a merchant family. He knew that in such troubled times there were too many orphans like Zhou Wen who had nothing at all . Zhou Wen was unsociable and eccentric. All he did everyday was practice like crazy, and simply treated everyone else like air.

What made Su Qingye most dissatisfied was that this guy was far more hardworking than himself. However, his foundation was too weak, so his overall capacity was the weakest of them all. The strongest one was Hua Xiaoyun. It was said that her grandmother once served in Rainbow Division and later retired due to injury.

"Good morning, Qingye!"

Su Qingye was happy to hear Lou Lan’s cheerful voice. He smiled and replied, "Morning, Lou Lan."

They all liked Lou Lan very much, especially Su Qingye. He was an earth elementalist, and his affection towards the sand puppet was like an instinct.

Su Qingye asked, "Lou Lan, is Teacher in?"

"He is having a rest." Lou Lan answered, "Qingye, you have finished fifty four percent of your training plan. Keep going!"

Su Qingye suddenly remembered his aunt’s words for no reason, and asked, "Lou Lan, is it difficult to create an inheritance?"

"Yes, Qingye." Lou Lan nodded, "Any inheritance is the result of profound accumulation of practice and talent."

Su Qingye was confused, "Then why did Teacher asked us to create our own inheritances in the future?"

"Do we give up simply because the thing we are going to do is difficult?" Lou Lan asked, "We do something not because it is easy, but because it is our objective, don’t we?"

Su Qingye’s face flushed with embarrassment.

Suddenly he heard a sniff from someone beside him, and it turned to be Zhou Wen who stopped practicing, held the sword in his hand and looked at Su Qingye with scorn. He said coldly, "Coward."

Su Qingye became furious, "Zhou Wen, are you looking for trouble?"

Zhou Wen was emotionless, "I hope you will not whine for mercy."

"Oh, so I think we can adjust our training plan today. How about a real combat match?" Lou Lan’s smiling eyes were like two crescent moons.

"Sure!" They both blurted out simultaneously, which made them dislike each other more.

"Where is your sand puppet, Qingye?" Lou Lan asked.

Su Qingye was a bit upset and said, "It was destroyed yesterday."

"If so, to be fair, let’s do this in the sandpit. Zhou Wen, will you please use a soft sword? Is that fine?" Lou Lan asked.

"No problem!" Su Qingye answered loudly. He was thinking fast to balance the advantages and disadvantages. Although his ability was largely reduced without the sand puppet , fighting on sand was advantageous to him. Besides, Zhou Wen usually practiced with a

heavy sword, so he could not adapt to using a soft sword within a limited period of time, which was also in Su Qingye’s favor.

Zhou Wen simply said, "Okay."

Seeing that they both agreed, Lou Lan said with a broader smile, "The result of the confrontation will be kept in your records."

Hearing what Lou Lan said, both of them became more serious.

The results of daily confrontations was worth a large proportion in their performance score, and would directly influence their teacher’s final judgment of their performance. Anyone whose performance was scored as excellent would get their teacher’s special tuition, have Lou Lan as training partner and be awarded with equipment tailored by the teacher.

The heavy sword Zhou Wen was using was a reward.

"Start!"

Hearing the word, the two figures immediately came to blows.

A crowd of people walked past the lane. An assistant wearing the costume of Evergold Enterprise was leading the way.

When they arrived at the gate of the training hall, the assistant said reverently, "Sir, this is the training hall of Wang Han."

"Thanks!" Fu Renxuan said. The assistant got a tip from him and left happily.

The crowd looked at the dilapidated training hall up and down. The gate of the training hall was open, and they could hear shouts from inside now and then. But apparently there were very few people in it.

"Swordsman Training Hall."

Fu Yonghao looked at the wood board and read it out aloud. Then he frowned and said, "This is a training hall? It’s so shabby. How can you open up a training hall just by hanging a name board in front of a shabby warehouse?"

Yesterday they had asked the person in charge of the enterprise for information about Wang Han, and learned that Wang Han had a training hall in the Peace City. They were all interested in taking a look. After all, his performance at the Silver Mist River was so amazing yesterday.

But when they came to his training hall in high spirits, it was a great disappointment to see nothing but this poor warehouse.

A streak of disappointment flashed in the lady’s eyes too, but she soon adjusted herself and smiled, "Since we are here anyway, let’s go inside and have a look."

Then she walked towards the gate first. Seeing this, the others had to follow her lead and walked in.

In the training hall, they saw two youngsters fighting against each other fiercely, and a sand puppet was standing by. The sand puppet said nothing, but only gave them a glance and then turned back to watch the two students fighting.

Only two students...

Fu Yonghao was speechless. This was the worst training hall with the least students he had ever seen. He thought of the Dragonrise Training Hall in the Silver City which was magnificent and majestic almost like a small city.

The lady's eyes fixed on the two students.

As if no one was around, the students were totally uninfluenced and devoted themselves to the confrontation.

After a while, the lady couldn't help but let out a soft yelp of surprise.

Chapter 278: The Youth in the Cold Palace

The towering palace looked solemn and majestic.

Emotionless god guards stood at each side of the palace gates like sculptures. They looked tiny compared to the tall and grand gates. Looking into the palace through the vermeil palace gates that were open wide, one could see no end, only gates after gates.

The palace was empty. There were no guards on patrol or maidservants coming in or out.

The floor of the palace was made of burnished blackish gold slates. Under the sunshine, the glittering surface added to its luxuriousness. In comparison, the stone carvings along the road were unadorned and simple. The lifelike images on the stone carvings depicted devils in the haunted night. The devils all looked ferocious, vicious, gloomy or cunning.

The whole palace was extremely silent. No sound could be heard, but anyone in it could sense an unspeakable pressure.

Even the blood fiends didn’t dare to utter a sound, but were only crouching at the top of the wall quietly.

Deep in the spacious palace and under the dome, a youth with long hair trailing over his shoulders was sitting at the high throne silently. The dense patterns of blood spread from every corner of the hall to the high throne located at the center of the hall.

The youth looked gentle and frail. His eyes were closed, and his face was pale. The most arresting part was his long hair that flowed to his waist, the ends of which were as white as snow.

He was Bei Shuisheng, the well-known Sick Tiger of tje Blood Nation.

No sound could be heard inside the palace. Only incenses were burning.

The youth slowly opened his eyes. His dark pupils were placid and deep.

Suddenly something black flew inside the palace. It turned out to be a vigorous goshawk with dark red eyes. The goshawk landed on the long desk in the palace and spitted out a red blood ball.

The young man forced a smile. His pale face made him look even frailer. He left his seat and walked to the table. His loose black robe that dragged on the floor was spotlessly clean.

"It’s so inconvenient without message trees," the youth murmered.

The Blood of God had been trying to create their own message trees, but achieved no success so far.

There were huge differences between blood spiritual force and elemental energy. Therefore, the message tree couldn't be used in God Nation. Previously, someone proposed to make use of elementalist captures to re-enable the functioning of message trees, but taking confidentiality into consideration, the proposal was denied. Now in Blood of God, letters were usually passed by blood birds, which was a very primitive method compared with the message tree.

The Avalon of Five Elements had a history of more than one thousand years. In this aspect, the Blood of God was still weak in its foundation. Even though in terms of fighting capacity, it was not inferior to the Avalon of Five Elements at all, there were still gaps in other aspects.

Bei Shuisheng had ordered to increase manpower on this, but so far the progress was still slow. He himself was clearly aware that it was useless to push them anyway. The message tree was the result of many years of study and another few hundred years of improvement.

If there was anything in the Avalon of Five Elements that could compete with the Cultivation Era, the message tree must be one of them.

The Blood of God even tried the paper crane that was utilized in Cultivation Era, but compared with message trees, its efficiency of message delivery was still slower. Although the paper crane was not a perfect choice yet, it was still usable in the context that the creation of message trees in the Blood of God was slow. After all, blood spiritual force was also spiritual force, and could power the

paper cranes without limitation. The key problem was materials.

However, at the moment, blood birds were a safer choice.

Bei Shuisheng raised his hand and touched the blood ball with his pale and thin finger, and the blood ball immediately transformed into a bloody light and merged into his body.

Bei Shuisheng closed his eyes and read it carefully. After a while, he opened his eyes and laughed out gently, "Lesser Avalon of Five Elements? How did they think of it? But it’s a good idea anyway. Interesting."

He began to write something fast at the table. Before long, he finished writing and folded the letter carefully. The goshawk flew in front of him and swallowed the folded letter before it spread its wings and flew away.

The goshawk was like a signal indicating the start of a day. Afterwards, blood birds kept flying in and out, bringing various matters to his table.

He stretched himself first before devoting himself to work. His reading and writing speed was fast, and the instructions and comments he wrote were short and concise. The whole process was as smooth as flowing water.

After about two hours, he stopped and rubbed his temples, looking tired and exhausted. Then he stood up and walked down

from the high throne to stretch him limbs.

The work for today was done. He could take a rest.

The sunshine was cast on the ground from outside the gate, drawing a clear-cut boundary between light and shadow behind the gate.

Bei Shuisheng stopped and sat down in the shadow absent-minded. This was his favorite daily activity. He only spent two hours dealing with his work every day, and for the rest of the day, he would look outside the palace like this.

He had ordered to open all the gates so that he could look out.

Gates after gates. He could see no end of the long blackish gold slate pavement and the stone carvings. The outmost gate in his eyes was only the size of a sesame seed.

The outside world was the same size as a sesame seed to him too.

He rested his chin in his hand, and looked at the outside world fascinatedly. Sometimes he smiled with some expectation, as if something interesting occurred to him.

The high dome roof behind him was cold and lonely.

……

At Swordsman Training Hall in Peace City.

Fu Yonghao was impatient. Why did they have to watch two kids fighting against each other? He couldn’t bear to stay here, even for one more minute.

The war lasted for three years, and many things were different from before. The cruelty of the war was pressing on everyone’s heart like a mountain. Under such pressure, the pace of life had become much faster. Whether it was training or life, it was no longer what it was like in those years.

In the past, an elementalist who had attained elemental externalization could be counted as a master-hand. Nowadays, however, the number of such elementalists had more than tripled compared with three years ago. Everyone was practicing desperately and spared no efforts to find shortcuts to a higher base level. Blood crystals, elemental food...anything that might be helpful to training had already been studied so many times by numerous people.

In troubled times, your strength was the only thing you could depend on to survive. Those who fell behind would only be eliminated.

To be eliminated meant death.

But since Big Sister didn’t say anything, no matter how impatient Fu Yonghao was, he dared not make any trouble, as he always

regarded her with reverence and fear.

The confrontation ended up in a draw. Su Qingye and Zhou Wen first used up their elemental energy, and then their physical energy. Neither of them could accept such a result, but the only thing they could do now was sitting in the sandpit weak and limp and glaring at each other in fury.

Having announced the result, Lou Lan looked towards the group of people and said, "Nice to meet you. Welcome to Swordsman Training Hall. Anything I can help you with?"

Fu Renxuan, who was relatively older in age, asked, "Is Mr. Wang Han here? We heard that this training hall was opened by him and we are here to visit him."

"I’m sorry. He is having a rest, and may not be able to meet you." Lou Lan expressed his regret.

Fu Yonghao had been bored to death for too long. Hearing what Lou Lan said, he immediately became angry, "What does that guy want to do? How dare he send a sand puppet to..."

"Shut up!" The lady stopped him harshly.

Fu Yonghao ducked his head at once and dared not say anything else, although his face was still filled with anger.

The lady bowed slightly to Lou Lan and said, "I sincerely

apologize for my brother’s rudeness."

"It’s alright" Lou Lan shook his head, "But my master cannot meet you indeed. Would you please come again next time?"

"If that’s the case, we will pay a visit some other day."

The lady was very polite. Then the rest of the crowd left after her.

As soon as they stepped out of the training hall, Fu Yonghao couldn’t help murmuring, "Big Sister, do we have to do this? It’s simply a shabby training hall..."

The lady’s face looked dark, "Yonghao, if you continue like this, you will get into trouble sooner or later!"

"Same old story." Fu Yonghao whispered disapprovingly.

Then the lady turned to Fu Renxuan, "What do you think, Renxuan?"

Fu Renxuan was a modest person. He thought for a while and said, "Although the two students were not skillful enough, their swordsmanship is rather exquisite."

A streak of disappointment flashed across the lady’s eyes. Although Fu Renxuan was sober and modest, his ability was only

mediocre and could hardly take over the family business. Meanwhile, Fu Yonghao was too irritable and flippant. If he could not change his character through hardship, he could hardly achieve any success.

It was a pity that she herself was a female.

"One of them is an earth elementalist, and the other a metal elementalist. The earth elementalist had no sand puppet with him, but could utilize the sand in the sandpit to motivate his sword moves. The metal elementalist was using a soft sword, but if you took a closer look, you would see that his sword movement was drastic and he apparently used it as a heavy sword. The sword was a soft sword, but his moves were heavy."

Having heard Big Sister’s analysis, the impatience on their faces was gone.

"Whether it was sand sword and soft sword, the sword gleams were very clear. But did you notice that there was hardly any fluctuation of their elemental energy. Besides, taking their elemental energy level into consideration, I have to say that the duration of their confrontation was too long."

Fu Renxuan’s face became solemn, "After Bis Sister pointed it out, we do realize so."

Fu Yonghao was unwilling to admit so he said, "They are just two kids. Do you have to treat them so seriously?"

Big Sister replied, "The tiny elemental energy fluctuation and long confrontation duration indicated their high efficiency in the usage of elemental energy. What kind of person cares about the usage efficiency of elemental energy? Only those who have been in actual combats many times. Therefore, it seems that their teacher, Wang Han, must be a person of superb swordsmanship and has abundant real combat experience. Besides, this person is also good at fishing artifact remnants, but chooses to dwell in such a remote and unknown city. He is not simple at all."

"You are right," Fu Renxuan agreed, "we have never heard of this name either."

The lady suddenly said, "Yonghao, you also practice swordsmanship."

Fu Yonghao was a bit confused at first, then he was a bit excited and asked. "Why? Do you want me to test his ability?"

"No." she shook her head and said, "You will bring money and gifts to the training hall and learn swordsmanship from Wang Han, starting from tomorrow."

These words shocked everyone present.

Fu Yonghao almost couldn’t believe his ears and stammered, "I, I go to the training hall..."

"Yes." The lady nodded and said indubitably, "This Wang Han’s

swordsmanship is excellent. You must study hard from him."

Fu Yonghao was vexed, "Big Sister..."

"I have already decided."

The lady said without looking back at him.

In the Swordsman Training Hall, Ai Hui woke up with a start.

Face looking pale, he stood up, walked to the mirror and took off his clothes.

The blood plum flower on his chest became hot and more beautiful.

"Ai Hui, it’s transforming." Lou Lan was standing at the gate, and his eyes were glittering. Then he passed a leaf to Ai Hui and said, "News from the message tree."

Ai Hui put on his clothes and took the leaf. Danger flickered in his narrowed eyes.

With the Dragonspine in his hand, he strode over to his azure wings.

"Lou Lan, I’ll be going out for a while."

"Okay, Ai Hui."

Chapter 279: Starry Gem Swordwings

Fierce wind howled past his face.

Ai Hui was excited about these new azure wings, the force of which had largely exceeded all the azure wings he had ever used.

The new azure wings that he designed together with Lou Lan had a beautiful name - Starry Gem Swordwings. Different from other azure wings that were agile and light, it weighed twenty three kilograms, which was over five times heavier than normal azure wings. Meanwhile, the force it could produce was as amazing as its weight.

It could generate spectacular force, and its carrying capacity could be compared with that of some transport wagons.

Its tremendous force allowed Ai Hui to fly at a much faster speed. However, this enormous advantage in terms of speed came at the expense of its turning and hovering ability. Compared with ordinary azure wings, the Starry Gem Swordwings were less flexible and stable when turning and hovering.

But Ai Hui thought it was worth it, because he was more used to the one-strike-to-death way of fighting. Dogfight was not his style.

Unlike other azure wings, its extreme design could provide high speed, but it also increased the difficulty in control and the pressure to his body. However, those were not Ai Hui’s concerns, because his body was different from ordinary people. The blood

plum blossom had changed his body, which made him more like a blood fiend in human shape, so he could easily bear the shock waves brought by the high speed of the new azure wings.

The leaves on the wings were three hundred and sixty pieces of small swords, for which Ai Hui had particularly designed special moves.

In order to enhance the sharpness of the small swords, Ai Hui mingled a mass of gemstone silks in them. The power of See You Later arrows already proved how sharp this kind of silk, that was made from Ai Hui's special reeling techniques, could be.

And the other purpose of adding the gemstone silks was to disguise himself.

The appearance of the sword wings and the texture of the Star-sinking Ink Cloud were out of the ordinary and too conspicuous. The gemstone silks were effective in covering up these features, for it possessed the unique characteristic of producing halos of different colors. These halos could shield the texture of the Starry Gem Swordwings.

Ai Hui landed somewhere in the wild where nobody was around.

The azure wings on Ai Hui's back turned into snow white and shined with holy and pure white radiance. When they flapped, the wings would generate luminous spots which were starry and white, creating a beautiful scene.

Ai Hui smiled. He took out an elemental energy mask and put it on his face, which turned him into a gloomy middle-aged man with a scar on his face.

For the sake of safety, Ai Hui didn't purchase one from the market. Instead, he asked Lou Lan to make this elemental energy mask.

Ai Hui took off his clothes and wore them inside out. The original inside layer was as white as snow, and now it made him look pure and holy.

Then he infused his metal elemental energy into his hair, which immediately changed silvery white. Those rough short hairs were like pieces of small swords. His occasionally squinted eyes, together with the scar on his cheek, signalled danger.

He unwound the Dragonspine from around his waist and took a broadsword that was wider than his palm.

He flew again into the sky at a slower speed, with the Starry Gem Swordwings flapping rhythmically. He seemed extremely unruffled.

Silvery hair, broadsword, white clothing, cruel scar, cold eyes and glowing wings.

Wherever he went, he was too distinctive to be forgotten.

The elementalists and trade caravans on the way were attracted by him and wondered about his identity. Ai Hui was not disturbed by them at all. Before long, he arrived at the Cloud Ridge.

The Cloud Ridge got its name because of the clouds winding around those endless mountains all year round. It was located at the border between the Silver Mist Sea and the Palette Cloud Village. Having flown past the Cloud Ridge, Ai Hui saw the Palette Cloud Village in front of him.

Those soaring mountains were not obstacles for elementalists. Flying over the Cloud Ridge, Ai Hui felt a blast of cool, refreshing mist blowing on his face. This was not the first time that he had flown over the Cloud Ridge, but he enjoyed diving in the sea of clouds every time.

The trade caravans normally flew over the sea of the clouds at a higher altitude where they could see further and travel safer.

Flying over the Cloud Ridge and tracing the meandering mountain downwards, he saw a busy city, which was Cloud Ridge City. Like all cities along the trade routes, thanks to the flourishing of trade nowadays, the Cloud Ridge City and the Peace City had grasped the opportunity to develop rapidly. The scale of the two cities had been expanding almost every day.

The Cloud Ridge City was free from wars. There was only prosperous trading and bustling trade caravans.

Some trade caravans that prepared to land in the Cloud Ridge

City started to descend, but the majority continued their journey without stopping. They were fully loaded with local products of Silver Mist Sea and flew to cities farther away like the Jadeite Forest and the Blood of God.

For those who believed in money, wars didn't just result in ruins and destruction, they also brought opportunities and wealth.

Ai Hui also flew to the Cloud Ridge City breezily.

This time his destination was Magic Cloud City.

Ai Hui knew very little about the city, except that it was located in the backland of the Palette Cloud Village. It was far from here, and Ai Hui didn't know the exact route to the city, so he decided to travel with the trade caravans that were heading in the same destination. In this way, he could be more comfortable and save more time on the way.

Ai Hui was familiar with the Cloud Ridge City because one of his students, Hua Xiaoyun, used to live here.

Ai Hui's appearance was quite remarkable and attracted the attention many passersby, but no one dared to walk close to him, because he looked dangerous and irritable.

The air was filled with mist here, so water elemental energy was very active. The humid climate was a feature of the Palette Cloud Village. Therefore, the luxuriant plants in the Palette Cloud Village

were only second to the Jadeite Forest.

Fruit trees along the two sides of the roads bore an abundance of fruits that were fresh and tender.

If someone felt thirsty, all he needed to do was inject a bit of elemental energy into a fruit tree, and then some fruit would drop. However, taking fruits without permission would get you fined over twenty points of elemental energy.

Ai Hui was in no hurry, so he wandered idly on the street.

The Palette Cloud Village was famous for its variety of clouds. Underground fountains sprayed throughout the year, bringing a great amount of mist into the air, which eventually became unique clouds above the fountains. The fountains here were all different in nature, which resulted in different kinds of clouds.

Picking clouds needed special techniques. Different picking methods were applicable to picking different clouds. Cloud pickers here were as numerous as fishermen at the Silver Mist Sea.

Cloud Ridge City wasn't superior for the number of fountains. But the city was the home to the everlasting sea of clouds, which was the best place for picking clouds.

Because the sea of clouds had a long history, those who were lucky enough might have the chance to pick cloud crystals that were also known as Aged Cloud Ice. The formation of a cloud

crystal required hundreds of years' nourishment from the mist, so they only existed in places which were suffused with mist throughout the year, like Cloud Ridge City. But even in such places, Aged Cloud Ice was still rare. As a result, finding some in the sea of clouds was not easy at all.

Local residents often tried their luck in the sea of clouds, but few of them succeeded.

The price of Aged Cloud Ices was astronomical. Ai Hui had thought of adding some into the azure wings, but once he knew the price, he immediately gave up on the idea.

The Peace City and the Cloud Ridge City were located on the two sides of a mountain, but they possessed quite different styles and atmospheres. Even the habits of people living in these two cities were disparate.

Most residents in the Cloud Ridge City were water elementalists, who were mild and had a good temper. In contrast, most residents in the Peace city were metal elementalists, who were straightforward and aggressive like fire elementalists, but not exactly the same. Whenever metal elementalists had conflicts, they sought the direct solution of fighting each other without saying much. On the other hand, when fire elementalists had conflicts, they would squabble fiercely before fighting, and then put up a fight in a big way until the surroundings were all on fire.

Nevertheless, those conclusions were not applicable to everybody. For example, Shi Xueman, a water elementalist, had a tough temper, while Fatty as a fire elementalist was as timid

as a hare.

Ai Hui was lucky, for he quickly found a trade caravan that passed by the Magic Cloud City. Their destination was the Jadeite Forest. Although the frozen relationship between the Avalon of Five Elements and the Jadeite Forest had started to improve, those who had the ability to trade between them must have a remarkable background.

Getting a ride with an enterprise was very common.

The passenger had to pay certain fees, and most trade caravans were willing to pick them up since getting one more passenger wouldn’t cost them much.

But certain examinations were necessary before a trade caravan agreed to offer a lift. After all, the world was not at peace and there were more and more bandits nowadays. It would be troublesome for a trade caravan if they picked up a bandit accidentally.

Large enterprises had less to worry about in this aspect, because they had renowned aristocratic families as their supporters. Their force of protection was strong enough to deal with normal bandits.

The war lasted for only three years, and the Thirteen Divisions had already attracted a variety of outstanding figures like a magnet. Joining the Thirteen Divisions was the best choice for those competent figures. Apart from good compensation, there were a lot of rarities as well as many inheritances and even absolute arts that only existed in the Thirteen Divisions.

Few bandits were renowned masters, although in recent years the situation was changing.

""

"May I know your name and where are you heading to please?"

Judging from Ai Hui’s appearance, the manager of the trade caravan knew he was not a normal person, so he was very polite.

""

"I’m Chu Zhaoyang, heading to Magic Clouds city."

His indifferent voice contained an indescribable chilliness with a pressurizing aura.

Zhaoyang stood for the rising sun, while Huanghun stood for nightfall. Meanwhile, there were two "mu" (which means "wood" in Chinese) in the character for Chu, which was one "mu" more than in Duanmu. Ai Hui believed the new name he made up was smarter than Duanmu, Huanghun’s name. That was definitely his deliberate trick.

""

The manager looked surprised and delighted, "Are you the

Silverwheel Swordsman?"

Chu Zhaoyang, the Silverwheel Swordsman, was featured with silver hair, white clothes and silver wheel-like sword. He was one of the swordsmen who rose to fame in the last two years.

Since swordsmanship became popular two years ago, a batch of powerful swordsmen suddenly emerged.

""

Ai Hui said deeply, "Yes. When do we set off?"

Chu Zhaoyang was Ai Hui's false identity. In the past three years, he had done plenty of things under this identity, which made Chu Zhaoyang's name more and more well known.

Ai Hui was satisfied with the result. An arresting fake identity was easier to get people's trust than a real one without fame.

It was better to deal with dangerous things with caution.

""

The manager was excited, "We are going to set off tomorrow morning. It's our great honor to have you with us. This way please. Madam will be happy to know that you are here."

""

Ai Hui said indifferently, "Leave me alone."

He cast two elemental energy beans worth one thousand points of elemental energy towards the manager and walked away.

Ai Hui exuded a killing aura, and all the passersby on the way chose to stay away from him.

The manager had no intention of charging him at the beginning. After all, building up a good relationship with the famous swordsman was a better choice. But when he caught the view of Ai Hui’s back, he opened his mouth and said nothing. Those celebrities were normally rebellious and moody. This Chu Zhaoyang was apparently a ruthless one. If they irritated him, good things might turn into bad things.

He had to let his mistress know about that immediately.

The manager ran to report to her at once.

Chapter 280: The Auspicious

The swirling clouds that encased the mountain peak behind him were just like a peaceful horizon over a large ocean. The morning fog had yet to clear.

Yet, the little city had already started to bustle with activity. Wood elementalists had begun to replenish their elemental energy while shop assistants were hard at work transporting goods. One bamboo cart after another were gathered together as they prepared to set off.

By the time Ai Hui arrived, the caravan had already completed their preparations.

The steward who had been keeping watch quickly made his way forward. "Sir, this way please."

He led Ai Hui to a shockingly massive Fiery Floating Cloud. The steward noticed that Ai Hui was assessing it and respectfully said, "Madam informed us that you are a valued guest. How could we possibly disregard you? Please."

The fire-red magic cloud exceeded seventy meters in length and was over twenty meters tall. Strands of red clouds continuously rolled up and dissipated into the air, a gorgeous sight to behold.

Quietly parked at the plaza, the Fiery Floating Cloud was incredibly eye-catching.

Ai Hui was able to deduce the financial resources of the trading caravan just by looking at the majestic looking cloud in front of him. The sheer amount of material needed for it already commanded a great price, let alone the labor required to complete it.

Walking towards the front of the stairs, Ai Hui suddenly asked, "Does this Fiery Floating Cloud have a name?"

The steward courteously replied, "Auspicious."

"Great name."

Ai Hui nodded his head and walked up the stairs, his face as calm as ever.

Taking on the role of Chu Zhaoyang these past three years had accustomed him to handling such situations.

Walking into Auspicious, Ai Hui was dazzled by the decorations inside. There were no resplendent crystal chandeliers and no soft, magnificent fur carpets on the floor. There was, however, a gentle breeze and an elegant screen. Ai Hui could see only a graceful silhouette through the screen, nothing more. The imperceptible fragrance that lingered in the air perked him up quite a bit.

This amazing fragrance which calms the mind and replenishes elemental energy wasn’t something that money could buy.

The well-trained servants bowed uniformly to greet him.

Ai Hui was secretly surprised. Such lavishness reminded him more of influential families than commercial enterprises.

However, Ai Hui didn't concern himself too much about it. Who cares what sort of organization it was, he was only here to ride the boat. Upon reaching Magic Cloud City, he would leave without a word.

Going around the screen, he saw a lady standing by the window, silently observing the busy situation outside.

In one corner stood an old servant who gave Ai Hui quite the shock. In his heart, Ai Hui noted that the old servant's presence had been practically undetectable. Previously, Ai Hui had only noticed the figure behind the screen.

Such things rarely slipped past Ai Hui's keen senses.

This old servant was pretty impressive!

The old servant was dressed in a simple blue robe and was impeccably groomed. He stood attentively at one corner and took a tall, yet relaxed posture.

The old servant appeared to notice Ai Hui's gaze and bowed to

apologize.

Ai Hui’s expression returned to normal as he returned the bow. Unable to detect the old servant’s elemental energy fluctuations, Ai Hui was unable to fully grasp his strength. Comparing base level alone though, the old servant was probably at least two levels higher than he was. After some thought, Ai Hui decided that considering the chamber of commerce’s financial strength, it’d be even weirder if they didn’t have an expert holding the fort.

This "Madam" mentioned by the steward must be someone who was highly respected.

Ai Hui was fascinated by this Fiery Floating Cloud since it was his first time on one this huge. Although the cloud looked thick and completely opaque from the outside, one could look out from inside the cloud without any hindrance whatsoever.

The lady heard some noise and immediately spun around.

Ai Hui felt his field of vision become much brighter

The lady had a delicate and exquisite oval-shaped face. Her fair and defined neckline, coupled with her hair worn in a high double bun imparted upon her an air of elegance. Her eyes lit up upon seeing Ai Hui. "It is with great fortune that I managed to chance upon the Silver Wheel Swordsman here in Cloud Ridge City. Your humble servant (not really a servant, it’s a way of referencing herself down in front of an esteemed person) Xiao Shuren, has actually met Mister Chu before."

Ai Hui bowed slightly to return her gesture.

Xiao Shuren smiled and continued, "There's still some time before we set off, kindly take a seat Mister Chu. I hope you don't mind my embarrassing attempt at tea art."

"Much appreciated." Ai Hui graciously accepted her offer and sat down.

Ai Hui only knew how to gulp the tea down, how was he supposed to fully appreciate Xiao Shuren's exquisite tea brewing skills? The only thing going through his mind was just how little tea there was in each cup. Such a small mouthful of tea wasn't enough for him to taste anything.

Xiao Shuren's smile never once left her face and as the saying goes, never beat a person who is full of smiles. What's more, Ai Hui was about to hitch a free ride on their boat so he effortfully restrained himself and patiently sat still.

After about ten minutes, the trading caravan finally set off.

The Fiery Floating Cloud gradually floated off the ground and was unexpectedly stable. The experience of flying on such a huge Fiery Floating Cloud was extremely refreshing for Ai Hui, especially the unobstructed view that he had from within it. He could see everything outside the cloud, from the bamboo carts around them to the scenery on the ground.

Xiao Shuren was an understanding individual. Upon noticing Ai Hui’s curiosity, she brought the Fiery Floating cloud to a higher altitude, avoiding the bamboo carts and widening Ai Hui’s field of view.

The cloud was so stable that if not for the passing scenery, Ai Hui would think that they were stationary. A light breeze was constantly blowing through the cloud, making him feel carefree and relaxed.

After enjoying the experience for a while longer, Ai Hui asked, "May I know where my room is?"

Xiao Shuren shouted for another servant, "Bring our esteemed guest to his room."

Ai Hui followed the servant to the guest room. The room’s decorations left him feeling warm and comfortable. Although it wasn’t considerably luxurious, the room was huge and had a special area for training.

The servant informed, "Mister Chu, this ship also has a specialized training hall which you may feel free to use."

Ai Hui nodded, feeling quite satisfied. He instructed, "Kindly do not call for me if there is nothing important."

"Understood," the servant quickly replied.

Ai Hui closed the doors and promptly sat down to meditate. He knew that time was a scarce resource and had long adapted himself to practicing anytime, anywhere. Ai Hui would have attained elemental externalization if the blood plum blossom wasn't constantly consuming his elemental energy. Despite the presence of the blood plum blossom, Ai Hui was still able to achieve elemental internalization through hard training.

He needed one last step before he could attain elemental externalization.

The blood plum blossom made him a little worried because it appeared to undergo some sort of transformation as his base level rose. It now frequently became boiling hot, and Ai Hui would feel his mind throbbing whenever this happened. He had a feeling that the blood plum blossom would undergo a tremendous change when he finally achieved elemental externalization.

Although this hidden danger was present, Ai Hui had no intention of giving up. Achieving elemental externalization held more attraction than avoiding the potential dangers of the blood plum blossom.

Attaining elemental externalization would bring his power to a whole new level.

He dismissed all his distracting thoughts and concentrated on his training.

Back in the ship’s hold, Xiao Shuren retracted her smile. She gently held up her teacup and leisurely asked, "He Lao, do you think this Chu Zhaoyang is real?"

Standing in one corner, He Lao replied, "I can’t say for sure if he’s real or not, but he is quite alert. What I find strange though, is his low base level. He has yet to breakthrough to elemental externalization."

"Yet to attain elemental externalization?" Xiao Shuren asked, momentarily stunned. She subconsciously continued, "Could this person be an imposter?"

Elemental externalization was becoming more and more mainstream in today’s world. How could an expert like Chu Zhaoyang have only attained elemental internalization?

"On the contrary, I feel that he is the real Chu Zhaoyang," answered He Lao. "An imposter wouldn’t possibly have such a glaring loophole."

"It is hard to believe that the Silverwheel Swordsman has only achieved elemental internalization," replied Xiao Shuren, clearly impressed. She had faith in He Lao’s judgement.

"It is indeed rarely seen," He Lao nodded. "But outstanding swordsmanship or certain special inheritances can result in such a phenomenon. From what I know, there are more than ten inheritances that suppress base levels in their initial phases."

Out of nowhere, Xiao Shuren asked softly, "Does He Lao think he’s a threat or just someone harmless?"

"It is still unknown at the moment whether he is a friend or a foe." He Lao lowered his volume. "But if he’s going up against us, I’m sure he’ll surely give himself away soon enough. You have handled him well so I suppose he’ll only go after the caravan if he wanted to cause trouble. Furthermore, he’s on our ship. We’ll be able to take him down if he tries anything funny."

He Lao spoke easily and showed no sign of worry whatsoever.

Xiao Shuren smiled. "I would only dare to take such risks with you around."

He Lao chuckled. "You’re too kind, madam. If this journey goes smoothly, we’ll have overcome all the difficult issues in our way. Nothing will stop us from achieving success. Without your hard work and detailed planning, the chamber of commerce would most certainly not have been able to achieve its position today. To us, this journey is like a fight to the death. Please rest assured that I will risk my life to make sure these goods are delivered."

He Lao’s voice became firm and resounding towards the end of his speech.

The servants and bodyguards behind them remained unperturbed.

Ai Hui was deeply immersed in his training. Over time, the blood plum blossom more frequently entered a boiling state and these states were lasting longer and longer as well. It had initially occurred once a month, but it soon became once a week and then once every three days.

It was now happening every other day.

The blood plum blossom was incredibly unorthodox. It was completely different from all the other blood elementalist techniques that he had encountered before. Even his tried-and-tested lightning had no effect on the blood plum blossom. Ai Hui had tried to utilize the lighting in his elemental energy to bombard the blood plum blossom. Upon realizing that it was capable of absorbing his lightning, Ai Hui immediately stopped and was scared out of his wits.

Ai Hui had to carry out high-intensity practice every single day to maintain his current base level.

The blood plum blossom ceaselessly devoured elemental energy and did not give Ai Hui any respite.

Ai Hui had managed to maintain his elemental internalization for one and a half months but had yet to reach the critical point for a breakthrough. Attaining elemental externalization was a huge leap from elemental internalization. With it came a completely new level of understanding. People often got stuck at elemental internalization, unable to break through to elemental externalization. Prolonged periods of stagnation at this level could even cause one’s base level to fall.

Logically speaking, Ai Hui shouldn't be out and about during this period of time since undergoing a breakthrough might leave him in an awkward situation. The slightest issue could send his efforts down the drain or in worse cases, cause him to become injured.

He had obediently spent the last one and a half months in Peace City by Lou Lan's side. Ai Hui felt at ease with Lou Lan around.

However, he had no choice but to leave and pursue the leads he found regarding the blood plum blossom.

He couldn't be at peace as long as the blood plum blossom remained. Although it was only devouring his elemental energy for now, Ai Hui had a nagging feeling that it would eventually start going after his life. He had to find a way to deal with it soon.

Beautiful ladies were known to be ruthless.

Ai Hui's elemental energy training wasn't making progress. He knew that becoming overly fixated with achieving a breakthrough would eventually see him splitting hairs.

Recalling that the servant mentioned something about a training area on the ship, Ai Hui picked up his broadsword and decided to practice his swordsmanship instead.

Regardless of the type of weapon, practice was the key to perfection.

Ai Hui was delighted to find the training hall completely empty. Enjoying the peace and quiet, he quickly got to work.

The past three years saw him scouring through countless swordplay manuals for a greater understanding of various sword seals and sword techniques. His understanding of swordplay grew more profound with each passing day. He began to have more and more original thoughts surrounding swordsmanship as well.

His swordsmanship was on a whole new level.

Ai Hui was absolutely immersed in his training.

He did not notice the elegant figure watching him from outside the training hall.

Chapter 281: Karakorum

When the last sword ray vanished, Ai Hui came out of his highly-concentrated state of mind.

Clap, clap, clap! A round of applause sounded.

Interrupted, Ai Hui, who was still feeling the high from his training, raised his head somewhat unhappily only to realize that it was Xiao Shuren.

"Sir, your swordplay is exquisite. I have never seen anything like this. It’s a new experience and a great honor. May I know the name of that swordplay?"

It was as if Xiao Shuren’s eyes were emitting light. Her originally beautiful complexion carried an extra luster now. Her face was full of admiration, making it difficult for people to refuse.

Xiao Shuren had confidence in her beauty. It was well-tested and had never before failed her. Whenever she pulled this move, all the men would look at her as if they wanted to swallow her up. They would never reject any of her requests.

"Heh heh."

Ai Hui chuckled. It was a pity that he had an elemental energy mask on. The scar on it, coupled with its fake smile, carried an indescribable gloom and coldness.

Heh heh?

Xiao Shuren was stunned. What did that mean?

Although she had been through many significant occasions, she was now at a loss and did not know how to continue.

An awkward silence ensued.

As though there was no one around, Ai Hui kept his sword and prepared to exit.

Xiao Shuren reacted, a fog rising in her eyes. As if she was going to cry, she asked in a pitiful voice, "Did I disrupt your training?"

"That’s right."

Ai Hui answered matter-of-factly.

Xiao Shuren’s body turned rigid. That’s right... What’s right? Her cherry lips opened slightly, her complexion stiff. The speech she had prepared so meticulously was stuck in her throat, unable to come out. She had met so many reputable fighters, and no matter how displeased they might be, they would still smile and respond politely with: "Why do you say that, Miss? It’s such an honor to have you interested."

Why were there such crude and unfeeling people in this world?

In that moment, this was all Xiao Shuren could think.

Following which, she thought, perhaps it was because she wasn't beautiful today?

If Ai Hui could hear her thoughts, he would lament his misfortune. Miss, just throw out a few hundred thousand elemental energy points and he would be overeager to compliment your angelic beauty. Not to mention the swordplay's name, you could even get him to impart the skills with some negotiations.

Thinking back, this was the same as how he treated One Thousand Yuan. There was no pressure at all for him to do the same thing again.

However, the guard at the entrance became agitated. "Outrageous! How dare you treat Madam so rudely!"

A guard dashed over aggressively. A righteous indignation filled his heart upon seeing his mistress being wronged.

Seeing this person charging over, Ai Hui's pupils shrank. He was unable to determine the man's intention, but as a seasoned fighter, he absolutely would not act passively.

With a turn of the broad sword in his hand, he became like a spinning top as a round, silver disk swiftly appeared before this

guard.

Xiao Shuren’s face changed greatly as she shouted at the top of her lungs, "Stop!"

The guard only felt the anger of the silver sword ray sweeping over. An intense bloodlust shrouded his whole body as a sky-piercing whistle seemed to approach him.

He had never before seen such an overbearing swordplay or felt such biting bloodlust. His mind went completely blank.

Without any warning, the silver, raging wave dispersed like bubbles and left only the dumbstruck, pale-looking guard standing on the field.

Ai hui’s silhouette had already disappeared.

Only at the end did Ai Hui realize that he was still on someone else’s boat. He restrained his attack.

Seeing that Ai Hui was gone, Xiao Shuren regained her composure. She also had no idea where He Lao came out from.

"He Lao, what do you think?" Xiao Shuren asked calmly, without the slightest fear or panic.

"Shouldn’t be an enemy," He Lao muttered.

Xiao Shuren nodded. That was also what she thought. If an enemy had the intention to invade their circle, he would think of a way to get close to them, pull strings, and even gain their trust. However, that fellow was so cold and clearly expressed his disinterest in getting close to them.

She asked directly, "Did you notice anything about his swordplay?"

"Never seen it before." He Lao shook his head. "The sword ray was like a silver disk, imposing and strong. Shocking indeed. With that outstanding sword technique, it’s no wonder he could make such a big name for himself despite not having yet achieved elemental externalization. I can see that he has already mastered element internalizationl and he can breakthrough to Elemental Externalization at any time. Once he breaks through to elemental externalization, his strength will naturally increase exponentially. Only, he has too heavy a murderous spirit."

Xiao Shuren seemed to be moved by his words. "He Lao has such high praise for him!"

He Lao replied, "Although swordplay has been slowly recovering its glory for the past two years and there are many swordsmen, only a few are able to attain a higher level of skills."

Xiao Shuren asked thoughtfully, "Could Chu Zhaoyang be from Karakorum Sword League?"

Karakorum Sword League was an organization that had been established in these two years. Members boasted of being the successors of the Karakorum Sect. Karakorum sect was an ancient and faraway sword sect in the Cultivation Era. It had ruled the Cultivation Era for over thousands of years and had a long history.

The influential appearance of Zuo Mo ended the regime of the Karakorum.

But as time passed, the swordsmen started regarding Karakorum as the orthodox sect, instead of the more powerful and legendary Void Sword Clan.

There were countless powerful sects that emerged throughout the history of the Cultivation World, but none had ever been as legendary and resplendent as the Void Sword Clan. Not only did they raise an exceptional evildoer like Zuo Mo, they had also raised geniuses like Wei Sheng, Gong Suncha, and many more. There had been supreme beings, unequalled swordsmen, and champion war generals. Every single disciple was impressive and well-known.

Capability wise, the Void Sword Clan never fell below third place, but it wasn't a pure swordsmanship sect. Other than Senior Wei Sheng, Zuo Mo's training was complex and Gong Suncha was famous for commanding in battles.

As such, it wasn't surprising that swordsmen viewed Karakorum as the orthodox sect.

Regardless of whether they were borrowing the reputation of

Karakorum or of the Void Sword Clan, it wasn't of much use in the elemental energy era. They were simply too ancient and distant. If recovering the glory of the Cultivation Era seemed attractive, recovering the swordsmen's glory was a little nonsensical. No one admired them for using Karakorum's fame, but people mocked them excessively instead.

Nevertheless, the performance of the Karakorum Sword League shocked everybody. In these two years, the swordfighting trend was closely related to the promotional efforts of the Karakorum Sword League. They had gotten hold of a batch of swordsmanship inheritances and attracted and recruited a large number of elementalists in an unbridled manner. Then, after some introductory swordplay manuals started circulating in the market, elementalists found them formidable, instantly triggering the start of the swordfighting trend. Elementalists willing to join Karakorum Sword League would receive guidance from powerful swordmasters. They wouldn't have to pay such a huge price to learn even higher level, inherited swordplay as well.

The sword manuals circulated by Karakorum Sword League were evidently written by experts, and as such, attracted a lot of conjectures from all over. Unexpectedly, however, Karakorum Sword League remained very low-profile and did not make any big news.

According to minor sources, however, there were a number of influences who placed their focus on Karakorum Sword League, but to no avail. Of course, these rumors hadn't been verified and no one knew if they were true or false.

The swordsmen were linked to Karakorum Sword League in countless ways.

Upon witnessing Chu Zhaoyang’s excellent swordplay, Xiao Shuren naturally associated it with Karakorum Sword League.

"If he’s from there, he probably holds a high rank," He Lao muttered. "Karakorum Sword League usually keeps a low-profile and the higher ups are even more mysterious, but since you mentioned it, I actually think it’s highly possible."

Meeting Xiao Shuren’s gaze, He Lao said in a low voice, "It’s not strange at all if Karakorum Sword League came for this."

Xiao Shuren was stunned for a moment before her expression changed slightly. How could she have forgotten such an important thing? She mulled it over for a bit, her expression worsening. "Karakorum is definitely interested in it!"

She was very certain now, that Chu Zhaoyang was definitely a swordsman from Karakorum Sword League!

He Lao muttered once again, "Where did Karakorum Sword League get the news from? Supposing that he is a member, why did he act so indifferently?"

"They have many feelers and sources of their own. If Chu Zhaoyang is from Karakorum Sword League, why was he so cold?" Xiao Shurun repeated He Lao’s words. She had been managing the

chamber of commerce for so many years, had garnered deep respect from all the members, and had surpassing talent. "Either he’s just a senseless person who has no knowledge of swords, or he doesn’t even need to come close to seize the goods. Or, perhaps he was monitoring us and how many more thieves there are?"

The more Xiao Shuren thought about it, the more alarmed she was.

He Lao was alarmed and fidgety as well. "Let’s take him down? Or else our whereabouts will be exposed?"

Xiao Shuren calmed down, her gaze flickering. "No, perhaps we can make use of this."

Ai Hui didn’t know that his performance had actually led them to the Karakorum Sword League. Had he known, he would not know whether to laugh or cry.

In the room, Ai Hui was coiling the bandage very seriously.

He wrapped the bandage around his chest. It had a certain restraining effect when used against the blood plum blossom. This was the only discovery made in roughly three years. The bandage was a gift from his mistress, and he later discovered that it could swallow fresh blood. In the war of Central Pine City, the bandage had developed an eye-shaped pattern.

Later on, unintentionally, Ai Hui found out that placing the

bandage near the boiling blood plum blossom caused it to cool down quickly.

Ai Hui then realized that the bandage could restrain the blood plum blossom. He'd become wild with joy at the time, but his later discovery calmed his feverish mind.

If he used the bandage to suppress the blood plum blossom's break out, it would work for a short period of time before the flower flared up even more intensely.

Ai Hui had no way out at this point. This wasn't Peace City.

The boiling blood plum blossom made him irritable and increased his murderous intent. If he hadn't held back at the final juncture, that guard would have been sliced in half by his sword.

But the murderous intent, which had appeared within a split second, had alerted Ai Hui.

This operation was very crucial and mistakes were unpardonable. Keeping calm was key. An overpowering bloodlust would only turn him into a butcher, and butchers typically did not live long.

In these three years, he had tried "feeding" the blood bandage.

Chu Zhaoyang wasn't someone who hadn't kill before. In this chaotic world, popularity was derived from grappling and killing.

The bandage reacted only thrice. It was exceptionally picky and was no longer that "hungry bandage" that took in everything. Having consumed three tonics, the blood eye on the bandage now had an eyebrow.

He was curious how did the blood bandage really look like in the Cultivation Era.

Chapter 282: Meridian Sand

The commerce team flew continuously for numerous days and all was calm.

Ai Hui couldn't be bothered making friends with Xiao Shuren and the gang and just stayed in his room to meditate. Being stuck on the edge of a breakthrough was simply too irritating but Ai Hui also knew that he shouldn't rush it. Being hasty made things worse.

Sometimes, he would sit and stare by the window and enjoy this rare feeling of contentment. He had been hustling and bustling for these three years and often wandered along the boundary between life and death. There was no time for him to appreciate the scenery and be lost in thought.

He had never forgotten about revenge.

He had been woken up many times from nightmares. The bloodstained Dragonspine and Teacher's chest...it was like yesterday. Whenever he woke up at this point in the dream, an inexpressible grief and pressure befell him. It was as if the pitch black, deep night had engulfed the fields, making it impossible to struggle free.

Falling into the abyss was his choice. He wouldn't hesitate at all if given another chance.

The abyss and the dark night were neither able to rescue nor

destroy him.

The Blood of God was so tremendous, even more so than how it looked on the outside. It was deep and profound. Ai Hui took only Lou Lan and the message tree from Vanguard Training Hall when he left Central Pine City. He had a better understanding of the Blood of God than most, and he knew how it was good at being forbearing and unscrupulous.

Compared to it, Ai Hui was like a tiny cricket with no power to exact revenge. Hope was slim.

But when it came to certain things, it was more about whether he wanted to do it, rather than whether he could succeed.

Luckily there was Lou Lan.

Thinking about Lou Lan made the corners of his lips turn up. Lou Lan was even stronger than before but remained pure and genuine. His vigorous, energetic voice always made Ai Hui feel encouraged.

Suddenly, the alarm went off, startling Ai Hui.

He looked out of the window and noticed a ball of white cloud flying toward him rapidly from afar. It looked aggressive and did not seem to harbor any good intentions. But the team's reaction was fast. The transport wagon placed Auspicious right in the center.

Elementalists with azure wings flew out one after another.

Ai Hui involuntarily furrowed his brows.

The situation did not seem right.

That ball of white cloud wasn't a Fiery Floating Cloud but one that belonged to a water elementalist. The team's reaction was too quick, as if they'd already expected something like this to occur. Their defense was put up in a matter of seconds.

Ai Hui shivered when his gaze fell upon those guards.

Their elemental energy waves were stable and steady, and the azure wings on their backs emitted a solid light, seemingly attesting to their abilities. They were obviously elites and had clearly attained elemental externalization.

Such significant backup made it impossible for Ai Hui to believe that this wasn't preplanned.

At this point, Ai Hui already knew that he was just afraid of getting dragged into this whirlpool, even though he had no idea what kind of whirlpool it was.

Recalling well, he couldn't help but laugh and rejected the thought that this could be a trap. From start to finish, he'd been making his own choices so no one was to blame.

Ai Hui didn’t know if he was lucky or unlucky.

He started to understand why he was being invited onto this Fiery Floating Cloud. It wasn’t because he was reputable, but rather because the other party wanted to keep him around.

Indeed... a little embarrassing!

Ai Hui touched his nose and stayed well-behaved in his room.

Any action on his part might be regarded as threatening.

He had a keen sixth sense and could vaguely detect the whiff of a faintly discernible odor outside the door. He Lao’s silhouette surfaced in his mind. Ai Hui did not expect He Lao to spy on him personally. That old fellow’s capability was unmeasurable and Ai Hui did not wish to provoke him.

Ah, who knew that taking this vessel would lead him to this.

Ai Hui sat leisurely by the window, watching the events unfold like a bystander.

The team’s display of strength was really something.

Ai Hui remembered the name of the enterprise –"Great Wei Enterprise". He had never heard of it before. Having stayed in

Peace City for three years, he'd heard of most chambers, big or small, operating on the trade route. Even though he wasn't aware of every single enterprise, if the name had appeared a few times more often, he would've heard of it at least.

Yet, he was certain that he'd not heard of Great Wei Enterprise.

It was unknown whether or not the other party was heading towards Jadeite forest. Ai Hui was somewhat puzzled and decided to find an opportunity to slip off midway. His priority was to head over to Magic Cloud City so he had no time to waste on Great Wei Enterprise.

The arriving water elementalist was strong and he was hiding among the clouds without revealing his face. The cloud was about as big as Auspicious and looked like a huge monster, its momentum tumultuous and oppressive.

"Who has come?"

A guard from the enterprise spoke loud and clear.

The other party did not respond. Instead, countless bright arrows shot out from the clouds toward the guards.

The guards did not panic. They each did what they did best. Some used weapons to brandish a sheet of lightscreen, some were surrounded in eggshell-like light screen, while others laid out a sheet of sea of fire. Ai Hui was dazzled by them all.

Ding ding ding!

The concentrated collision sounds never stopped. When the specks of light hit the guards' surrounding light rays,

Ai Hui saw clearly the shocking power of the light arrows. They were raindrops the size of green beans, were uncountable and covered an extremely wide area. The rain fell incessantly, filling the skies with sharp whistling noises.

Ai Hui smacked his lips. This was truly a large-scale moving fort.

Attaining elemental internalization opened the access between the Nature and the human body. Upon attaining elemental externalization, an elementalist can borrow the elemental energies from the Nature to increase his powers. Where vapor filled the air, like in Palette Cloud Village, water elementalists would undoubtedly best be able to unleash their powers.

When faraway, the environment played a major role in affecting one's combat abilities.

The water elementalists at sea, earth elementalists in the desert, wood elementalists in the forest, fire elementalists in the midst of earth fire and metal elementalists in the city... you were never to cross paths with them there unless necessary. They were enemies no one wanted to face.

This person trained with clouds and mist. Where there was plenty of vapor, his abilities rose dramatically.

But the guards of Great Wei Enterprise weren't willing to be passive. They spread their azure wings and dispersed, before flying toward that ball of cloud from all directions.

They were like an agile flock of birds drawing handsome light traces in the sky, their murderous intent intense.

A blue fireball was thrown into the clouds.

Boom!

Like cotton, the cloud burst into flames, the blue blaze spreading across the clouds.

"[Icy Flames]!"

A stifled groan sounded from within the clouds as they shook strongly like the vibrations of huge drums and gongs, causing everybody's ears to go numb.

Ai Hui was astounded as well. Up till now, he had discovered nine types of [Icy Flames] and the inheritances of these nine types of [Icy Flames] were all in Icy Flames Division at Fire Prairie.

[Icy Flame], as the name implied, was cold. Generally water

restrained fire, but [Icy Flame] was water's mortal enemy.

Ye Baiyi commanded the [Icy Flames] Division with help from the Blood of God, and took with him practically every elementalist that practiced [Icy Flames]. Although Elders Guild had a backup copy of every [Icy Flames] inheritance, the most proficient practitioners of [Icy Flames] in this present age were all under the Blood of God.

The Elders Guild had wanted to rebuild [Icy Flames] Division for a long time now but had been unable to do so because of this.

Tradition was treasurable for sure, but no matter how much it tried to replace old with new, the Thirteen Divisions were forever the real masters .They could exchange skills and learn from one another. With many people training together, there were sufficient supplies of materials to create all kinds of new experiments.

As such, in this aspect, Avalon of Five Elements was behind by over ten years, or even longer.

"Such a pity that [Icy Flames] Division betrayed Avalon of Five Elements!"

A cold groan sounded from within the clouds as an immeasurable amount of water vapor gathered from all directions and inflated the cloud at a shocking speed. Where it was in contact with the [Icy Flames], it transformed into a cloud whip and belted towards the elementalists in the sky.

The cloud whip burned continuously but also grew at an even faster speed.

The guards' faces changed. Even the fire elementalist who threw the [Icy Flames] was shocked as well and he quickly retreated. Getting [Icy Flames] on himself meant trouble.

Countless bright blade lights flew toward the small mountain-like cloud like fast javelins, their sharp, silver arrow light accompanied by balls of raging flames.

But it had no effect, as if a clay ox had just entered the sea and disappeared.

Among the many offensive attack moves, the balls of raging flames seemed unremarkable. The clouds and mist swallowed it up in one mouthful.

Icy Flames was slightly more troublesome as the raging flames would only be restrained by a water elementalist. These elementalists were having a headache.

Sure enough, the raging flames continued shrinking and melting. Clap! They collapsed and a ball of clear, yellow sand flowed out.

This lump of yellow sand was abnormally dry. Once it fell and landed among the clouds, it started to absorb the surrounding vapor rapidly.

It was like a yellow bottomless pit, as an immeasurable amount of clouds and mist were ingested non-stop.

"Meridian sand!"

The hidden, mysterious water elementalist between the clouds was, for the first time, emotionally stirred. He felt a hint of fear.

Meridian sand was known to be the driest sand and was an extremely precious type of earth sand. It was made of sand, soil and mainly rock, and had the widest range of uses in all sand types. Yellow Sand Corner was known for producing all kinds of sand but even then, Meridian sand was extremely uncommon there.

Ai Hui, who had been observing leisurely, stood up for the first time, his eyes opened wide.

Uncommon meant expensive!

Ai Hui was stunned by Great Wei Enterprise’s way of handling business. Because of Lou Lan, Ai Hui had a much better understanding of sand types and materials. Lou Lan had a very big sand core but his body hindered his performance. Ai Hui had always wanted to upgrade Lou Lan’s body, so he was very aware of the market situation with regard to sand materials.

Ever since Yellow Sand Corner fell into the hands of the enemy,

the price of sand materials rose at least five times and some good materials just kept getting more and more expensive, without limit. Mostly, materials were out of stock and he couldn't buy them even if he wished.

Meridian sand was one of those.

If he could give Lou Lan the Meridian sand, Lou Lan would instantly become the water elementalists' mortal enemy.

This was an material that Ai Hui had not even dared to set his heart on obtaining, yet Great Wei Enterprise actually used it for battling. Watching it made Ai Hui bleed inside. He wanted so badly to dash up and fight the water elementalist, then snatch the sand over.

A pity it was being abused this way.

Meridian sand's formidability was astonishing. The small, mountain-like layers of cloud were actually being firmly sucked in by a small lump of meridian sand, unable to struggle free at all.

The clouds shrank rapidly and the water elementalist's body was finally revealed. It was a middle-aged man, his face overwhelmed with shock at this point.

Losing the clouds as a shield, he had no strength to resist at all.

A few guards had already closed in on him from different

directions, ready to nab him alive.

Suddenly, the middle-aged water elementalist revealed an eerie smile as a pool of fresh blood spilled out of his mouth.

The guards' faces changed greatly. He increased his speed and charged over but the water elementalist was no longer alive.

Just then, He Lao's voice sounded. "Mister Chu, Madam's requested a meeting with you."

Ai Hui shivered inwardly, his scalp going slightly numb.

Chapter 283: Alighting

All was the same. The same seat, same incense, the old servant standing in the same corner and Madam Xiao's movements were as graceful and cheery as before.

The painting-like scene was inexpressibly quiet. The atmosphere was subtle, as if a fog was floating in the air, carrying a certain tension.

Madam Xiao spoke suddenly, "What do you think, Mister Chu?"

"What do you mean?" Ai Hui responded. He was somewhat stunned by her stupid question.

"That earlier battle. Could it be that you have no thoughts on it?"

"Thoughts? My thoughts aren't important and I do not wish to get involved." Ai Hui conveniently added, "I have other matters to attend to and was just planning to bid goodbye."

He would be a fool if he hadn't already understood the other party's apprehension. Although he wasn't clear as to what was going on exactly, he could tell from the battle crew's allocation that this was going to be a maelstrom.

This wasn't something he could deal with. Plus, he had more urgent matters to handle so how could he waste any more time here?

It was best to get away from this maelstrom as soon as possible.

Madam Xiao stared intently at Ai Hui. He sounded genuine with his words, his expression truthful.

Could it be that Chu Zhaoyang's blending into the caravan was really without ulterior motives?

"Mister Chu's swordplay is excellent. Perhaps you're from Karakorum?"

"No." Ai Hui shook his head.

Madam Xiao seemed disappointed. The initial stages of Karakorum's establishment was at precisely the same time its popularity surged, so those walking outside would never conceal their identity. She had wanted to borrow the assistance of Karakorum but her hopes were dashed now.

"If Mister Chu is worried, just feel free to stay for a few days before heading for Magic Cloud City. I'll send you back to your room."

There was no doubt in her voice, and unknowingly, He Lao appeared by his side.

Ai Hui shivered inside. This old man was of a different level and

was not someone he should ever provoke.

He knew it was pointless to say anything now and he was feeling lazy anyway, so he went straight back into his room.

Things were not over.

This battle was just the prologue. Waves of elementalists charged forward like ants. While Great Wei's preparation was sufficient, injuries quickly appeared and the number of casualties kept increasing.

The most severe loss occurred on the fourth day, when eight guards died and six got injured. This elementalist was superbly powerful and in the end, the old man had to take on the task of inflicting a heavy blow to the opponent.

Benefiting from three years of extensive travel, Ai Hui knew quite a lot about the more reputable strong players.

He recognized this person.

Shi Youguang became famous more than twenty years ago and was truly a capable earth elementalist.

The old man's abilities shocked Ai Hui greatly. He had long felt that he was incomprehensibly strong but did not expect him to be

powerful. Shi Youguang’s sand puppet was completely destroyed by the old man and even Shi Youguang was badly injured.

Ai Hui was secretly glad that he did not try anything funny with that old man.

But it seemed that the old man was injured as well. Shi Youguang’s sand puppet launched a counterattack before dying and its strike was very sharp and powerful.

Witnessing a battle between experts enlightened Ai Hui greatly. It was a great learning experience. The might of elemental externalization was thoroughly displayed by the two of them.

Especially that direct control of heaven and earth elemental energy, which fueled them with abundant elemental energy and increased their endurance exponentially. Plus, they had a profound understanding of elemental energy and sometimes, weaker moves became outstandingly solid and powerful in their hands. It really opened up Ai Hui’s horizons.

Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door.

He opened the door and He Lao said while carrying a pouch in his hand, "We’re changing direction so you’ll have to be on your own for the later part. This is a gift prepared by Madam. She’s tired and won’t be sending you off."

The old man shoved the pouch into Ai Hui’s hands.

Ai Hui instantly knew what was going on. What gift? He was simply a bit of bait, asked to dig his own grave. No wonder he wasn't allowed to leave these past few days. It was to save him for this moment.

A bitter struggle had just broken out in the day, and in the middle of the night a member leaves slyly with such an obvious pouch, evidently trying to escape.

It wasn't clear how many pairs of eyes were secretly watching. Would he be able to escape?

He had to run if he wanted to live. The faster he ran, the better he would be able to lure the elementalists away.

Truly a cruel woman!

Ai Hui did not expect to get himself into this situation just by boarding this vessel. But he knew that if he did not agree, he was going to perish in this room today.

Looking at the old man's gloomy appearance, it seemed clear that his murderous instincts had been triggered.

"Pay up," Ai Hui spoke suddenly.

The old man was stunned. He had expected Chu Zhaoyang to

either be in rage or be silent or even rebel. Asking for money was beyond his imagination.

"I paid two thousand elemental energy points as part of the transport fare and now you’re just going to tell me that I have to get off? Violation of the deal means compensation. I’m not being unreasonable, am I?"

"How much elemental energy am I going to consume if I fly? Plus, the route is unsafe, what if I bump into a thief? How am I going to replenish myself with such a high consumption rate? What if I fall into the hands of the thieves? It would be a blow to the reputation of your enterprise."

The old man stood by the door like a statue, stupefied.

He turned around and left after a few seconds.

Ai Hui abruptly retrieved a seemingly unimpressive stone from the pouch and channelled a wisp of elemental energy inside. The stone instantly lit up but the slight glimmer vanished quickly.

Ai Hui stuffed the stone under his bed before returning to the door, standing motionlessly.

Not long after, the old man returned and threw a bag of elemental energy beans towards Ai Hui.

Ai Hui opened the pouch. It was filled with sparkling elemental

energy beans. The silver colored light was mesmerizing and the rich metal elemental energy odor hit him in the face. Each bean was very plump, sparkling and translucent. It was of a decent quality, far beyond ordinary elemental energy beans. Ai Hui immediately understood that these were rare essence elemental beans.

It contained even purer elemental energy and each bean costed more than five thousand elemental energy points, ten times more than an ordinary elemental energy bean.

As if no one was around, Ai Hui started counting the number of beans. There was a hundred.

"What a big move," he said suddenly without any ruthlessness since it was meaningless and not of any help in the current situation.

He put the beans away properly, carried the pouch and walked to the cabin door.

It was already open and the wild wind was whistling. It was pitch-dark outside but he did not stop or hesitate. He leaped forward.

Ai Hui detected a few odors approaching him as soon as he made the leap. Without hesitation, he threw the pouch away.

A few approaching black shadows turned around immediately

and dove for the pouch.

Ai Hui did not utilize his azure wings yet but instead, allowed himself to drop. When he was about ten meters away from reaching the ground, the azure wings on his back spread open suddenly.

The bright wings instantly became as dazzling as a torch. The powerful force resisted his downward momentum and slowed his body down before applying power.

His whole body was like a sword of light, stuck to the ground and advancing violently.

He had counted the number of beans not to estimate their worth but so as to give himself time to think of the possible scenarios that could happen and how he could deal with them upon exiting the vessel.

He was very clear about how dangerous the situation that he was about to face was.

As such, the first thing he did was to dispose of the bag. While this did not remove suspicion, it could attract the hidden enemies' attention, again giving him more time to react.

Great Wei's caravan flew in the sky so their pursuers would, too, stay in the air. Relying on his legs would not get him to Fiery Floating Cloud.

That being said, the number of enemies on the ground should be minimal.

Ai Hui’s series of responses had been observed by Madam Xiao and He Lao.

"Chu Zhaoyang really has skills. He is able to adapt and is as sly as a fox." Madam Xiao exclaimed in admiration and couldn’t help but sigh, "Not sure if what I’ve calculated is right or wrong." If Chu Zhaoyang lived, enemies would flock to the enterprise.

"Why blame yourself, Madam?" He Lao responded before adding indifferently, "This guy is not bad indeed, but he’s far from being able to become an enemy of the enterprise. An elementalist that has yet to attain elemental externalization is not a cause for worry, Madam. But, his azure wings aren’t bad at all. They’re speedy. Hopefully he’d be able to help us attract more people."

The stone Ai Hui left under his bed became brighter suddenly.

He Lao felt its intense elemental energy wave move and his face changed. "Not good..."

Boom!

Ai Hui smiled upon seeing the sudden blossoming of splendid flames amid the darkness.

That seemingly ordinary stone was an explosive created by Lou Lan from the blood crystal. It was relatively harmless to elementalists who had yet to attain elemental externalization, but was extremely suitable for destroying constructions or causing a stir.

Items Lou Lan produced were always reliable.

It wasn't that easy to deceive him!

The caravan was in chaos. Countless guards ran out in succession as a small half of the vessel had been blown off. Under He Lao's protection, Madam Xiao remained uninjured. But she looked on at the mess before her, at the remains of her tearoom and at the night sky, her face turning ashen.

This ball of flame was simply too eye-catching. Plus, it was Auspicious that had been blown up. Most of the hiding elementalists were attracted by the sight before them.

By now, Ai Hui was already miles away.

The instant the flame blossomed, the dazzling azure wings on his back turned pitch-black suddenly.

Ai Hui's silhouette merged into the darkness.

Looking down from the sky, one could see the silver sword light advancing close to the ground and disappearing suddenly.

He Lao was similarly ashen-faced.

He did not expect to be blindsided by Chu Zhaoyang. The latter’s words were like a slap to his face. It stung.

He turned around and glared at that violent silver light.

"This damned bastard!"

These words escaped through the gaps between his clenched teeth.

As he finished, that pencil-straight light vanished into thin air.

The old man’s face was filled with malevolence as it froze up suddenly.

Without any signs at all, that silver light disappeared into the dark.

All of a sudden, he recalled his mistress’s words. Sly as a fox. He felt that it was greatly true at this point. He smelt a whiff of an indiscernible odor and was startled. He shouted in a stern voice, "Protect Madam!"

Losing Auspicious instantly changed their situation for the worse.

Ineffably, a tinge of remorse surfaced in his chest. But there was no time for regrets. A fierce battle ensued.

Chapter 284: Ambush

Ai Hui concealed the light of his azure wings. The initial whistling of the wind stopped abruptly and the surging force of the wings soften and calmed down. Not only that, he was like a snake, constantly changing his direction and advancing in a haphazard manner.

The faraway, dazzling light behind him would occasionally illuminated his silhouette but he never once looked back.

He no longer cared if the Great Wei’s caravan lived or died.

He was already unlucky enough to get tangled in such trivial matters. It was simply a waste of his precious time to continue getting involved with the other party. He had things on hand and had no energy to waste on this.

Whether or not the Great Wei’s caravan could survive, it would depend on their luck.

Thinking about the elemental energy beans in his possession, Ai Hui felt that he had gained a little after all.

Unknowingly, he had already flown a few hundred miles. In order to get rid of his pursuers, he had deliberately altered his route as he felt like it. He wasn’t familiar with the route anyway so it did not matter where he went.

A thread of light had already started emerging in the sky.

He flew on for most of the night, which felt like an extremely long time. Even Ai Hui felt rather tired and his speed had declined quite a bit. Nevertheless, his vision was clear as day.

Flying close to the ground, about seven, eight meters away, easily allowing him to hide between the rocks and forest.

Seeing a small slope in front, Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. He flew up and when he reached the top, he saw a rock.

This is an ideal ambush location.

He flew to the bottom of the rock, took off his clothes quickly, wrapped it around a stone slightly smaller than him, and placed it under the rock.

He then flew away from the rock to a nearby tree. The thick treetop concealed him thoroughly.

He grabbed the broadsword tightly and tossed an elemental energy bean into his mouth. Essence elemental beans contained exceptionally pure elemental energy, and the best way to consume it was to absorb and refine it slowly. Using it the way Ai Hui was doing now is a waste of valuable resource since he would only be able to utilize less than ten percent of its essence.

But Ai Hui’s did not seem sorry. He felt a wisp of pure elemental energy circulating within his body and felt refreshed immediately. Sure enough, this deserved to be called the essence elemental bean. It was said that elementalists who had attained elemental externalization would directly produce essence elemental beans when they had no money. It was this easy for high level elementalists to earn money.

It was his first time "abusing" an essence elemental bean like this. The result was exceptionally good.

The strand of pure element within his body, released by the elemental energy bean, was congealed and gluey like mercury. When it circulated, his five residences and eight palaces were rejuvenated. It was inexpressibly comfortable and his fatigue vanished

He crouched on the tree trunk, his eyes drooping low. His broadsword hung down, its tip pointing toward the ground. His breath was nearly undetectable, his body not moving a single jot. He was like a seasoned hunter, patiently awaiting the appearance of his prey.

There was a brief instant, when he was on the run, where he captured a wisp of extremely weak wave of motion.

This wisp of undulation was very faint and passed in a flash but it was as if Ai Hui had met a big enemy. He pretended not to sense it and continued on , changing directions non-stop. Even after flying unceasingly for a long time, he wasn’t sure if he had managed to ditch the other party.

Ai Hui knew he had crossed paths with a troublesome opponent.

As he was advancing forward, he was searching for a solution. His eyes lit up when he saw the slope, in particularly the terrain behind it .

Ai Hui waited for a whole ten minutes and when he captured a wisp of odor, he knew that prudence had saved his life once again.

He remained highly focused, waiting for the right opportunity.

Their locations changed constantly. The prey became the hunter, but the hunter was oblivious to this fact. Having flown for such a long time, both were largely exhausted and since the pursuer had to identify the target’s direction , their energy consumption was even greater.

Through the thick tree crown, Ai Hui finally saw his pursuer. Although it was blurry, that face startled him. Shi Youguang. He thought that Shi Youguang, who had been badly injured by that old man, was already far away. He did not expect him to be so persistent.

He didn’t know what it was that Great Wei had in possession for Shi Youguang to be so determined, not giving up despite his severe injuries.

In fear of being detected, Ai Hui squinted his eyes, leaving only two slits open.

Shi Youguang looked extremely tired and his movements were evidently much slower than before he was injured. His injuries must have been very serious. On second thought, if Shi Youguang didn’t get hurt, he wouldn’t have chased after him. Ai Hui knew very well that if he were to face unwounded Shi Youguang, there was no way he could win.

Shi Youguang flew up the slope and immediately saw the perfectly positioned rock.

That was the ideal ambush spot.

That fellow wouldn’t be laying in ambush, waiting to take me down right?

Shi Youguang was being cautious. The chase made it clear that the fellow was very sly and had lots of tricks up his sleeves. He had merely attained elemental internalization, but managed to get him, a strong elementalist that had attained elemental externalization, all tired. There had been a few times where he almost lost sight of the fellow as well.

It would’ve been too embarrassing if that did happen.

Luckily that fellow was of a lower realm and wasn’t as capable. Otherwise, Shi Youguang would’ve turned around.

Shi Youguang knew well that with his injuries, it was already impossible to profit from the puppeteer-like Great Wei Enterprise. If he was just a little careless, his life would be jeopardized. But he had already invested so much and even got hurt so it would be a massive loss if he were to give up now.

Shi Youguang had planned to take down a lone-moving, injured elementalist to recuperate his losses.

He then saw Ai Hui jumping out of the Fiery Floating Cloud, but did not take action since there were quite a few fearful players who made a move. Who knew, that guy was incomparably sly and disappeared in a flash.

Shi Youguang then made his move quietly. Few knew that he was good at chasing and those who knew were already dead. It was rare for earth elementalists to be good pursuers but Shi Youguang had the skills to differentiate the changes in the ground elemental energy.

Ground elemental energy was like a calm lake, and when an elementalist hovered over, ripples formed on the water surface. To others, these ripples were disordered but to Shi Youguang, they were information.

The earth elemental energy on the ground looked very messy but many ripples made it clear to him that his target had flown straight to where the rock was.

Shi Youguang was good at ambush to begin with, so he could tell right away that where the rock was, was the perfect spot.

His opponent had detected him.

Shi Youguang was somewhat surprised but quickly calmed down. His target's cunningness exceeded every single elementalist he had met before. It shouldn't be strange even if that fellow managed to detect him.

But if that was all to that fellow's abilities, so what if he knew where he was?

Trying to lay an ambush? How naive!

A mocking smile appeared on his face as he advanced confidently toward the rock. While his elemental energy had been greatly exhausted, he knew his opponent's was too.

Even though his condition wasn't good, he did not feel pressured since he was dealing with a worn out, elemental externalized elementalist. The disparity in realm is not easily compensatable.

There was still no movement behind the rock. How composed.

Admiration flashed across his face. To be honest, while his target wasn't considered very strong, his abilities in other aspects were actually uncommonly outstanding.

Cunning, shockingly calm, and collected.

If his target had been slightly stronger, Shi Youguang would've aborted his mission.

But now, the admiration in his eyes turned into ruthlessness. Die!

Where the rock was, a bottomless pit appeared suddenly as the surrounding soil seemed to come alive. Mud vines appeared above the pit to form a big cage, covering the pit.

Ai Hui went for it the moment Shi Youguang made a move.

He was like a noiseless bat, diving down for Shi Youguang from the treetop.

When the mud vines above the pit took shape, Ai Hui was already less than thirty meters away from Shi Youguang!

Shi Youguang suddenly realized what was going on and his face changed completely. He had been tricked!

The rock was just a diversion!

His target's shrewdness turned his body cold, but for him to be this reputable, Shi Youguang had experienced countless battles. While his situation was precarious, he knew that the thought of

escaping would undermine his will and allow his opponent to take advantage of it.

There was a subtle aura around the battle between strong players.

Once his state of mind swayed, his abilities would be affected greatly. Coupled with the fact that he was injured, he would undoubtedly die.

His only chance of survival was to meet his target face on!

Whatever trap became useless since it boiled down to abilities.

Shi Youguang was shook, as if he was a completely different person. His whole body oozed ferocity. Instead of retreating, he suddenly pounced on Ai Hui, his body transforming into a clump of quicksand in midair.

A head seemed to be floating atop a pool of quicksand.

And on Ai Hui’s back, a sharp earth spear was raised, just like how a poisonous snake raised its head in the darkness, ready to deal a fatal blow.

They were less than fifteen meters away from each other.

Shi Youguang couldn’t help but was slightly distracted by

his target's eyes. Those eyes were cold, still, and without the least bit of panic and helplessness.

Not good!

Shi Youguang's heart sank a little as a bad feeling rose within his chest. Before he could react, a glaring silver light exploded right before his eyes.

This ball of light was so dazzling that he lost his sight right there and then. Everything was white.

Ai Hui channelled nearly half of the elemental energy within his body into the Starry Gem Swordwing and it exploded with an extremely splendid silvery light!

They were too close and the silver light appeared too suddenly, effectively striking Shi Youguang, who was unprepared.

Amid the glaring light, a bright yet non-conspicuous and silent sword light emerged.

The broadsword was soft and easy, making a slash across Shi Youguang's neck.

The head floated up lightly and unhurriedly.

Ai Hui's elemental energy had been maxed out and as he was

descending, his legs softened and he almost kneeled on the ground. The battle was short but Ai Hui had put all his wisdom and skills to use.

His body was empty but the moment he touched the ground, he dashed over to Shi Youguang. Within thirty seconds, Ai Hui had already claimed all the loot.

He wasn’t out of practice!

Ai Hui swept all the spoils of war and flew away speedily.

The silver light from before was simply too dazzling and could’ve very possibly attracted other elementalists’ attention.

Chapter 285: Panicked State

Not even ten minutes after Ai Hui left, two lightflows broke through the sky as two silhouettes, one male and one female, landed on the ground.

The man was tall and handsome, his eyes exceptionally clear and bright. He held a longsword and his gestures were graceful but fear-evoking.

"Shi Youguang!"

Shock was evident in the lady's voice as she realized that the head on the ground belonged to Shi Youguang. His expression was sinister and his eyes were wide open, a clear sign that he died with a remaining grievance.

The man squatted to inspect Shi Youguang's head. The slash was cleanly done and there was no signs of sloppiness. Looking at the headless corpse not far away, the man imagined the fight scenario in his head and his expression turned grave. "Outstanding swordplay!"

The lady asked curiously, "Perhaps one of your people? A swordsman from Karakorum?"

The man shook his head. "I heard that the thief is called Chu Zhaoyang. Not one of us. But we did observe him. His skills are pretty good, just that he has a low base level and has yet to attain elemental externalization. Looks like he's actually much more

powerful than we first thought."

Karakorum always had much interest in swordsmen who somewhat famous.

The man continued, "I had thought initially that Great Wei's words were a diversion tactic but seeing Shi Youguang's corpse now, I'm quite convinced."

The lady asked in shock, "Don't tell me you too, believe Great Wei's excuse?"

"It's a fact that Chu Zhaoyang managed to defeat Shi Youguang, so he's really not as simple as we thought. He has some hidden abilities. Moreover, he has a lot of wisdom. There's no way Great Wei would destroy Auspicious, which means that explosion was Chu Zhaoyang's doing."

"Is he really that powerful?" The lady asked in disbelief.

"Judging from his head and body, that fatal slash easily snapped Shi Youguang's neck. His head did not receive a big impact since it did not float far. It is extremely challenging to execute such a heavy blow in a light manner during a frontal confrontation."

The man then flipped Shi Youguang's corpse over. His sword mastery was excellent and he could naturally tell that the perpetrator had an outstanding level of skills.

Shi Youguang’s body was completely naked and the lady turned her head in revulsion.

"Shi Youguang is not a simple fellow as well. Look at his corpse. A third of it had become sand."

The man reached his hand out to press on Shi Youguang’s skin and a portion of quicksand emerged. It was a strange sight. A few minutes after dying, the elemental energy within a body undergoing sandification would gradually dissipate and the area of sandification would transform into quicksand.

"He actually transfigured his own body?" The girl’s voice became louder suddenly, her face full of fear.

Body modification was taboo yet by no means extinct.

Essentially, elementalists’ training was an energization process which deepened the elemental energy within their bodies. The faster the energization, the greater the elemental energy storage, which meant a better mobilization of the heaven and earth elemental energy.

At the beginning, body modification was used to help disabled elementalists. Its effectiveness then became apparent since not only did the elementalists’ abilities not decline, they actually became more powerful.

Elementalists who transfigured their bodies could garner

tremendous force in a short period of time and their initial training speed far exceeded that of the average elementalists. Some extremists began to use pure ingredients to modify their bodies in order to expedite the energization process.

For a period of time, it was fashionable to have had one body modification done.

But as the number of body modifying elementalists increased, malpractice and abuse set in.

No matter how exquisite the ingredients' grade was, they were ultimately man-made. The human body was rather amazing. With further developments, the foreign, man-made matter started getting rejected more apparently by the human bodies.

The fatal part was that such repulsion would affect one's intelligence and temperament. Many elementalist who had undergone modifications started acting strange and irritable, and started developing a liking for slaughter. Within a short period of time, many cases of violence by transfigured elementalists shocked the whole Avalon of Five Elements. Eventually, the Elders Guild personally ordered the Thirteen Divisions to hunt and take down those transfigured elementalists.

From then on, transfigured elementalists were regarded as taboo and whoever followed their path would be killed.

Hence, the lady was seriously in shock when she realized Shi Youguang was actually a transfigured elementalist.

The man wasn’t surprised by her reaction. Instead, he nodded, "And that’s why I said Chu Zhaoyang isn’t simple."

The lady was now convinced. Transfigured elementalists were much stronger than normal ones and their survival means were weirder as well. Chu Zhaoyang must not be weak if he managed to take down a transfigured elementalist.

"Then let’s head to Magic Cloud City?" The lady asked.

The man shook his head. "No, let’s keep our eyes on Great Wei Enterprise."

He muttered to himself, eyes flickering with wisdom and quick-wittedness. "There’s something suspicious here. If Chu Zhaoyang was a thief trying to blend into the Great Wei’s caravan and finally defeated Shi Youguang down upon crossing paths when he was trying to escape, his first reaction should be to flee far away as opposed to loot. Of course, it’s possible that he’s a money grubber but chances are low. Such a wise and crafty person should be able to control his emotions well. I’m starting to doubt Great Wei."

He raised his head and revealed a confidence smile. "Let’s watch. If the item is in Chu Zhaoyang’s hand, they would definitely find a way to get it back. That will help us locate him as well. If they were lying, they would find ways to leave."

The lady said sweetly, "I’ll listen to you!"

Ai Hui had been flying non-stop and as fast as lightning for a whole day and night, changing directions a few times midway. When he was certain that no one was following behind, he stopped by an empty valley to rest.

He could feel his whole body falling apart.

After descending, he found an isolated corner before popping another elemental energy bean into his mouth to drive his elemental energy for the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

That short fight had engaged all his wisdom, experience and, perseverance and strength such that he almost collapsed from exhaustion during that moment of victory. However he dared not stay long and quickly fled all the way here like a stray dog.

A stray dog was a stray dog. He had no poise but surviving was more important.

To fly a day and night straight in that worn out state, Ai Hui had been completely relying on his excellent willpower. But he had already reached his limit. These past three years, he had been involved in many battles of different scales but he never allowed himself to fall into such a pitiable state.

The pure essence of elemental energy was like gluey mercury, circulating within his body.

Ai Hui's body was like dried up mud, which tirelessly and diligently absorbed moisture from the rain.

He seemed to have lost consciousness. It was his instinct driving the Circulatory Cycle Revolution. One after another revolution transformed the pure elemental energy into wisps that entered his five residences and eight palaces, and his limbs and bones. They were being absorbed by the flesh and Ai Hui's withered body began to sprout and flourish once again.

An unknown number of revolutions later, the wisps of elemental energy steadily seeped out from every corner of Ai Hui's body to rejoin the Circulatory Cycle Revolution. Following it, they gradually turned into elemental energy sword pills, which were unique to Ai Hui.

When Ai Hui woke up, he felt as though his whole body had been cleansed. It felt indescribably empty and pure.

When he checked the elemental energy within his body, the elemental energy sword pills made clear, crisp sounds and the odor became abnormally introverted. If the pills from the past were somewhat thorny, the pills now were perfectly round and smooth without any sharpness.

There was vigor within his body. His whole person became exceptionally clear and pure.

It was his first time experiencing something like this.

Just then, Ai Hui's body jolted and his mind rumbled, as if a big gate had been opened within.

He seemed to have seen countless silvery light pouring out like a flood from Silver Mist River, drowning him in an instant as his mind went blank.

All of a sudden, the area between his brows lit up and a silver whirlpool gradually took shape. Elemental energy from the his surroundings came pouring into the whirlpool from all directions.

The elemental energy first entered and filled the sky palace, so much that Ai Hui's brain felt overfed and was about to explode.

Ai Hui's remaining thread of consciousness told him that the most important thing to do now was to start the Circulatory Cycle Revolution!

Following the Circulatory Cycle Revolution, the congested sky palace finally found an opening for drainage.

The influx of elemental energy was simply too high, causing Ai Hui's circulatory cycle revolution to lose control.

A huge volume of elemental energy was like a havoc-wrecking deluge, destroying everything in its path and flooding whatever possible openings and crevices. The speed of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution far exceeded what was usual.

A black, fishy-smelling matter started seeping out of Ai Hui's skin. This continued for a period of time before the black substance gradually faded.

By now, Ai Hui had already recovered his spirits and could feel the elemental energy within his body filling up. The absorption of elemental energy by his sky palace had also slowed down quite a bit and the whirlpool between his brows started to shrink.

Once the whirlpool between his brows closed up completely, he would attain elemental externalization!

Just then, the blood plum blossom in Ai Hui's chest lit up with a devilish bloody glow and started wildly sucking in elemental energy. The circulating elemental energy, which had practically come to a stop, began operating once again and the whirlpool between his brows, which had started to close up, stopped shrinking.

The sudden change of events caught Ai Hui off guard.

The blood plum blossom was like a bottomless pit, greedily and incessantly swallowing elemental energy. The elemental energy within his body started operating quicker and quicker. What frightened Ai Hui more was the fact that the elemental energy whirlpool between his brows had actually started to enlarge.

Ai Hui's body had already been cleansed by the elemental energy and if the energy continued pouring in, his body would gradually

collapse and combust under the powerful current.

Overdoing was as bad as insufficiency.

The surrounding elemental energy formed a halo around Ai Hui and elemental energy within a radius of about two miles gushed wildly toward the valley. An underground metal vein of ore exuded silk threads of silvery light, which seeped out towards Ai Hui, who was above ground.

Ai Hui tried all sorts of ways but the current within his body did not slow down and the blood plum blossom wasn't affected all as it continued absorbing the elemental energy avariciously.

What oozed out from Ai Hui's skin was no longer that black, fishy-smelling matter but drops of fresh blood. In the blink of an eye, Ai Hui looked as if he was covered in blood .

Ai Hui's skin started to crack as silvery light seeped out. It looked exceptionally scary.

Just then, the all along quiet bandage seemed to have smelled the odor of a prey.

It moved.

Chapter 286: Woman in Red, She Yu

The blood-colored eye on the bandage lighted up slightly and looked alive. It seemed as though there was a pair of invisible hands untying the knot around Ai Hui's wrist.

Sha sha sha was the sound made by the bandage rubbing against the shirt. The bandage was like an agile snake, coiling around Ai Hui body as it moved.

Its tip started to tremble slightly like a snake that sniffed around constantly.

It quickly appeared on Ai Hui's chest. The blood plum blossom must have swallowed up a significant amount of elemental energy for it to look this plump and tender. Its petals reached out, as if it was going to peel off from Ai Hui's chest.

The bandage shot out like a white, sharp sword, and entered the heart of the blood plum blossom suddenly.

The flower trembled, as if breaking free, but was unable to no matter how hard it tried.

A fine wisp of blood thread extended along the bandage and entered the blood eye .

The blood eye's light brightened significantly. The initial blurry and stiff eye now burst with life and carried a different kind of

grace.

The flower’s extended petal withdrew into Ai Hui’s body again. It's once tender, beautiful and lifelike appearance withered and dulled, becoming a dark red color.

The light cracks on Ai Hui’s body faded quickly and eventually vanished.

The light whirlpool between his brows shrunk rapidly until it closed up as well.

At this point, the blood bandage was full and satisfied. It withdrew from the blood plum blossom and returned to its original position, knotting itself up around Ai Hui’s wrist.

Jadeite City was located at the core of Jadeite Forest and was the biggest city. Ever since Jadeite Forest was established, instead of falling into a slump, this area became livier. Everything went well and business within Jadeite Forest flourished. The families involved in its establishment recovered from their initial worry and became highly confident.

Power, status and so on were easily attainable for these core families.

Quan family was one of the mightiest families in the whole of Jadeite Forest.

There were three main supreme families.

The most reputable and unsurpassable clan would be the Duanmu household.

Duanmu household was the most well-known family within Avalon of Five Elements and possessed a lot of inside information. Furthermore, Duanmu Huanghun was Dai Gang's disciple. Jadeite Forest never would've been possible without Duanmu household's support.

Other than the Duanmu family, there were two other comparable families and one of them was Lu family. Lu family used to be pretty influential in the past but still not as much as Duanmu family. Now, with the chance to contribute to the establishment of Jadeite Forest, Lu family made a great leapt and became one of the most supreme families.

Like Duanmu family, Lu family had a disciple under a Grandmaster. Not only was Lu Chen Dai Gang's disciple, he was the first disciple. Even Duanmu Huanghun had to address him as Senior when they meet.

Able to squeeze its way into the top ranking families without Duanmu Household's inside information, Lu family had not only Lu Chen to thank but also Lu Feng. That year where Deathgrass's division's leader Zheng Yuanhong refused to surrender, the whole division underwent a blood purge. Thereafter, Yu Mingqiu left his village and Deathgrass Division fell into a downward spiral.

At the time of calamity, Lu Feng undertook the role of leading Deathgrass Division.

It was this appointment which people were not optimistic about but the results were extraordinary favorable. Lu Feng was outspoken, straightforward and loyal. Within a short period of time, he managed to reorganize and transform the atmosphere of the division, tidying up the previous ruins.

Other than Duanmu and Lu family, there was yet another family that stood at the peak of the food chain – Quan family.

If one were to say that Duanmu family set Jadeite Forest in place and Lu family took the opportunity to drive their influence, then Quan family bore the first evildoer. The Deep Sea Enterprise, created by Quan family, was the biggest underground organization that had every commodity under the sun.

Although Quan family was wealthy, they had no power and did not bear any top-notch fighter. Since ancient times, merchants were the lackeys of tyrannical aristocratic families. They had plenty of money but were without status.

The head of Quan family, Quan Weide had his own interpretation of the situation and initiated a provocation regarding the establishment of Jadeite Forest. And in order to gain the approval of Duanmu family, Lu family and Grandmaster Dai Gang, Quan Weide spontaneously offered Deep Sea Enterprise.

The merchants of Jadeite Forest ridiculed Quan Weide’s action

and felt that he was simply being silly. Handing over his own chamber of commerce was like trying to draw water with a wicker basket. The greedy families would definitely take thorough advantage of him and reduce him to nothingness.

Who would've thought that not only did Quan Weidie not get swallowed up, a few big families joined hands to enter Deep Sea Enterprise. They invested a large amount of money and manpower to expand it.

From then on, the trading world also became Jadeite Forest's national policy.

More importantly, Quan Weide was Deep Sea Enterprise's authority figure. Just like Lu family, Quan family shot their way up to become one of the most reputable families that carried the money bag of Jadeite Forest. Even Dai Gang encouraged him to do a proper job and Quan Weide did not disappoint. Under his leadership, Deep Sea made astonishing gains, filling the big families' pockets with money and so, they were especially courteous to Quan family as well.

It'd been said recently that Dai Gang might be taking in an unofficial disciple from Quan Family. This was buzzing news that drew many visitors to the household.

Quan residence was filled with visitors tonight as well. The wine and food were intoxicating and the lights were bright and splendid, as if it was day time. More than half of Jadeite Forest's most important figures were here and their usual stern faces were replaced by cheeriness. Occasionally they raised their glasses to

celebrate and enjoy this moment of recklessness and tipsiness. Many hoped to mingle with familiar-looking people, going forward to start chats.

And beyond the high perimeter walls, so many people were racking their brains trying to get in.

Quan family feasts were usually well-known since Quan Weide enjoyed lavish fun and many other fresh things. Over time, the family also became a place for many children from influential families to hang out. They held an astonishing record of hosting a party for over two hundred days straight.

Tonight's feast was exceptionally grand. Quan family had spent many days preparing for this.

When a lady in red appeared, the whole household quietened down. That beautiful and tender face had already gotten the gentlemen holding their breaths.

Her blooming red clothes floated gracefully like smoke, carrying a tinge of languidness and charm. It was as if there was a pair of invisible hands that grabbed everyone's hearts.

Quan Minglong, who stood beside her, was looking at this goddess-like lady passionately as well.

The lady in red smiled sweeting, instantly brightening up the whole hall.

Quan Minglong's heart was beating so fast, as if a voice was booming inside. He must have her! No matter what, he must have her!

This voice was raging within his chest like a fierce storm. Quan Minglong radiated a whole new kind of vigor as he'd just found the biggest desire of his life.

The lady in red was unaware of how the gentleman beside her was feeling but she wouldn't care even if she did. She did not have time to care since so many men were interested in her any way.

She handled the scene skillfully, giving the right amount of smile, words and charm.

Everyone who met her couldn't help but admire and praise her inwardly. The emergence of Blood of God was indeed not a fluke.

The lady in red, She Yu, was indeed out of the ordinary.

She Yu was sent by Blood of God on a diplomatic mission. She had heard that Duanmu Huanghun was of a marriageable age and Blood of God hoped to build ties with Jadeite Forest through marriage.

Quan Minglong was somewhat jealous. If he was Duanmu Huanghun, he would immediately accept the proposal. Thinking about how the host was still indulging in fun while here he was

burning inside, Quan Minglong’s spirits fell instantly.

Everything will change once he became Dai Gang’s disciple!

"By sending such a beautiful angel like yourself on a mission, God Nation is just trying to get poach Jadeite Forest’s best talent over to Blood of God!"

A steady and grave voice sounded and others started muttering in low voices. Guests who stood beside the old man immediately moved aside to make space for him. A rather stout middle-aged man went forward slowly. He was an authority figure of Jadeite Forest, Gong Wenyou.

Quan Minglong quickly bowed. "Uncle You!"

"You’re here too, Minglong." Gong Wenyou said as he gave Quan Minglong’s shoulder a pat.

She Yu blinked her eyes. "Mister Duanmu and I have had the chance of meeting. I really hope you’re right, Sir. That way, Mister Duanmu will not treat me so harshly."

Her words shocked everyone present. Gong Wenyou was rather surprised as well. "Could it be that Miss She Yu and Duanmu had a conflict?"

She Yu smiled playfully. "There was a time when I happened to be near Central Pine City."

Everyone suddenly understood and momentarily, there was an awkward silence.

The blood disaster in Induction Ground was a taboo topic within Jadeite Forest. The peaceful relationship between Jadeite Forest and Blood of God caused much controversy within Jadeite Forest since many sons from Jadeite Forest families had lost their lives in the blood disaster.

While both aligned with each other for mutual benefits, the hatred did not disappear.

Gong Wenyou knew as well that this topic was not discussable and so he simply laughed it off. "You youngsters go ahead and get close to one another. There's no need to care about us old fellows. Minglong, I'll leave Miss She Yu to you. I'll hold you responsible if anything goes badly!"

Quan Minglong was overjoyed. "Yes!"

She Yu smiled as she gave Gong Wenyou a respectful bow before following Quan Minglong to join the gentlemen from respective families. The young ladies present observed She Yu curiously, whereas the young masters acted restlessly as if they'd been injected with chicken blood.

She Yu casually played along with her perfect smile.

Suddenly, her heart trembled as a peculiar sensation hit her arm.

She remained composed as she casually placed her left hand over her left arm. Over her clothes, she could clearly feel the blood plum blossom on her arm emerging from her skin, as if it was floating up to the water surface.

She got distracted momentarily. The many things that happened three years ago and the frightening images surfaced within her mind. For three years it seemed that Ai Hui had vanished from this earth and she had practically forgotten about this.

Who would've expected the flower to bloom only after three years.

At that time when she was shaken by Ai Hui, she picked an opportune moment to plant a seed. Now that the seed was actually about to mature, she was somewhat surprised but largely pleased.

The seed took less than three years to mature, a sign that Ai Hui had outstanding innate skills. But it also proved that her foresight was accurate. Then, she had placed heavy faith on Ai Hui and had to pay a high price for it.

It was all worth it.

The long destroyed secret technique reappeared in her hands. If this news was to spread, it would definitely cause a huge sensation.

She Yu was excited, her eyes bright and clear.

Suddenly, a voice rang.

"Did Miss She Yu encounter something happy? Care to share?"

Chapter 287: What Happened?

Quan Minglong’s words caught everyone’s attention.

A smile appeared on She Yu’s face. "I feel really happy to meet everyone."

The smile on her face was genuine and her gorgeous eyes were glittering. Her absolutely ravishing face was brimming with sincerity, making everyone believed that she meant her words without the slightest doubt.

However, at this point of time, she was actually placing all her attention on the blood plum blossom on her arm. She could clearly feel the petals of the blood plum blossom extending outwards. The petals were already protruding halfway out of her arm. Once the plum blossom was fully protruded from her skin, it would fall off her arm.

No one knew how excited she was deep down.

Once the plum blossom fell off, it would be an exceptional priceless treasure in the whole of Nation of God. It would be a supreme elixir that everyone yearned for.

Once she swallowed the plum blossom, she could effortlessly rise through the premier ranks in the Nation of God.

Right now, what she needed to do the most was not to attract any

attention to herself. For any blood elementalist, this plum blossom was an irreplaceable priceless treasure that could directly raise his or her base level significantly.

If the High Priest was to know of its existence, even he himself would covet after it.

In the past, she used to despise and disdain people looking at her with such burning envy. However, at this moment, she was extremely pleased by these gazes.

Was there better cover than hiding among these people? If those old foxes were around, she would have let the cat of the bag. The rest of the diplomatic mission were at least twenty metres away from her, it would be impossible for them to sense it.

The smile on her face became increasingly alluring

Quan Minglong could not help but feel overjoyed and smiled, "It seems that Miss She Yu gets along with us quite well."

At this point of time, even fools could tell that Quan Minglong was very interested in She Yu.

"Has anyone realized that when Miss She Yu and Mr Quan stand together, her radiating beauty and his imposing dignity complement each other really well? Sigh, there's really too much pressure standing beside these two individuals. It's okay if we lose out to them in terms of capabilities. However, right now, even our

looks lose out to them. Someone please help us!"

A person in the crowd shook his head and sighed, putting on a self-pity look on his face.

Quan Minglong was delight as an aloof smile appeared on his face. Why didn't he find this guy so pleasing to the eye in the past?

"Can we even be compared to Brother Minglong? He is the first young master of the Quan family!"

The surrounding people started flooding the Quan Minglong with flatters. The Quan family was powerful and influential. As the first young master of the Quan family, Quan Minglong was always highly flattered wherever he went.

Quan Minglong was born in a family of merchants. His father had enforced strict discipline on him since he was young, and as such, he was not tainted by bad business ethics. His father also knew that if one did not have any fighting capabilities, he or she would not survive and excel in an era of killing and bloodshed. Since the day Quan Minglong was born, he had displayed extraordinary talents and had become the main focus of the Quan family to nurture and groom.

As a child, Quan Minglong trained diligently everyday. Even though Quan family was well-known for its extravagance, Quan Minglong was not fond of indulging himself in such habit.

Usually, those who wanted to bootlick Quan Minglong to win his favor were not able to succeed as Quan Minglong did not endorse such behaviour. However, today Quan Minglong seemed to be a changed man. Apparently, he was very happy and was beaming with joy. Thus, everyone started to flood him with flatters.

She Yu, who had been smiling brightly on the surface, suddenly felt a shiver went down her spine. The blood plum blossom that was emerging from her arm had stopped in its tracks!

What happened?

Before she could find out what had happened, the blood plum blossom began to sink back into her arm.

She became anxious instantly.

What was going on? What exactly had happened?

The blood plum blossom did not hear the the cries in her heart and continued to sink back into her arm. The speed at which it was sinking was much faster than usual as well.

She Yu had never panicked like this before. The exceptional priceless treasure that she was about to get her hands on was disappearing right under her nose. Her mind went into a blank and she was stunned.

Even though she was surrounded by a clamorous crowd now, like

a bright moon that was surrounded by a myriad of stars, she felt as if she was in a boundless wilderness, lonely and isolated. The feeling of losing something she just obtained felt so terrible. The turn of events was so devastating that she thought how ridiculous it was for her to feel so happy and excited just now.

Disappointment engulfed her like a black hole, leaving her isolated and helpless.

Quan Minglong noticed the smile on She Yu's face had disappeared and she looked slightly pale. He was preparing to ask her what had happened.

"In a few months' time, Brother Minglong is going to become Master Dai's disciple. Come on, come on, let us congratulate Brother Minglong beforehand."

She Yu's body turned cold. The blood plum blossom had completely sunk back into her arm. Her arm became smooth once again and her face had turned deathly white. She was being played by fate.

She felt extremely terrible.

It just so happened that she heard someone was talking about congratulating Quan Minglong and her patience in putting up with everyone collapsed instantly. She coldly snorted,

"Disciple-in-name? If my memory serves me right, Duanmu

Huanghun is the last official disciple of Dai Gang?"

A dead silence swept across her surroundings. Everyone widened their eyes and stared shockingly at She Yu.

Quan Minglong’s face turned ashen.

At this moment, She Yu also realized she had said something wrong. However, she was too lazy to explain as she did not care about these people at all.

With a cold and indifferent look on her face, she bowed and bade everyone farewell, "I’m sorry, I feel unwell and I have to leave in advance."

After finishing her sentence, She Yu turned and left the place without bothering about anyone.

.....

A valley in the wild.

Ai Hui woke up and opened his eyes unhurriedly. At the instance when he opened his eyes, he was stunned. There were numerous glowing wisps floating before his eyes, resembling a veil of mist.

These glowing wisps were elemental energy.

Traces of wood elemental energy were emitting from the plants and trees around him. The closer one got to the ground, the stronger the earth elemental energy he or she could feel. In the midst of the earth elemental energy, one could also see speckles of silvery light. Those were the metal elemental energy from the ore veins under the ground. The water elemental energy in the sky was flowing with the moving clouds. Occasionally, one could see a few faint traces of water elemental energy lingering in the valley. The naked boulders that made up the mountain peak was emitting a red glow. That was the fire elemental energy. That must be the fire elemental energy that was left over from the lava that formed the boulders in the ancient past.

The morning sunshine scattered fire elemental energy all over the valley. The fire elemental energy was faint but its range was extremely wide. It also contained a trace of wood elemental energy.

The whole world was vivid, animated and full of vitality.

Elemental externalization!

He had attained elemental externalization!

Ai Hui was overjoyed. A wide grin spread across his face. Eventually, he was grinning foolishly to himself.

Then, he suddenly remembered that the blood plum blossom almost killed him when he was about to achieve a breakthrough. How did he survive after that? Did the blood plum blossom spare

his life? Ha, what a joke. One Thousand Yuan's heart was extremely vicious, she only wanted to kill him, not spare him.

The bloodstains all over his body indicated how dangerous his condition was at the time when he was achieving his breakthrough. Everything was not a misperception.

He quickly took off his clothes and looked at his chest. The blood plum blossom was still there. Other than its color becoming slightly fainter, there were not much changes.

Slightly fainter?

Ai Hui was baffled. From his understanding towards things that were related to blood elementalists, the brighter the color of something was, the more dangerous it was. Why did the color of the blood plum blossom became fainter? What had happened?

Ai Hui examined his body and remained confused. He then thought of how the blood bandage had saved his life in the past. Could it be the blood bandage?

He took off the blood bandage and examined it. When he saw the blood eye on it, he immediately knew what was going on.

The blood eye had completely transformed.

The color and luster of the blood eye did not change but it gave Ai Hui a completely different feeling, an indescribable one. It was as if

the blood eye was a living thing. Ai Hui could not help but take a closer a look at. His gaze gradually became blank and a surprise slowly crept upon his face. He stared blankly at the blood eye, motionless.

After an unknown amount of time, Ai Hui returned to his sense abruptly as a cold shiver went down his spine.

Astonishment flashed across his face.

The sunset in the distant dyed the entire valley in orange. The sunset glow was dazzling and golden-bright, extremely beautiful. The evening breeze was cool and refreshing, and yet, Ai Hui felt his body was doused in chilliness.

Just a moment ago, it was still early morning. Now, it was already sunset.

He did not seem to have any recollection of what happened between then and now. He did not even feel the passing of time at all.

An indescribable fear engulfed Ai Hui.

The blood bandage... the blood eye... it was indeed an extraordinary object!

In the past, he already knew that the blood bandage was an extraordinary object, but it was only at this moment that he

realized that it was far more powerful than what he expected. Even though he had already attained elemental externalization, he still fell into its trap. The blood bandage was indeed an evil object.

Mistress never would have thought that her blood bandage was so powerful.

When Ai Hui thought of his mistress, his fear towards the blood bandage immediately reduced significantly. His gaze became much gentle as well. No matter what, the blood bandage had saved his life several times. So what if it was an evil object?

Ai Hui patted the blood bandage and said, "Don’t worry, I won’t lose you."

After the fright from the blood bandage, Ai Hui’s ecstasy over his attainment of elemental externalization had dampened a lot.

He thought about the spoils of war he looted from Shi Youguang. At that time, he was in a hurry to escape, hence, he did not really see and check what they exactly were.

Since he was free now, he might as well arrange and account for the spoils of war.

Shi Youguang had been a reputable expert for many years, he definitely had an immense amount of wealth. At least, he was not as poor as Ai Hui himself.

He took out the items one by one.

Initially, there was a bunch of earth elemental materials, presumably for sand puppets. There were also a few rare items that made Ai Hui's eyes lit up. He had been thinking for quite long on giving Lou Lan's body an upgrade. However, earth elemental materials were in high demand and those high-grade ones were extremely expensive.

Meteoric sand was an extremely dense and heavy material. It was a well-known heavy sand and had a special ability of breaking armor. The meteoric sand was produced in the depths of the thick sand sea in Yellow Sand Corner. This type of heavy sand were only flushed out of the ground by quicksand occasionally. They were very rare and could not be found on the market. They were usually used to make the offensive parts of sand puppets, such as their fists.

Soft sand, also widely know as dough sand, was a very unique type of sand. They behaved like dough, which shape could be easily changed. Using this type of sand to make a sand puppet, the sand puppet's body could be pulled as long as noodles without breaking. Soft sand was produced using clay. Even though clay and sand were both earth elemental materials, they had completely different characteristics. Soft sand was usually produced at the border of sand sea and wasteland.

The other materials were of high grade as well. It was clear that Shi Youguang's sand puppet was of high grade tool.

He was an expert that had been reputable for many years! Could

he afford to be so petty with his money? How could he have the nerve to be petty with his money in the first place? What would other people say of him if he was to be so petty with his sand puppet? Would he dare to use his sand puppet if he was to be so petty with him? Would his sand puppet still be capable of protecting him? (Sarcastic tone)

Ai Hui was over the moon. Even though he had made a small name for himself after going through all kinds of battles during the last three years, this was the first time he made such bountiful gain.

As the proverbs in Avalon of Five Elements said,

A horse won't get fat if it doesn't secretly chomp on grass at night, a man won't get rich if he doesn't have a windfall!

If you ask me how melancholy I am now, I can tell you I feel like a poor man who is gifting his head away.

When Ai Hui took out the last item, he was so excited that he jumped up from the ground.

This is an altered version of a line from Li Yu's poem in the Song Dynasty. Basically, this line means that it's useless for one to kill a poor man as he or she will not be able to reap any benefit.

Chapter 288: Sand Compass And Bad Reputation

It was a palm-sized sand plate that was covered with densely-packed vein patterns and characters, resembling a compass.

Its name was called sand compass.

Sand compass was one of the greatest inventions by earth elementalists. It was created by the great earth elemental master Luo De seven hundred years ago.

Before Master Luo De, people treated the flow of the elemental energies in the Nature like ‘water’ and ‘air’. Master Luo De was the first one to propose that when the concentration of an elemental energy had reached a certain point, the nature of its flow started to change fundamentally.

At that time, Master Luo De’s theory was unconvincing and a lot people thought that he was indulging in his own fantasy.

However, eventually, Master Luo De was able to use his ingenuity and creativity to prove his theory.

Sand compass was the what he used to prove his theory.

Lou De realized that entire Avalon of Five Elements sat on a huge continent. Even Jadeite Forest, which consisted of numerous

islands, shared the same continent as the other four elemental factions. This implied that the earth elemental energy at any places in the Avalon of Five Elements were interconnected, forming a massive base of earth elemental energy beneath the Avalon.

Deep under the ground, the concentration of such immense amount of earth elemental energy was extremely high. This knowledge formed the basis of the proof to his theory.

As such, he created the sand compass.

Beneath the ground, he opened up a stable earth elemental space. Every earth elemental space would have a particular sand compass that it corresponded to.

On the Mid-autumn festival seven hundred years ago, under the invitation of Master Luo De, the Jadeite City was packed with elders, division leaders and elementalists. Everyone in the Jadeite City turned up as they wanted to witness the miraculous night.

Under the watchful eyes of the people, Master Luo De and the Great Elder jointly placed a mooncake that contained the latter’s token onto the sand compass. Following which, the mooncake was slowly devoured by the quicksand on the sand compass.

The sand compass was immediately placed in an unique metal box that was being sealed up afterwards. Then, the metal box was being taken by the fastest flying elementalist at that time, Zhou Mingkui, who was also known as the "Hurricane of the North Sea",

to the biggest city in Silver Mist Sea, Silver City. He traveled day and night and flew towards his destination in his fastest speed

And at this point of time, the Silver City was already fully packed with people. They were stretching their necks, waiting anxiously for the arrival of Zhou Mingkui.

Two days later, when Zhou Mingkui descended from the layer of clouds in the sky, draped in the first glimmer of dawn and mist, the people in Silver City exploded into cries of joy.

The bone-tired Zhou Mingkui took off the metal box on his back and passed it to the mayor of Silver City.

Under everyone's attentive gaze, the mayor opened the metal box and took out the sand compass and placed it on the ground. Holding their breath, everyone looked on as the sand compass transformed into a very small sand whirlpool. Following which, a piece of mooncake emerged from the sand whirlpool. At this moment, everyone cried out in surprise.

To the mayor's surprise, when he broke apart the mooncake, he saw the Great Elder's token.

The mayor held the Great Elder's token up high in the air. However, at this point of time, his surroundings had already broken into an uproar. Surging waves of deafening cheer almost overturned this time-honored city. Everyone understood that this day would definitely go down in history. They also knew that this day signified the coming of a new era. The creation of sand

compass enable people to have a treasure box that could open anywhere and anytime, not restricted by the dimensions of space and time.

Master Luo De became everyone's hero, receiving supreme prestige and a terrifying amount of wealth.

Those earth elementalists that followed Master Luo De kept on improving the sand compass. They made it more safe by adding a lock to it, increased its space, reduced its construction cost and etc.

However, until now, sand compass was not something that ordinary individuals could use.

Even Ai hui had only heard of it and not seen it before. However, it was appropriate for him to feel so excited. After all, a fugitive like Shi Youguang would hide his most valuable things in it.

Unlocking the sand compass might be a problem to many but not Lou Lan. To him, unlocking the sand compass was a piece of cake.

The technology of sand compass might be improving, but so did the technology of unlocking it as well. Ai Hui knew of elementalists that knew how to unlock a sand compass. If he used the identity of Chu Zhaoyang, he could definitely find people to unlock it for him. However, by doing so, it would be very difficult for him to maintain secrecy.

Ai Hui looked forward to seeing what kind of treasure would be

kept inside the sand compass. If the items that Shi Youguang brought along with him were already so valuable, the item that he stored in the sand compass would definitely be an even more valuable treasure.

Wiping off the saliva stain on his mouth, Ai Hui carefully kept the sand compass.

It was already nighttime but Ai Hui did not want waste any time. He had already wasted a lot of time.

He needed to find out where the nearest town was to determine his current location.

Luckily, it was already nighttime and the layer of clouds in the sky had cleared. This enabled him to quickly locate a dimly-lit place in the distance after flying up to the sky.

The pair of azure wings on his back spread and he flew in the direction of the dimly-lit place in a burst of light.

He could feel something different with his body. The elemental energy in his body was surging violently, increasing his flying speed sharply. At this moment, he realized why everyone only cared about base level. He felt so powerful just by achieving elemental externalization. Even though he was flying with reservations, his current flying speed had already surpassed the highest speed he achieved in the past.

Ai Hui became excited and increased his speed to its maximum. He felt like an extremely sharp sword that was slicing madly through the air.

It was too fast!

His current speed was at least twice his top speed in the past. The Starry Gem Swordwings was able to withstand the test. Even when Ai Hui was flying at such a high speed, the Starry Gem Swordwings did not tremble the slightest bit. Not only that, Ai Hui could also feel the pair of azure wings still had potentials that had yet to be unveiled.

The thing that amazed Ai Hui the most was the metal elemental energy in the wind kept on gathering around him, forming a metal elemental force field around him.

The wind around him was not metal wind and only contained a small amount of wind elemental energy. After a while, the metal elemental energy surrounding Ai Hui increased and was extremely spectacular.

With the metal elemental energy surrounding him, Ai Hui felt unusually comfortable. Not only did the metal elemental energy negate the violent wind that was blasting against him, it also greatly reduced the amount of elemental energy his azure wings exhausted.

Ai Hui knew that achieving elemental externalization would allow one to use the elemental energies from the Nature but this

was the first time he experienced it.

It was also at this moment that he felt fear when he thought about the fight with Shi Youguang. He now then realized how lucky he was to be able to kill Shi Youguang. If not for the fact that Shi Youguang was severely injured beforehand, his sand puppet was destroyed and he underestimated his enemy, Ai Hui would not stand a chance against him.

Luckily, he eventually defeated Shi Youguang and attained elemental externalization. The thrill from his extreme flying speed made him felt on top of the world.

It felt truly blissful to have a life like this.

After flying for approximately half an hour, a brightly-lit city appeared in his sight.

At this time, the air traffic had become much more busy. Ai Hui saw a lot of elementalists with a flustered look on their faces. He did not activate the silvery light on his azure wings as it would be very eye-striking at night. He used a black-colored glow that was surrounded by swirling traces of metal elemental energy, preventing people from getting a clear view of him.

He turned his body and lowered his flying speed and flew towards the city.

After a few minutes, he landed in the city.

He finally knew where he was after enquiring with a pedestrian.

Rain City.

Ai Hui knew about this city. There were two given explanations for the origin of its name.

The first one was that this city was located in an area where there was an abundance of water elemental energy. This caused a buildup of thick clouds and frequent occurrence of heavy rain, and hence, the name "Rain City" was given to this city. The second one was related to the ancient [Rain Spell]. The [Rain Spell] was a spell that existed in the Cultivation Era. This spell was commonly used for growing crops. Reportedly, the weather of Rain City used to be bright and sunny whole year long. The first mayor that the Elders Guild sent here to establish tillage in the city was obsessed with [Rain Spell]. He wanted to develop an inheritance that was of similar nature to [Rain Spell]. One day, he accidentally succeeded in doing so and caused an immense amount of rain clouds to form continuously over the city. Eventually, the climate of the city became cloudy and rainy and it lasted until today.

The reason why Ai Hui knew about [Rain Spell] was that many swordplay manuals he read had mentioned about it before. Reportedly, the first man who mastered this spell in the Cultivation Era was called Zuo Mo. However, there were also a lot of swordplay manuals that stated historical records of Zuo Mo practising the [Rain Spell] were unofficial and inaccurate.

Usually, when a spell was much more distinguishable when it was associated with a legendary figure. However, when that particular legendary figure lived in the ancient past, debates over the accuracy of the historical records would arise.

After buying a map in a shop, Ai Hui was able to understand the specific location of Rain City. There were five cities in between Rain City and his destination, the Magic Cloud City.

However, Ai Hui did not intend to travel with caravans. Right now, he was running tight on time. If he was to encounter any trouble again, he would really be late.

He decided to fly straight to Magic Cloud City from Rain City by himself.

Since Ai Hui had just attained elemental externalization, he was extremely confident with his capabilities. Now, he had the confidence to do things that he felt were impossible in the past.

As Ai Hui walked out of the shop, he suddenly sensed something. After achieving elemental externalization, all his senses had become sharper significantly.

Not far away, there was a man staring furtively at him.

Ai Hui feigned ignorance and casually walked into a secluded alley.

The man's eyes lit up. After a while, he followed Ai Hui and walked into the alley as well. However, when he saw the alley was empty, he was stunned. When he noticed there was a side road deep within the alley, he hurriedly ran over.

Just as he turned the corner, a powerful force blasted upon him. His body flew across the air and slammed forcefully onto a wall.

His eyes dimmed and he became dizzy. When he returned to his senses, he realized a sword was placed upon his neck. The ice-cold blade of the sword sent a cold shiver down his spine. In an instant, his face turned deathly pale.

After a period, Ai Hui left the alley. He took off his mask and revealed his true self. The color of his eye-striking azure wings had turned muddy yellow, completely indistinguishable.

He had killed the elementalist who followed him just now. Ai Hui was extremely vexed by what he had found out from that elementalist via torture.

Right now, there were rumors everywhere saying that Chu Zhaoyang infiltrated the Great Wei Enterprise's caravan, Auspicious, to steal an ancient treasure and blew up the caravan to make his escape afterwards. The Great Wei Enterprise had ordered the arrest of Chu Zhaoyang and put a bounty on him everywhere. The amount of the bounty was extremely generous, prompting countless people into searching for Chu Zhaoyang.

An individual who merely attained elemental internalization

could actually escape from the numerous experts in Great Wei's caravan. Because of this, everyone now knew of the name "Chu Zhaoyang".

The information that Chu Zhaoyang was heading to Magic Cloud City had spread everywhere as well. Even though a lot of people felt that was a diversion tactic by Bandit Chu, there were still many people guarding the road to Magic Cloud City. Not only that, there were many people in the vicinity of the incident searching for Chu Zhaoyang.

In the Rain City, there were also many elementalists looking for Chu Zhaoyang.

That killed elementalist unexpectedly saw Ai Hui's face and found him looked somewhat similar to the picture on the bounty. As such, he decided to follow Ai Hui.

Ai Hui's face turned ashen as anger blazed within him.

In the end, he still fell into the Great Wei Enterprise's plot!

He spent three painstaking years to build the identity of Chu Zhaoyang. It took him great pains to build a great reputation that would not attract much attention for Chu Zhaoyang.

Right now, the reputation of Chu Zhaoyang was tainted and his three years of painstaking effort had completely gone down the drain. One could imagine how infuriated Ai Hui was.

The thing that troubled him the most was this turn of events would have great impact on his subsequent operations.

Until now, he did not know the impact was a positive one or a negative one. He could only bitterly smile to himself.

Chapter 289: A Turn of Events

After changing back to his original appearance, a calm look appeared on Ai Hui's face. He swaggered along the street and no one cared about him at all.

Nowadays, Ai Hui was slightly wealthy. Naturally, he had no qualms about buying things. He found the shop he was looking for, went in, replenished his equipment, and left the shop without any hesitation. No matter how chaotic the situation had become, he still had to get to Magic Cloud City first before he could decide on doing anything.

Along the way, no one noticed him. No matter which angle one looked at him from, he bore no resemblance to Chu Zhaoyang. He had a youthful face, muddy yellow azure wings, and attained Elemental Externalization. No one would suspect him of being Chu Zhaoyang.

However, Ai Hui was still extremely vexed. Along the way, he encountered several people who asked him whether or not he had seen a middle-aged man with a pair of silver-colored azure wings. It was at this moment that he realized how infamous Chu Zhaoyang had become.

He had a deep hatred for Great Wei Enterprise.

They'd better not bump into him. Humph.

After a few days, when Ai Hui landed in Magic Cloud City, before

he could even keep his azure wings, he heard a sneer from nearby.

"Another fellow who fantasizes about getting rich. Does he think Chu Zhaoyang is really that stupid? Why would he come here when he knows that there are so many people waiting for him? Bandit Chu purposely came up with this diversion tactic and has already made his escape!"

"Money is the root of all evil! Look at him, he’s still so young. It’s understandable why he’s doing this."

...

When Ai Hui heard the whispers between the two men, he stumbled as he was landing on the ground.

Alright, I will pretend I never heard what they said.

Ai Hui consoled himself. However, after he had walked a few meters, he started to feel really uncomfortable. Everyone on the street had their eyes twinkling brightly, skeptically and warily examining each other. There were even some people who occasionally twitched their noses to sniff at each other, looking extremely like hunting dogs.

Having travelled extensively for so many years, this was the first time Ai Hui came across such a scene.

Everyone was mad...

Ai Hui was filled with helplessness and agony. How could he communicate with others like this? When he saw the wanted poster on the street and saw the astronomical reward of ten thousand essence elemental beans being offered, for a moment, he had the urge to give himself up to Great Wei Enterprise.

Troublesome!

No matter how dull Ai Hui was, he still knew how troublesome the situation he faced was.

Ai Hui felt unsure about his contact. If he was also interested in capturing Ai Hui for the reward or coveted the so-called ancient treasure, then Ai Hui would be in danger.

At this very moment, Ai Hui heard someone yelling, "Caught! Caught!"

Ai Hui could feel that the street was about to erupt into a commotion.

"Has Chu Zhaoyang been caught?"

"Who caught him?"

"Where? Where? Which bastard was so lucky?"

...

Everyone was annoyed. They could only look on helplessly as the windfall of ten thousand essence beans disappeared into thin air.

"No, it’s Great Wei Enterprise that was caught. The ancient treasure was in their hands all along and the Chu Zhaoyang incident is a cock-and-bull story set up by them!"

"Woah, the Great Wei Enterprise is so cunning! Thief crying thief!"

"Too treacherous! Serves them right! I have said it before, how can Chu Zhaoyang be so stupid? If he really wants to steal something, why would he tell other people about his destination?"

"You don’t say? That’s hindsight! Aren’t you here in the end?"

"Why are you all still talking about Chu Zhaoyang? What exactly is the ancient treasure? It’s in whose hands now?"

"Karakorum!"

"Karakorum is rich this time around!"

Upon hearing the bits and pieces of everyone’s discussion, Ai Hui was between laughter and tears. Nothing could describe what he

was feeling now. First, he boarded a caravan and was made a scapegoat. Then, the incident got blown out of proportion. In the end, Great Wei Enterprise got into big trouble.

He rejoiced in Great Wei Enterprise's misfortune. They deserved it.

Great Wei Enterprise never expected themselves to screw up this badly.

Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief. He had spent so much effort building the identity of Chu Zhaoyang and this identity was extremely important to his subsequent operations. He would vomit blood if he could not use it anymore.

This incident reminded him that he should make a few more identities. Preparedness averts perils. In case something like this happened in the future again, he would not be stuck with just one identity.

Instead of going straight to the meeting point, he stayed in Magic Cloud City.

After two more days, no one talked about Chu Zhaoyang anymore. The whole city was filled with heated discussions on Karakorum and the ancient treasure. Some said that the ancient treasure was actually an ancient sword art that had belonged to Karakorum in the past. Some also said that the ancient treasure was an exceptional elixir. There was not only one, but a hundred of them.

Anyway, the main idea of every discussion was that Karakorum struck a windfall and swordsmanship was going to make the big time.

Ai Hui also learned that almost all of Great Wei Enterprise's experts had been killed. The captain, Madam Xiao, was nowhere to be found and no one knew whether or not she was alive. A lot of people lamented at the thought of her. It would be a pity if such a great beauty died just like that.

It would be a real pity if she was just nowhere to be found, Ai Hui mumbled to himself.

He thought about how he had been set up by them. Alright, now he did not even have the chance to take revenge after being made a scapegoat for so long. Of course, he had long forgotten about the one hundred essence elemental beans they had given him that day.

After making sure the coast was clear, Ai Hui put on Chu Zhaoyang's elemental mask and walked onto the street.

"Eh, isn't that Chu Zhaoyang? Sigh... There go my ten thousand essence elemental beans."

"Forget it. He was able to blow up the Auspicious and escape. You will only be seeking death if you take him on."

"Forget it, he's not worth it."

...

Upon hearing these words, Ai Hui was finally at ease. It was just that he felt these people seemed to be looking at him with disdain. Perhaps it was his misperception.

After roaming around the city for quite a while and making sure no one was following him, Ai Hui walked into an alley. After making several turns, he reached a huge residence. The large vermillion entrance doors were tightly shut. Ai Hui knocked on the door.

After a while, the door opened and a muscular man appeared. When he saw it was Ai Hui, he said expressionlessly, "You're late."

"There's nothing I could do about it," Ai Hui replied helplessly. "You should know about my situation."

The muscular man grinned and stepped aside for Ai Hui to enter.

Ai Hui walked into the courtyard and looked around. The courtyard was unadorned and filled with various kinds of flowers and plants. Deep down, however, Ai Hui knew that these beautiful flowers and plants were actually hidden killing machines.

This muscular man, who looked like a blacksmith, was actually a wood elementalist, a very powerful one. Ai Hui had once witnessed a rather powerful guy try to fight with this wood elementalist and

end up dying on the spot.

He did not know the muscular guy’s real name. Everyone called him Hua Kui (In Chinese, it means Queen of Flowers).

Whenever Ai Hui thought about the muscular man being named Hua Kui, his hair stood on end.

"The rest have left." Hua Kui cast a glance at Ai Hui and said, "Since you have a valid reason this time around, the higher-ups won’t pursue the matter of you being late. However, this shall not be taken as a precedent."

Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows and his face turned ashen. "Of course. I know this."

Hua Kui was not angry and smiled. "It seems like you have attained elemental externalization. Congratulations."

He had never seen anyone in the organization that had merely attained elemental internalization complete so many missions before.

"My reward," Ai Hui replied, not wanting to waste any time.

"You did a great job for your last mission. The higher-ups have decided to double your reward." Hua Kui passed a piece of leaf to Ai Hui. "This is the information on the secret arts of blood elementalists that you wanted. Actually, given your scope of

authority, you have no right to read this information, but the higher-ups made an exception for you. Of course, this information is from three years ago. It is unknown whether or not they have developed other secret arts during these three years. Remember, don’t leak this information out. I don’t need to remind you of the consequences."

Excitement arose in Ai Hui’s heart. The information from three years ago was more than enough for him.

He acted nonchalant and kept the piece of leaf. Then, with an unhappy tone, he said, "It seems like you have a lot to say today."

Hua Kui chuckled and continued, "The second reward is an opportunity for you to learn something new."

"An opportunity to learn? A swordsmanship inheritance?" Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. "Don’t use some trash to fool me."

Hua Kui smiled and replied, "For a swordsmanship inheritance, you will have to depend on yourself. However, we can send you to Karakorum to train in [Sword Formation] for a week. How about it? Are you interested?"

"Karakorum is our ally?" Ai Hui’s eyes shrunk.

Hua Kui smiled and did not say anything.

Three years ago, when Ai Hui left Central Pine City, he brought

along the message tree in Vanguard Training Hall. The organization that the old prisoner was a part of was called Assembly of Patriarchs. This organization was the arch-enemy of the Blood of God. The enmity between the two organizations could be traced back to the ancient past.

Ai Hui knew that one man was not enough to deal with the Blood of God. He had too little knowledge of the Blood of God.

Since the old prisoner's organization was the arch-enemy of the Blood of God, then they must have a lot of information about them.

Furthermore, the old prisoner had told Ai Hui that the blood plum blossom on his chest must be a secret art of the blood elementalists.

However, when Ai Hui suggested joining the Assembly of Patriarchs, the old prisoner had raised a strong objection. This surprised Ai Hui. The old prisoner did not give him many details, but he revealed his suspicion and lack of trust towards the organization. This made Ai Hui realize that there was more than meets the eye with regards to the organization.

Putting the blood elementalist's secret art that was on Ai Hui's body into consideration, the old prisoner and Ai Hui decided to use a fake identity for the latter to use to enter the organization. The old prisoner used to be a core member of the Assembly of Patriarchs and he knew everything about the organization.

The Assembly of Patriarchs' stringency and prudence exceeded Ai Hui's expectations. If not for the old prisoner's assistance, Ai Hui's situation would have been very dangerous.

With the old prisoner's guidance, Ai Hui started from the position of an external member and rose through the ranks. After spending two years in the organization and completing numerous missions for them, he finally became an official member.

Deep down, Ai Hui suspected a long time ago that Karakorum was tightly linked to the Assembly of Patriarchs. Swordsmanship inheritances!

When Ai Hui first discovered that the Assembly of Patriarchs possessed a huge amount of swordsmanship inheritances, he had been startled.

Swordsmanship had been irrelevant for many years. Even sword moves like the three moves from his sword pill were extremely hard to find. As such, how could Ai Hui not feel shocked when he suddenly discovered an organization that possessed so many sword inheritances?

Ai Hui soon realized that the Assembly of Patriarchs had been experimenting with their swordsmanship inheritances and obtained a lot of desirable outcomes. What surprised him the most was that the outside world had zero knowledge about what they were doing at all. It was at this moment that he realized that he had underestimated the Assembly of Patriarchs in the past.

With the sudden appearance of Karakorum, Ai Hui suspected that the Assembly of Patriarchs might have something to do with Karakorum. He could not help but feel suspicious about the sudden appearance of a long-lost sword art in an organization that specialized in swordsmanship.

Today, his doubts had finally been confirmed.

Hua Kui did not admit nor deny it. He merely cackled. "Sword Formation was a secret sword art of Karakorum. Even though it can’t be compared to the sword arts in the Cultivation Era, it is still very powerful. Every time it is activated, two hundred essence elemental beans will be consumed. It is usually reserved for those core disciples to practise. You have made a bountiful gain this time around."

Two hundred essence elemental beans!

Ai Hui’s eyes widened in an instant.

"I will go!"

Chapter 290: Back Home

The clean and unadorned room did not have a lot of furniture nor decorative items. The old-fashioned table was filled with ancient blotches of peeling paint. The elm wood, which made up the pillars of the room, was rustic and firm. On the white wall, there was a hanging scroll placed upon it. Two words were written on the hanging scroll with forceful strokes: Beihai.

Plip, plop, plip, plop. The sound of raindrops falling on the eaves of the roof could be heard.

Two cups of steaming hot tea were placed on the table, separating the father and daughter sitting opposite each other.

Shi Beihai wore a blue-colored robe. His facial features bore a resemblance to Shi Xueman's, but his expression was grave and stern, looking as if he was carved out of a coarse boulder. His neatly trimmed beard exuded vigor and hardiness.

Looking at his daughter who bore a resemblance to himself, Shi Beihai could not help but think of his late wife. Her gaze had been much gentler and more heartwarming. He picked up the cup of tea and took a sip. The aromatic bitterness of the tea diffused in his mouth. If his wife was still alive, she would definitely not have wanted him to raise Shi Xueman like this.

Shi Xueman did not drink the tea. Her father liked bitter tea, the most bitter kind. She was not used to drinking bitter tea as she preferred sweet-tasting tea.

"How do you feel about Duanmu Huanghun?" Shi Beihai suddenly asked.

"Little Brother Huanghun?" Shi Xueman though of the rumors that had been circulating around and seemed to understand what was going on. "Don’t tell me the Elders Guild is trying to matchmake me with him?"

"Someone mentioned it." Shi Beihai nodded.

"I’m not interested," Shi Xueman replied bluntly.

"Got it." Shi Beihai took another sip of tea and cast a glance at his daughter. Even though his daughter had concealed her anger rather well, he could still sense it.

He smiled in his heart while his face had a nonchalant look. "I have already dispatched the guy who mentioned it to the front line."

Shi Xueman felt a hint of warmth in her heart, but was also slightly worried at the same time. "Will anyone say that you are disregarding the general interest?"

She disliked office politics, but that did not mean that she did not knew what was going on among the higher-ups of the Avalon of Five Elements.

"I am Shi Beihai."

His indifferent tone contained an overwhelming aura of dominance.

He was more than qualified to say such words. Ever since the Thirteen Divisions had collapsed, the status and importance of division leaders had far surpassed what they had been in the past.

Even though the Avalon of Five Elements preserved the organizational structure of Mountain King, Lordsand, Icy Flames, Ardent Flower, Deathgrass, and Truewood, these six divisions only remained in name and had died out in reality. Meanwhile, assassination attempts had been launched on the division leaders of the remaining North Sea, Rainbow Raiment, Sky Edge, and Infantry not too long after the blood catastrophe broke out. Only the division leaders of the North Sea and Rainbow Raiment Divisions had survived the assassination attempts. The division leader of the Sky Edge Division had been killed while the Infantry Division's division leader was severely injured and had yet to recover. The strength of the four divisions had reduced significantly.

The vice-division leaders suffered an even more terrible fate. Four of the vice-division leaders were either severely injured or dead.

The only thing that set the Elder Guilds at ease was that three central divisions were still completely intact. Otherwise, the Avalon of Five Elements would not know how to withstand the military offensive of the Blood of God.

Shi Beihai then continued, "We shall leave the issue of political marriage to the Elders Guild. For now, you have to make some preparations. I have decided to let you lead the diplomatic mission this time around."

"Why? I’m not good at negotiating." Shi Xueman was slightly puzzled.

Indeed, Shi Xueman was not good at negotiating. She was better at fighting while risking her life with real swords and spears on the battlefield.

"The one leading Blood of God’s diplomatic mission is She Yu. As such, I thought you might be interested in going."

Upon hearing the name She Yu, Shi Xueman nodded without any hesitation. "I will go!"

She had been through many battles in the past three years, but her most memorable one was still the Battle of Central Pine City. Even when she thought about it now, her body would tense up involuntarily. She did not know how many times she had dreamt of Ai Hui kneeling in front of that grave in the torrential rain.

Shi Xueman could not forgive She Yu for taking advantage of Ai Hui’s misfortune at the most critical juncture.

When Shi Xueman returned to her room, she sat in front of the

window and stared blankly at the sky.

After a while, she walked to the message tree in the courtyard and fixed her eyes on the piece of age-old leaf. Numerous thoughts formed in her head, but she did not know what to say to him.

Suddenly, she broke into laughter and wrote: "When are you returning my eighty million yuan?"

She felt an indescribable joy when she thought of the image of Ai Hui being in agony after receiving the message. Every month, she would send him a message to urge him to repay the debt. This was such a great amusement for her, especially during hectic and tiring days.

Haha, money-losing deal!

To this day, Ai Hui still did not know that the ‘money-losing deal’ he had been talking about was her. She felt that she was very quick-witted. Ai Hui thought he could hide from everyone, but he did not know that the message tree he had brought with him had had one of its leaves plucked off.

Oh right, she was the one who had plucked the leaf.

However, that was not important as long as she could urge him to repay his debt!

After writing down her debt-chasing message, Shi Xueman felt

her mind clear up. Right now, the Avalon of Five Elements was unstable, having both internal and external problems. As the daughter of Shi Beihai, she was also caught in the maelstrom; however, everyone knew that Shi Beihai loved his daughter. Given his domineering character, no one dared to mess with her. Even so, she still frequently felt mentally and physically exhausted.

Her father was as staunch and strong as a boulder.

Sometimes, she wondered if anyone around her was as strong as her father. Perhaps Ai Hui was the only one? She did not know when Ai Hui would be able to walk out of his nightmare.

Shi Xueman became lost in her thoughts.

.....

Ai Hui made it back to Peace City looking travel-worn. He was soon shocked by the bustling sight before his eyes.

Did he come to the wrong place?

The outside of the city was filled with densely-packed people resembling colonies of ants. Trees were being cut down, ground was leveled, ditches were dug, and canals were built. Countless fully loaded bamboo carts were flying back and forth through the air. Heaps of items were piled everywhere.

Fortunately, Ai Hui saw some familiar faces and knew that he

hadn’t come to the wrong place.

Avoiding the crowds, Ai Hui entered the city and returned to his training hall.

"Lou Lan!" Ai Hui yelled at the top of his voice.

A crowd of mini Lou Lans ran out of the house holding sand letters that were many times bigger than their body size.

The sand letters read, "Welcome back, Ai Hui."

Ai Hui burst into a hearty laughter. Seeing Lou Lan always made him happy.

The sand letters dissolved and transformed back into Lou Lan.

"What’s going on outside?" A puzzled look appeared on Ai Hui’s face. "Just now, I saw a large-scale construction happening outside. Are they trying to build something?"

"I heard they are trying to build a lesser Avalon of Five Elements, Ai Hui," Lou Lan explained. "They want to provide a place for fire elementalists, earth elementalists, and wood elementalists to train, so they are building a lesser Avalon of Five Elements. To build it, they are going to connect five cities together. Peace City and Cloud Ridge City have already been confirmed as two of the five cities."

"No wonder there are so many people." Ai Hui realized what was going on. "Peace City is too small, so they need to expand it, huh? We do need a lesser Avalon of Five Elements, otherwise everyone will leave this place. Although, Peace City will be much livelier from now on."

Three years ago, the reason he'd chosen to come to Peace City was that this place had fewer inhabitants and was quieter than other cities.

He had not expected the main trade route to pass through Peace City, making it a strategic trading hub. With Peace City now being confirmed as one of the five cities in the lesser Avalon of Five Elements, this place would definitely become more prosperous and busy in the future.

"Yes, Ai Hui. Recently, there are many foreigners pouring into Peace City," Lou Lan replied.

"Haha, we are foreigners too." Ai Hui chuckled. "Did anything happen while I was away?"

"There are three things, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied. "The first is that a person named Fu Yongwu has requested to be your disciple. He has already been here twice."

"Fu family?" Ai Hui was slightly shocked. Touching his chin, he muttered, "What are they trying to do?"

"Lou Lan doesn’t know." Lou Lan shook his head innocently.

"He still came twice." Ai Hui pondered. "Is that considered sincere? Lou Lan, how much is our enrollment fee?"

"One thousand elemental energy points, Ai Hui."

"We are that cheap?" Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows. With the essence elemental beans in his pouch, he no longer cared for this small amount of money. "Since he is already so old, the enrollment fee will be different for him. Ten thousand elemental energy points and two essence elemental beans."

"Alright, Ai Hui." Lou Lan did not raise any objections and continued, "Second thing, someone wants to buy our training hall. His offering price is five hundred thousand metal elemental energy points."

"Not selling!" Ai Hui rolled his eyes. "He wants to buy such a huge place for just five hundred thousand elemental energy points? Is this guy stupid? How dare he come here and try to take advantage of us!"

Ai Hui completely forgot that he’d only paid one thousand five hundred elemental energy points for this place three years ago.

This place used to be Su Qingye’s family’s warehouse, but since it was located in a secluded area, it was not used very often. At that time, Ai Hui had needed a huge place near the Silver Mist River, so

he’d chosen this area.

Then, because Su Qingye’s father knew that Ai Hui had wanted to open a training hall, he’d decided to send Su Qingye to Ai Hui’s training hall. Thus, Su Qingye became Ai Hui’s first student.

After becoming a part of the lesser Avalon of Five Elements, Peace City’s status would rise sharply. One could see that Peace City would definitely become a large-sized city, as well as one of the most important cities of the Avalon of Five Elements in the future. So why did the higher-ups want Peace City to be expanded? That was because the current Peace City could no longer hold and sustain the many elementalists. The land prices in Peace City had skyrocketed an unknown number of times. Using his toes, Ai Hui could also see that land in Peace City would be extremely expensive in the future.

As such, if he sold his training hall now, wouldn’t he suffer a huge loss?

Ai hui definitely would not agree to a bad deal.

"Alright, Ai Hui." Lou Lan completely agreed with Ai Hui and continued, "Third, the message tree has a new message for Ai Hui."

"Who sent the message? What does it say?" Ai Hui asked casually.

"Miss Debt," Lou Lan replied cheerfully. "She asked about when you are going to return the eighty million yuan."

Ai Hui’s face turned ashen in an instant. "This money-losing deal is killing me. She has to do this to me every month. This is really killing me. I shouldn’t have let her pluck that piece of leaf from the message tree."

"Ai Hui, are you trying to renege on the debt?" Lou Lan widened his eyes.

"Am I that kind of person?" Ai Hui put on a righteous front and yelled, "Tell the Fu family that the enrollment fee is four essence elemental beans! No discount!"

"Alright, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied happily. "There’s nothing else from me. How did Ai Hui do this time around?"

It was at this moment that Ai Hui raised his eyebrows and yelled with excitement, "Ha! I made a huge gain this time around!"

"Ai Hui, really?" Lou Lan’s face was filled with surprise.

"Look, what are these?" Ai Hui smirked as he took out the things to show Lou Lan.

"Meteoric sand! Soft sand!" Lou Lan’s voice was brimming with surprise. With these two materials, his body could be upgraded substantially. Right now, his body could not keep up with the operating speed of his sand core, Midnight. He had no choice but to limit Midnight’s operating speed to a very low range.

He could be of more assistance to Ai Hui after upgrading his body!

"Are you breathless already? They are merely meteoric sand and soft sand." Ai Hui smirked and took out another object to show Lou Lan. "Look at this!"

"Sand compass!" Lou Lan’s eyes opened even wider.

Feeling pleased with himself, Ai Hui threw the sand compass at Lou Lan and said, "That’s right! However, it hasn’t been unlocked yet. I will have to depend on you to unlock it."

"No problem Ai Hui!" Lou Lan loudly acknowledged Ai Hui with the demeanor of a soldier. "Leave it to Lou Lan!"

Chapter 291: I Don't Like Your Face

Ai Hui sat in front of a table in a pitch-black room.

He had already placed the prepared film-spitting tortoise on the table. The film-spitting tortoise was slightly bigger than Ai Hui's palm. On the surface of the tortoise shell, there was a streak of dark-red blood trace.

The film-spitting tortoise was a product developed by the Blood of God. Even though the Avalon of Five Elements and Blood of God were arch-enemies, the elementalists were still fond of using products developed by the Blood of God. What an irony.

The Blood of God excelled at breeding and rearing blood fiends. They had bred a lot of new species that had not existed in the past. Some species were actually very useful, such as the film-spitting tortoise.

The creation of the film-spitting tortoise had led to a decrease in the use of mirage bean pods. Mirage bean pods had already been replaced by film-spitting tortoises in high-end markets. The quality of the film projected by a film-spitting tortoise was much clearer than that of a mirage bean pod.

This had created huge losses for the wood elementalists in Jadeite Forest. As such, the wood elementalists were extremely anxious to breed more remarkable species of plants. In the past, the wood elementalists made big bucks off the mirage bean pods and now they were facing an extremely powerful competitor.

Regardless, to an ordinary person, usefulness mattered more than anything else.

Ai Hui fed the film-spitting tortoise a few elemental beans. Even though it was a blood fiend, it had an insatiable thirst for elemental energy.

When the film-spitting tortoise ate the elemental beans, the blood trace on its shell began to glow. The green-colored tortoise shell immediately became mixed-colored. The color of every section of the shell was different; they were colorful and gorgeous. The colorful sections glowed and dimmed rhythmically, looking as if they were breathing.

Ai Hui took out the piece of leaf that Hua Kui had given him and placed it before the film-spitting tortoise.

The film-spitting tortoise stretched its neck and completely devoured the piece of leaf. Crunch, crunch.

The Blood of God was Ai Hui's mortal enemy, yet he was using their film-spitting tortoise. Ai Hui found it hard to describe what he was feeling now. The only thing he could think of was that the piece of leaf could only be used and seen once. This was for the sake of maintaining confidentiality.

After eating the leaf, the film-spitting tortoise turned motionless.

Even though Ai Hui had used the film-spitting tortoise several times, he still felt the film-spitting tortoise was somewhat dumb.

The rhythmically glowing tortoise shell suddenly released a burst of light, following which, a beam of light erupted from one of the sections on the tortoise shell and shot into the air. One by one, the colorful sections of the shell lit up and beams of light shot out.

All the beams of light converged at a point in the air twenty centimeters above the tortoise shell. An image formed and went from a blurry state to a clear one in an instant.

"Blood Elementalist Secret Arts Database." Upon seeing these few words, Ai Hui became energized and his body involuntarily straightened up.

There were descriptions of numerous blood elementalist secret arts, but each description was a brief one. Some of them even mentioned the origins of these secret arts, none of the information included anything about how to practise and master those secret arts.

Ai Hui stared at the information very carefully. The Blood of God was not only the Assembly of Patriarchs' enemy, they were also his mortal enemy.

Only the Assembly of Patriarchs, which had been fighting the Blood of God for hundreds of years, would possess so much detailed information about them. This information could not be found outside and was extremely valuable.

This was the main reason why Ai Hui had wanted to join the Assembly of Patriarchs. He knew that he would have limits if he chose to fight the Blood of God single-handedly. He needed to understand his enemy well if he wanted to take revenge, just like how a hunter must understand his or her prey.

On the other side of the training hall, Lou Lan was completely focused on unlocking the sand compass.

The glow in his eyes kept flickering while his sand core, Midnight, operated at full force.

The master and his sand puppet were working back to back with extreme focus. At this point in time, the training hall was filled with absolute silence.

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The most famous high-end brothel in Jadeite Forest had a weird name, Circle of Flowers.

The Circle of Flowers was located in the northeast corner of Jadeite City. That area used to be a crater, with the terrain caving inwards like a bowl. Every time it rained, the crater would be quickly filled with rainwater. Once it was summer, it would become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and flies, causing the air to be filled with stench. No one had been interested in that plot of land.

No one expected that a ring-shaped building could be built there after terrain was dredged for a few hundred meters and then miraculously transformed. Fresh spring water was directed into the crater and flowed around the ring-shaped building endlessly, forming a well-known Ring River. With such an unique architectural style and a weather-resistant barrier in place, it immediately garnered a lot of popularity on the day it was opened.

If one considered Quan's night feast as the gathering place for influential government officials, then Circle of Flowers could be considered as the gathering place for wealthy merchants. As long as one was wealthy enough, he could have unlimited pleasure in the Circle of Flowers.

Delicacies, fine alcohols, beauties; anything that one desired could be found here.

If one wanted to vent his anger or stress, he could go to the free-duelling arena beneath the Circle of Flowers. If one wanted to gamble, the Circle of Flowers had the largest casino in Jadeite City for his pleasure. The Circle of Flowers was well-known in the Avalon of Five Elements for its money-squandering establishments.

A purple-clothed, frivolous-looking youngster was talking animatedly. "None of you know how much those people wanted to kneel down and bootlick Quan Minglong that day. Hahaha, in addition, Quan Minglong is blind! He actually took a fancy to She Yu! At least twenty members of the Quan family had died in the Induction Ground. He's such a forgiving guy!"

Wu Qirong’s face was filled with worry. He looked around anxiously and lowered his voice. "Ziyi, speak cautiously!"

"Cautious my foot!" Ziyi agitatedly stood up. Not only did he not lower his volume, he raised his voice instead. "Did I say anything wrong? How many of our people have died in their hands?! Are we going to treat them as if nothing happened? Political marriage! Political marriage my foot!"

The guests seated at the surrounding tables shifted their gazes in unison towards Yu Ziyi’s direction. Wu Qirong panicked and tried to pull Yu Ziyi back into his seat. "Ziyi, you’re drunk!"

Yu Ziyi had yet to lose his last bit of sanity and sat down grumpily. He and Wu Qirong were lucky to have made it out of the Induction Ground alive. After witnessing so many of their family members and friends die in the blood catastrophe, how could they so easily forget their hatred for the Blood of God?

Yu Ziyi’s words garnered a lot of approval from the surrounding guests.

There were also some guests who were infuriated by Yu Ziyi’s words. They wanted to confront Yu Ziyi, but when they saw the guy sitting beside him, their facial expressions changed and they quickly withdrew.

As if he had never heard Yu Ziyi’s grumblings, Duanmu Huanghun picked up his wine cup and drained it in one gulp. His

devilishly handsome face contained a tinge of morbid paleness. His hair was in a mess and his eyes were in a daze. A strong smell of alcohol surrounded his body.

Every lady that walked past Duanmu Huanghun would look at him with pity, wishing that they could pull him to their chest and cuddle him.

There was nothing new about Duanmu Huanghun drowning his sorrows with alcohol everyday. It was not only the citizens of Jadeite Forest who knew about this issue, even the Avalon of Five Elements and Blood of God were well aware of it.

Cup by cup, Duanmu Huanghun's face became increasingly pale and the melancholy in his eyes became more and more obvious.

He'd rather stay in the smoke-filled and blood-soaked Central Pine City than stay in Jadeite Forest for one more day.

Central Pine City, the place that had been overrun with blood, appeared in his dreams countless times. Death, struggle, and fear were always unforgettable. Similarly, the happy times that he'd spent with everyone were also unforgettable.

However, the decision that his family and his master had made for him turned these unforgettable memories into a joke.

He did not have the strength nor a method to resist the decision. The entire family benefited from it, while he was the biggest

‘beneficiary.’

Is this fate? His mouth curled into a bitter smile.

Fate... He suddenly thought of Ai Hui. A mysterious thought crept into his mind.

If it was Ai Hui, what would he do?

His fingers that were fiddling with the wine cup froze as he became lost in thought.

Fate was really too cruel to that bastard...

Ai Hui’s expressionless face involuntarily appeared in his mind, but in the blink of an eye, that expressionless look turned into a smirk filled with disdain. In his mind, that disdainful smirk was so clear, so hateful.

Suddenly, for some unknown reason, Duanmu Huanghun felt that it was ridiculous for him to wallow in self-pity.

How could he lose to that bastard?

All of a sudden, he stood up. His face still looked drunk, but his eyes were unusually limpid. "Let’s go!"

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong were stunned.

"Go?" Yu Ziyi asked with a pair of sleepy eyes. "What time is it now?"

"It’s only eight o’clock." Wu Qirong was puzzled as well. What’s going on with Brother Huanghun? According to their usual routine, this was only the beginning.

Duanmu Huanghun ignored them, stood up, and walked down towards the basement. He wanted a good fight all of a sudden. There were various types of arenas in the basement and numerous experts. After being in a slump for so many days, he needed an epic fight to revitalize himself and expel the perplexity that he was feeling.

There was only one thought in his mind. How could I lose to that bastard?

As Duanmu Huanghun walked down the staircase, his vision became clearer and clearer. Even though he was still walking with a bit of a stagger, his aura became sharper.

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong, who were following him, were shocked. Both of them looked each other in the eyes and quickly caught up to him.

At this moment, Duanmu Huanghun heard a voice coming from below.

"She’s too much! She should thank the gods for Brother Minglong taking interest in her. Does she really think that she is a goddess? Humph, she doesn’t know what’s good for her."

"She’s so arrogant at such a young age. Blood of God? They still have to come and beg us in the end, right? If they are so capable, then don’t come looking for help from Jadeite Forest! Minglong treated her with so much respect, yet she reciprocated with nothing but arrogance. She doesn’t know that we are not to be trifled with. How dare she act so arrogant in our territory! Is she tired of living? What did she say again?"

"Disciple-in-name? If my memory serves me right, Duanmu Huanghun is the last official disciple of Dai Gang." Someone mimicked She Yu’s words to perfection.

Just as that person was about to add in another sentence, which was something along the lines of "a disciple-in-name can still make her kneel in front of him if he wants to," an indifferent and arrogant voice came from above them.

"Is she wrong to say that?"

Quan Minglong, who was drinking his wine dejectedly, raised his head in an instant while his eyes surged with fury.

A white-robed guy with a handsome, pale-white face slowly walked down the staircase. His chin was slightly raised as he stood high and looked down at the people below, not trying to conceal

the arrogance and disdain in his eyes.

The one who had been mimicking She Yu became tongue-tied and froze on the spot.

When the surrounding guests saw Duanmu Huanghun and Quan Minglong, they quickly kept quiet, but their gazes continued to shift towards the direction of the duo involuntarily.

Quan Minglong stared at Duanmu Huanghun. One by one, these words left his clenched teeth: "What does Young Master Duanmu mean by those words?"

"What do I mean by those words?" A smirk appeared on Duanmu Huanghun's pale-white face. He leaned his slightly drunk body over the hand railing of the staircase, waved his hand, and spoke in an arrogant and condescending tone. "I don't like your face."

Quan Minglong's face turned ashen. He stood up slowly and replied, "Today, I have to seek guidance from Young Master Duanmu."

"Are you even fit to do that?"

Duanmu Huanghun sneered. Without taking a second look at the fuming Quan Minglong, Duanmu Huanghun took a step forward and disappeared like a ghost. Quan Minglong's facial expression changed slightly. Just as he was going to brace himself for an incoming attack, a blur flashed across his eyes and he lost sight of

his target.

Duanmu Huanghun appeared in the air above the Circle of Flowers. Following which, he shot upward like a comet and flew to the sky above Jadeite City.

"She Yu, do you dare to come out and battle me?"

A cold and arrogant voice blasted across Jadeite City like thunder.

Everyone in the Circle of Flowers, including Quan Minglong, had their facial expression change drastically.

Chapter 292: Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art

In the dark, Ai Hui carefully looked through the blood elementalist secret arts database. Eventually, he found the secret art for the blood plum blossom on his chest.

[Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art]. This was a blood elementalist secret art that existed only in theory and had never before been used in practice. Reportedly, this art was based on the Cultivation Era's [Flower Demon Secret Art] and blood sects' [Nine Tripod Cauldron Secret Art].

The requirements for one to practice this secret art were extremely stringent.

The one who cast the spell was known as the flower master while the one whom the spell was cast upon was known as the flower slave.

The flower master needed a powerful soul, while the flower slave needed a vigorous life force.

To practice this secret art, the flower master had to first form two seeds. One seed was to be placed in the flower master, himself, while the other was to be placed in the flower slave. The seeds were formed using the essence blood and spirit of the flower master. Once the formation of the seeds was completed, the flower master's strength would be greatly reduced. On the other hand, the seed was greatly beneficial to the flower slave. In a short period

of time, the seed could sharply raise the flower slave's strength. The flower slave's body would be cleansed until it was free of all impurities.

When the flower slave was in the process of being inoculated with the seed, he had to be willing to do so. Otherwise, the seed would either be destroyed or the flower slave would explode and die.

Once the inoculation was successful, the flower slave would be like a plot of soil, providing the seed with an endless stream of nutrients. Even though the flower slave's energy would be devoured by the seed, the seed would also provide the flower slave with immense powers in return. Eventually, the flower slave would find himself addicted to the powers that the seed provided him, unable to free himself from the addiction.

The seed in the flower slave's body was an Embryo of Emptiness, which would grow into a Flower of Destruction. The seed in the flower master's body was an Embryo of Fullness, which would grow into a Flower of Life. Both flowers were complementary embodiments of Yin and Yang. When the flower slave's embryo had matured, it would become the Flower of Destruction and fall off his body. By then, the flower slave's life force would be completely devoured, and he would eventually die. On the other hand, when the flower embryo on the flower master matured, it would become a Flower of Life and drop off from his body. The Flower of Life would contain all the life force, elemental energy, the three incorporeal energies of essence, breath, and spirit, as well as the soul of the flower slave, becoming a supreme treasure.

The flower slave and the Flower of Destruction were the sacrificial offerings.

Upon reading this information, a cold shiver went down Ai Hui's spine. He had never heard of or seen such evil secret art.

The information did not mention any methods to undo the secret art.

Perhaps even the Assembly of Patriarchs would not believe that anyone could master such a secret art.

Ai Hui went into a daze before returning to his senses after a while. He tried to suppress his fear and carefully read through and memorizing the remaining information on the secret art.

This information broadened Ai hui's knowledge of blood elementalists and their secret arts. The blood elementalist secret arts were weird and unique. The ideas behind these secret arts were ingenious and evil at the same time, causing him to exclaim in admiration. When compared to these secret arts, the mysterious technique of developing a sword embryo did not seem that mysterious anymore.

However, the database had also mentioned that most of the secret arts were only theoretically possible. Some were restorations of secret arts from the ancient blood sects and some were newly developed by the blood elementalists.

Ai Hui heaved a long sigh. When he raised his head and looked out of the window, the sky was speckled with the luster of dawn.

Another night had passed.

At this moment, Ai Hui suddenly heard Lou Lan screaming happily, "Ai Hui, Lou Lan did it!"

Ai Hui was stunned. Then, a joyful look appeared in his face. He tiptoed, backflipped, and landed gracefully beside Lou Lan.

On the ground beside Lou Lan, there was a swirling whirlpool of quicksand. The quicksand whirlpool kept on swirling as the heart of the whirlpool caved in.

Ai Hui rubbed his hands as his impatient-looking eyes surged with greed. "Let’s see what treasure the famous Shi Youguang has for us!"

"Ai Hui! Come on!" Lou Lan yelled, brimming with expectation.

Ai Hui reached his hands into the heart of the whirlpool. After a while, he pulled out a box.

He opened the box and found that it was filled with sparkling essence elemental beans. There were roughly 200 of them.

"This is the way to go! How can the great Shi Youguang be a poor

fellow? Does that even make sense?

When Ai Hui saw these essence elemental bean, his eyes glittered like a hungry wolf’s.

He continued to feel around inside of the quicksand whirlpool with his hands. After a while, he dug out a piece of crystal. Inside the crystal, there was a faintly discernible light flowing about.

"An inheritance?" Ai Hui squinted his eyes and identified the item. Then, he casually threw it to Lou Lan and asked, "Lou Lan, take a look. What inheritance is it?"

Lou Lan’s palms transformed into a puddle of quicksand and engulfed the piece of crystal. The red glow in his eyes flickered for a while and he replied, "Ai Hui, it’s the [Earth Elemental Deciphering Technique]. This technique can decipher the chaotic earth elemental energy waves on the ground and obtain relevant information. For example, this technique enables one to track the path that someone recently took, identify the types of ore veins underground, etc."

Ai Hui thought about how he racked his brains and still could not escape from Shi Youguang. The [Earth Elemental Deciphering Technique].

"Can Lou Lan learn it?"

"No problem, Ai Hui," Lou Lan replied.

"Lou Lan should learn it then." Ai Hui chuckled. "Next time Lou Lan will be my tracking master."

"Yes, Ai Hui!" Upon knowing that he could help Ai Hui in a new way, Lou Lan was overjoyed.

Next, Ai Hui pulled out a yellowish tome entitled <Forbidden Arts - Body Sandification>. Upon seeing this book, Ai Hui suddenly came to a realization. "No wonder Shi Youguang was so powerful. He was a transfigured elementalist!"

Upon learning that he had killed a transfigured elementalist, he felt rather pleased with himself.

"I will give this to you as well, even though you have no use for it." Ai Hui threw the book to Lou Lan. Body transfiguration was specifically designed for elementalists and was worthless to sand puppets.

Lou Lan took a closer look at it and replied, "Alright, Ai Hui. Lou Lan will treat it as updating my knowledge base."

Subsequently, Ai Hui pulled out a pile of stuff that was mostly earth elemental materials. Currently, there were more than enough materials to upgrade Lou Lan’s body.

Even though there weren’t many things that Ai Hui could use, he was still very happy since these things could be used by Lou Lan.

"Oh, oh, there’s one last thing. Is this a letter?" Ai Hui pulled out a letter from the quicksand whirlpool. "By the way, does Lou Lan know how to bind a sand compass? If you know how to do it, then we won’t need to bring our luggage along when we travel in the future."

"Ai Hui, Lou Lan knows how to do that!"

"Lou Lan is great! All right, this really is a letter." Puzzled, Ai Hui looked at the letter in his hand. "Who still writes letters nowadays? Wouldn’t it be much more convenient to use a message tree? Sigh, how good would it be if the skank wrote letters instead? Then, I wouldn’t need to be vexed by her every now and then."

"Yes, Ai Hui," Lou Lan agreed with Ai Hui.

"I like your honesty, Lou Lan! Haha, let’s see what’s written in this letter?" Ai Hui flipped open the letter in his hand and read it. Subsequently, he exclaimed in surprise, "Wow, I couldn’t tell that Shi Youguang had such wide connections."

The letter was not really long and mainly asked Shi Youguang to think of a way to snatch the ancient treasure from the Great Wei Enterprise, explained how important that ancient treasure was, etc.

Judging from the tone of the letter, the sender and Shi Youguang were very familiar with each other. One could sense an authoritative undertone from the sender as well. This implied that

the sender was of a higher status than Shi Youguang.

Ai Hui did not find this weird at all. After all, transfigured elementalists had always been looked down upon by people. There would also be underground organizations that accepted them for who they were, mutually benefiting each other in various ways.

It was a pity that the letter did not mention what exactly the ancient treasure was. Ai Hui was extremely curious about this so-called ancient treasure. The Great Wei Enterprise had suffered a lot and lost almost everything because of this ancient treasure.

In the blink of an eye, Ai Hui put all of these thoughts out of his mind. The so-called ancient treasure had nothing to do with him.

Lou Lan was currently sorting out the various materials and treasures. Upon seeing Lou Lan working hard and seriously, Ai Hui could not help but smile. This time around, he had gained more than he had expected, especially with regards to the earth elemental materials. Lou Lan's body could now be significantly upgraded.

He looked forward to an upgraded Lou Lan. How powerful would he be then!

Actually, Ai Hui felt that the current Lou Lan was already very powerful. For the last three years, if Ai Hui had not had Lou Lan, he would have led a miserable life. The only reason Ai Hui could continue improving while his elemental energy was devoured by the blood plum blossom was because Lou Lan kept on making

elemental food for him.

Ai Hui did not bother Lou Lan and began to think about the blood plum blossom on his body.

He had regained his calm. The [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] was mysterious and unpredictable. The database stated that no one had succeeded in perfectly executing this secret art yet.

One Thousand Yuan was far more powerful than he expected.

Ai Hui felt fear and worry, but he did not harbor a grudge toward her.

It had been a deal.

At that point in time, did he not know that the blood plum blossom was something harmful? Yes, he knew. The iron lady and the others hated One Thousand Yuan for taking advantage of his misfortune. However, from Ai Hui's point of view, what One Thousand Yuan did was fair. Was One Thousand Yuan obligated to help him? No, she was not.

There's no such thing as a free lunch.

Back then, he was like a penniless gambler who had lost it all. Other than his wretched life, he had nothing left.

Without One Thousand Yuan's blood plum blossom, he would not even have had the power to make his final decision.

Actually, Ai Hui felt grateful for this deal since it helped him to fulfill his master and mistress's wish. He was willing to pay any price just to fulfil this wish. Any price.

However, despite feeling grateful for the deal, Ai Hui did not intend to resign to his fate. Right now, whether One Thousand Yuan got what she wanted or Ai Hui broke free from the curse would depend on their individual capabilities.

A deal was supposed to be risky!

A cool-headed Ai Hui had recovered the clarity of his mind.

Even though the [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] was powerful and mysterious, that did not mean it did not have any flaws. The relationship between flower master and flower slave resembled that of master and servant, but there was no guarantee that the slave would be dominated by the master.

The Flower of Life and Flower of Destruction were embodiments of Yin and Yang. They affected each other and restricted each other.

For example, One Thousand Yuan definitely would not want Ai Hui to die. If the flower slave was to die, the flower master's body would begin to devour itself. In mild cases, the flower master

would become a handicapped person. In severe cases, the flower master would die.

This was an important factor that Ai Hui could take advantage of.

If he purposely went to some dangerous places, would One Thousand Yuan followed him? His life was wretched anyway. If he really died, then so be it. On the contrary, One Thousand Yuan enjoyed a sublime status in the Blood of God and had boundless prospects. Wouldn't it be a pity if she died?

So what if she didn't want to die?

Then she had to sit down and have a good discussion with him!

How about compensating me with some capable bodyguards? Nah, bodyguards would be rather inconvenient for me. It would be more practical to compensate me with essence elemental beans. If not, I'm fine with blood crystals and blood cores as well.

How could I feel safe without money? How could I live comfortably without money?

You must pay me some remuneration for helping you grow your flower.

All right, all right, let's not talk about the remuneration right away.

If you don’t nourish me, how can I provide enough nutrients for your flower! How would the nutrients be enough!

Once Ai Hui started to think clearly, ideas flowed into his mind endlessly.

The Yin and Yang relationship between the Flower of Life and Flower of Destruction could be taken advantage of as well. Since the Flower of Destruction was a projection of the Flower of Life, if he could control the Flower of Destruction , then wouldn’t it be possible for him to control the Flower of Life as well?

Sure, it might be unlikely for him to control the Flower of Life, but what about affecting it? Could he affect the growth of the Flower of Destruction and Flower of Life?

Ai Hui’s eyes became brighter and brighter.

The [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] was indeed a good thing!

Chapter 293: The Sha Family

The city woke up from its deep sleep as the night scene receded into the horizon.

After working hard for the whole night, Ai Hui let out a yawn. He had yet to fully understand the nuances of the [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art]. He did have some ideas about it, slightly setting his mind at ease.

He would first need to test out whether or not One Thousand Yuan would be injured if he died, or rather, if she would care about him. Controlling the Flower of Death might sound easy, but in reality, Ai Hui had no idea how to execute it.

The game had just begun.

After greeting Lou Lan drowsily, Ai Hui lay down and fell into a deep sleep. For the past few weeks, he had been travelling nonstop, and his mind was stretched taut. Only when he came home could he then relax.

The esoteric [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art], the ancient treasure, the Great Wei Enterprise, the Assembly of Patriarchs, and everything else had been cast to the back of his mind. Right now, he only wanted to sleep until the end of time.

Lou Lan did not disturb Ai Hui.

After sleeping for an unknown amount of time, Ai Hui vaguely heard someone quarrelling in his dream.

"... Four essence elemental beans? Ha! Why don’t both of you rob a bank instead? I have never heard of any training hall that dares to quote such a price..."

"It’s not that I don’t have essence elemental beans. I just don’t want to get scammed by the both of you! Do you think I’m stupid?"

"Do both of you think that you’re some big shot? How dare you both take me for a fool! Wait and you shall see!"

...

Soon after, Ai Hui again faintly heard someone quarrelling in his sleep.

"Not selling? 500,000 elemental energy points is enough for you to make a huge profit!"

"People who are too greedy don’t usually come to a good end. I think both of you should reconsider your decision."

"Ask your master to come out now. What’s the meaning of letting a sand puppet deal with me!?"

The person talking was getting increasingly agitated, and his

voice grew louder and louder. Ai Hui, who was in a stupor, could no longer carry on sleeping. Awakened by the noise, Ai Hui's face turned gloomy. All he wanted was to have a good sleep, but he kept getting disturbed by other people. Even a gentleman would get angry at this point.

Wait, was Ai Hui a gentleman?

He stood up and walked out of the warehouse. From a distance, he saw an obese middle-aged man, who seemed to be a butler. As he spoke, his face was filled with anger and his arms waved through the air from time to time.

When the obese butler saw Ai Hui, he became even more agitated. He walked aggressively toward Ai Hui and asked rudely, "Are you the owner of this training hall?"

Ai Hui tilted his head and looked at him.

"Let me tell you! No matter what, today you're selling this training hall to me! If you're tactful enough, you can still get 500,000 elemental energy points. If you're not tactful, don't blame our Sha Family for being ruthless. Your daddy, I, have come across plenty of trash like you. How dare you put on airs in front of our Sha Family! You must be tired of living!"

"Sha Family? What Sha Family?" Ai Hui looked baffled.

"What Sha Family?" The obese butler replied with arrogance,

"There is no sand that the Sha Family can’t make into sand puppets!"

"Oh, that Sha Family," Ai Hui came to a realization.

He had heard of this Sha Family before. They were also known as the home of sand puppets and specialized in making sand puppets. There was a famous saying: "There is no sand that the Sha Family can’t make into sand puppets," which meant that any type of sand could be refined and manufactured into sand puppets in the hands of the Sha Family.

The obese butler looked extremely pleased with himself. He cast a haughty look at Lou Lan and said, "Our Sha Family is upright and fair. By buying your dilapidated warehouse for 500,000 elemental energy points, you will have made enough profit. Lad, don’t be too greedy. I’m afraid you won’t have the appetite to digest if we give you too much. If we can reach an agreement today, we will even exchange your sand puppet for a free Earth Dragon sand puppet from the Sha Family. I’m sure you know the price of an Earth Dragon sand puppet."

Ai Hui put on an innocent look and replied, "Exchange? You might as well just give me an Earth Dragon."

"No!" the obese butler answered in a stern tone. "If I do that, I will be taking on a huge risk. If the higher-ups find out about this, I will be in deep trouble. I need to take your lousy sand puppet so I can keep the same number of sand puppets in my warehouse. This way, the higher-ups won’t be able to tell what I have done..."

Thump!

The sole of Ai Hui’s foot landed squarely on the obese butler’s face, sinking deeply into his fat, pudgy face.

As if he rammed by a wild beast, the obese butler flew out of the training hall’s entrance.

The facial expression of the Sha Family’s guards changed drastically. "How dare you!"

One of the guards reached out to catch the butler. The butler was Madam’s relative and had gained the trust of both Master and Madam. Hence, he had extremely high authority in the family. If anything was to happen to the butler, all of them would be in deep water.

Just as the guard made contact with the body of the flying butler, his facial expression changed.

The guard felt a violent force pass through his body. By now, it was already too late for him to respond. The body of the butler collided heavily with his body.

Bang!

Both of them smashed into the wall. Crash! The wall collapsed

like a pile of toy building blocks, burying the two.

Ai Hui withdrew his leg and muttered, "How dare you say my Lou Lan is a lousy sand puppet. You must be tired of living."

At this moment, the rest of the guards summoned their sand puppets.

Ai Hui's gaze landed on these sand puppets and asked Lou Lan curiously, "Lou Lan, are these Earth Dragons?"

The sand puppets looked very weird. Even though they had a humanoid form, their spines were swollen. Each section of their spinal column could be clearly seen. The Earth Dragon sand puppets were entirely black in color. Their limbs were thick and solid, but not swollen. Their gazes were cold and austere.

"Yes, Ai Hui." Lou Lan explained as if he was reciting from a book, "Earth Dragons are the Sha Family's elite sand puppets. They are mainly composed of matt black sand, square stone, and gray clay. They have powerful strength, outstanding survivability, formidable fighting capabilities, and are very obedient. Their weakness lies in their sand core. Their sand core is made up of Thousand Water Stone, which is not particularly intelligent."

Lou Lan's words sent a cold shiver down the spines of the Sha Family guards.

At a loss, they looked at each other. Who exactly were these

people? Why were they so familiar with Earth Dragons? The Earth Dragon sand puppets were new sand puppets that were developed only 500 years ago. Their construction blueprints were the Sha Family's well-kept secret, and they were the main sale product nowadays.

A furious look flashed across the guard leader's eyes. He yelled angrily, "Audacious spy! How dare you spy on our sand puppets! We will not forgive you! Everyone, shoulder to shoulder. Advance!"

The guard leader knew that the butler was was a petty individual. If they returned completely unharmed, the butler definitely would bear grudges against them. The guard leader also could tell that the training hall's owner was someone not to be trifled with, and as such, he charged him with a crime first.

Whether or not they won this battle, the Sha Family would have an excuse to denounce him afterward.

No matter how powerful the training hall's owner was, he still could not contend against the Sha Family.

Upon seeing the incoming sand puppets and hearing the guard leader's words, Ai Hui laughed coldly. Ai Hui was experienced enough to know what the other party was up to just by listening to his words.

"Lou Lan, freeze the Earth Dragons.

"Okay, Ai Hui!" Lou Lan replied cheerfully as his eyes began to glow.

All along, he could not help Ai Hui much during battles. He often reminisced about the blind battle that he previously fought with Ai Hui. Finally, he could fight alongside Ai Hui again!

Over the past three years, Ai Hui was not the only one improving. Lou Lan had improved as well. Even though Lou Lan's body could not be completely upgraded due to the lack of materials, he still managed to absorb many blood crystals and blood cores and also made many minor alterations to himself.

Lou Lan was still unfamiliar when it came to dealing with elementalists, but when it came to dealing with sand puppets, Lou Lan was an expert.

Since he was a sand puppet just like the Earth Dragons, he knew everything about their moves.

It was more than enough for Lou Lan to know that the Earth Dragons' weakness lay in their sand core. Furthermore, he even knew that their sand cores were made up of Thousand Water Stone. As such, he knew properties of the cores and how to make them sluggish. He also knew that if the concentration of elemental energy between the matte black sand and gray clay was lower than a certain critical point, these two materials would repel each other.

Lou Lan dissolved into a pile of sand and seeped into the ground.

Just as the Earth Dragons were about to reach Ai Hui, they suddenly froze, looking as if a freezing spell had been cast on them.

The glow in the Earth Dragons' eyes continuously lit up and extinguished. After around 10 seconds, the square stones on the Earth Dragons' backs loosened and fell to the ground.

The faces of the Sha Family guards became ashen as they looked blankly upon this scene. What had happened completely defied their logic.

Why...

When they saw Ai Hui striding toward them, they started to panick. They tried to put on a brave front and asked, "What... what are you trying to do?"

Ai Hui grinned and revealed his teeth. "Since all of you are my guests, you will have to stay here today."

He did not give these earth elementalists any chance to react. Like a lightning bolt, he knocked them out in the blink of an eye.

Ai Hui silently shook his head. He really did not know what these earth elementalists were thinking. Nowadays, earth elementalists were in such a dire situation, yet they still had the nerve to do things so arrogantly. Weren't they seeking death?

"Lou Lan, tie them up!" Ai Hui waved his hand.

"No problem, Ai Hui!"

Simultaneously, countless voices came out from all corners of the courtyard.

Pea-sized mini Lou Lans emerged from the ground and yelled cheerfully in unison, "Lou Lan is coming!"

Happily, they rushed to the fainted earth elementalists and jumped on their bodies.

A few mini Lou Lans carried ropes that were thicker than their bodies, threw them on top of those elementalists, and yelled together, "Lou Lan, catch the rope!"

The several mini Lou Lans standing on top of the fainted elementalists spread their arms and yelled together, "Lou Lan caught it!"

"Lou Lan is beginning to tie a knot now!"

"Lou Lan has completed tying the knot!

"Lou Lan is preparing to carry him!"

"Lou Lan is coming!"

"Lou Lan is coming!"

"Lou Lan is coming!"

...

Upon seeing the bustling scene, Ai Hui was deeply moved. The scene very much resembled the expansion project outside of the city...

In the blink of an eye, the Sha Family guards and the butler were tied up.

Ai Hui was very sly. When the butler said he wanted to trade Lou Lan for an Earth Dragon, Ai Hui knew that they would not peacefully resolve the issue. Even though the butler was fat, he was sharp-sighted. He could tell that Lou Lan was an extraordinary sand puppet and coveted him.

Even though the Sha Family was currently in a dire situation due to the loss of the Yellow Sand Corner, they were still very powerful. If Ai Hui had not attained elemental externalization, he would be very fearful of them.

However, since he had attained elemental externalization, his fighting capabilities had improved tremendously and his confidence was greatly boosted.

The poor were not intimidated by the rich. It would only spell trouble for a rich and powerful family like the Sha Family to encounter a fellow like Ai Hui.

Ai Hui liked to keep a low-profile and did not like to stir up trouble, but that did not mean that he was afraid of causing havoc. No matter how powerful the Sha Family was, were they more powerful than the Blood of God?

Since they could not resolve the issue peacefully, Ai Hui had to resort to his fists.

Recently, there had been an increase in criminal activity in Peace City. With the establishment of a lesser Avalon of Five Elements, Ai Hui knew that many people would be interested in his plot of land.

In the city, there were very few properties that were as big as his training hall.

There were a lot of people eyeing his training hall. If he displayed any sign of weakness, plenty of greedy individuals would pounce and completely devour him.

Ai Hui was hoping that this training hall would sell for a good price. The Sha Family was trying to scam him!

Looking at the empty entrance of the training hall, he gave a sinister smile while his eyes glittered with the glow of essence

elemental beans.

Chapter 294: Rising Storm

The news that the Sha family had been beaten up spread across the whole of Peace City as if it had wings.

The undercurrent surged in Peace City. It was apparent from the number of property transactions that close to seventy percent of houses in the city had new owners. The power of money, fist and authority were displayed vividly through different ways. Lucky home owners could earn a big sum of money and unlucky ones would find themselves in a worse situation. While it wasn't to the extent of becoming bankrupt or losing lives, injuries were common.

Peace City was like a feasting place, fertile and repleted.

Peace City was a small place and played no impressive roles. It couldn't provoke fellows that had a strong background. As for other matters, it was fine as long as they did not go overboard. Going overboard would bring shame to the family and they still wanted to keep their reputation. Most families would choose to offer a pretty decent price along with some threats in order to achieve their goals.

A little bit of money meant nothing to big families. There was no need to complicate matters over such an insignificant amount of money.

While there were many undercurrents in Peace City, it was buzzing with activity on the surface and there was no

sensationalized news. As such, the news of the Sha family getting beaten up created such a big stir.

Some felt rueful over the Sha family's decline.

The Sha family from three years back had still been a well-celebrated family in the Avalon of Five Elements. Yet, in just three years they fell into poverty and were taken over by a small and remote training hall. The whole affair would make you sigh.

The occupation of Yellow Corner Sand was a devastating blow to influential earth elementalist families. It only took three years for the Sha family to lose their power and fall into such decline. In another three years there might not even be a Sha family anymore.

It was no wonder the Sha family was so desperate. They had no choice.

A pity the Sha family wasn't in luck and had stumbled.

The news of Wang Han and the swordsman school had already reached the desks of respective homeowners. There wasn't anything noteworthy about the news other than the interesting nickname, 'King of Anglers', given to Wang Han.

It was said that Wang Han had just attained elemental externalization so how great could he be?

Could it be that the Sha family's abilities had already reached

such a frail state? Some people were secretly affected. Although they couldn't make sand puppets without sand, there were still many good things about the Sha family. At least the manufacturing method was invaluable.The Elders Guild would absolutely disallow only metal and water elements to exist long term. It was evident from the establishment of the small Avalon of Five Elements that Elders Guild was trying. Their determination was apparent as well.

One could tell, from the construction of the small Avalon of Five Elements, that Elders Guild had already realized that regardless if it was the Fire Prairie and Yellow Corner Sand, occupied by Blood of God, or the independent Jadeite Forest, none would return to the hands of the Avalon of Five Elements any time soon.

The war would not end soon and once the small avalon succeeded, the rebuilding of the Avalon of Five Elements would immediately begin.

As long as the Elders Guild pushed through the challenging phase before them and gained strength, the situation would improve greatly.

The difficult situation faced by earth, fire and water elementalists was only temporary. They would recover their elemental energy upon the reconstruction of the Avalon of Five Elements.

These families were at their weakest right now, which meant that now was the best opportunity to swallow them up. If these weakened families were taken over now, the spoils of war during the rebuilding of the Avalon of Five Elements would earn them a

large sum.

Quickly, many families became restless and threatening.

Evergold Enterprise.

"Four essence elemental beans?" asked the Fu family's elder sister.

Fu Yonghao replied angrily, "Yes, Sister. This man is crazy about money! Treating me as a fool? I was so angry that I almost quarreled with them."

"So did you give them to him?" the lady asked while looking at him.

Fu Yonghao felt weak from his sister's gaze but answered firmly, "Of course not! I'm not stupid!"

His sister shook her head. "Four essence elemental beans in exchange for a fair chance to get close to him. What's bad about it?"

"In any case, I don't want to be slaughtered like an idiot!" Fu Yonghao stiffened his neck and repeated indignantly.

The Fu family's elder sister asked directly, "Then have you seen the Sha family's battle process?"

"I've seen it." Fu Yonghao felt at ease upon seeing that his sister wasn't angry. He continued, "I left the alley and saw them not far away. I heard the housekeeper mumbling something about buying over the training hall and immediately knew that they were going after Wang Han."

His sister asked hurriedly, "How?"

Out of curiosity, others looked over as well.

Fu Yonghao had a strange expression. "Wang Han did not look very impressive, but his sand puppet was pretty capable. The guards' Earth Dragons were all defeated by Wang Han's sand puppet.

"Taken down by Wang Han's sand puppet?"

This outcome was surprising.

"Yeah." Fu Yonghao was puzzled too. "Isn't the Sha family well-known for their sand puppets? While Earth Dragons are not considered first-rate sand puppets, they are pretty good at combat. How did they get defeated by a single sand puppet so easily? Has the Sha family really fallen into such a sorry state?"

Fu Renxuan couldn't help but ask, "Where's Wang Han's sand puppet from? Isn't he a metal elementalist?"

Fu Yonghao spread his hands out.

"Regardless, the Sha family can only brace themselves." the Fu family's elder sister added, "If they cower now, they will have to succumb to their fate of getting swallowed up. Not only do they have to win, they have to win beautifully in order to intimidate those greedy fellows."

Fu Yonghao's eyes lit up. "A good show's coming up!"

Swordsman Training Hall.

"Ai Hui, am I really going to start upgrading my body? It's going to require a very long time." Lou Lan spoke.

"How long?"

"Six to eight days."

"Oh okay, start as soon as possible once you're ready."

"But what would you do if enemies appear?"

"Hah, don't worry, what's there to be afraid of? We're in school!"

...

Ai Hui really wasn't worried. He wouldn't be so sure if they were in some other place, but since they were in Swordsman Training Hall, he was highly confident.

This was his home ground.

As someone who was always cautious, he placed much more importance on his nesting place as compared to most people. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to sleep in peace.

Ever since he left Central Pine, he had accumulated a significant number of Heaven Merit Points. He was supposed to get an inherited manual but with additional points, he exchanged it for an absolute art manual for training sky palaces.

He then used the rest of his points to obtain all sorts of uncommon ingredients.

And he used most of these ingredients to make elemental food for upgrading Lou Lan's body and for Dragonspine tempering. For Ai Hui to be able to progress steadily in spite of the Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Technique Art, these ingredients played an important role.

The remaining ingredients were used in his training hall.

All the resources were taken away by the Elders Guild for Wang Shouchuan's [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] plan during the war of Central Pine City. Even Wang Shouchuan's daily notes

that had been found were kept safely. The Elders Guild saw these pieces of information as treasures and were highly secretive about them.

No one would've thought that there was still someone who remembered the complicated and meticulous proposal from that time.

And that person was Ai Hui.

He had been in touch with Teacher's ideas on a regular basis, and when the proposal was out he visited Teacher, who explained it all to him without stopping. As such, Ai Hui had a much deeper understanding of the whole plan since he'd been following up with it from start to end.

The plan was so grand and full of complex scenarios, things that Ai Hui wasn't able nor required to try. Thus, he specially made smaller scaled, simplified versions to fix up the hall and increase security.

As his understanding of sword mastery and Teacher's theory deepened steadily, he continued improvising the installations.

No one would've thought that this shabby-looking training hall had its own mysteries.

Even people like Su Qingye, who practiced here regularly, did not sense anything abnormal.

When Ai Hui knew that there might be danger, he informed all the students that classes would stop for half a month so as to prevent getting involved in this affair.

Lou Lan started upgrading his body and the hall quieted down.

Ai Hui did not waste any time as well. He had just broken into external externalization, which was the best time to train. The change in elemental energy offered him a different revelation.

Attaining elemental externalization meant that elementalists could directly engage Nature's elemental energies, precisely the reason for their formidability.

For example, currently, Ai Hui could engage elemental energy from within a radius of fifty feet. As he upgraded his level of training, this range would widen as well.

Attaining elemental externalization was merely the beginning. There was a huge difference between being able to engage elemental energy from within a radius of fifty feet versus from within a radius of thousands of feet.

Along with a deeper understanding of elemental energy, elementalists would not only be able to increase their control over a larger area, they would even be able to engage elemental energy that was not of their own element.

The finest thing about the five elemental energies was how they affected one another.

Nature's elemental energies in itself resided in circulations. Those Masters were able to convert other elemental energies into the one that they needed.

This was also the reason why although Han Yuqin's combat abilities weren't as strong as Yu Mingqiu, she was able to complete the [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] plan. When one's base level was high enough, elemental energy was no longer divided. In her hands, any type of elemental energy could be converted easily.

Of course, this was the ultimate goal for elementalists. None had been able to achieve it so far.

According to recent rumors, the person closest to reaching this goal was grandmaster Dai Gang.

To Ai Hui, these were beyond his reach. He had just attained elemental externalization and was a thorough rookie. Many experiences were still very foreign to him.

He could feel the elemental energy in the ground beneath his feet dragging him along.

The elemental energy flow was completely different from before. Ai Hui was full of curiosity, his eyes flickering brightly.

As he moved, the Dragonspine started operating slowly.

Within these three years, if there was one area which he improved the greatest, it would have to be his sword mastery.

He had already attained a higher mastery level when he was still in Central Pine. Three years of perseverance, fumbling and bitter trainings really refined his swordsmanship.

He did not use Heaven Merit Points to exchange for the sword techniques. He did not care for those.

But Karakorum's swordplay really made his eyes light up.

Nevertheless, his own fighting style had started to infuse with his swordplay. Learning swordplay from others would instead be disadvantageous.

He could borrow them as references but could not completely imitate them.

What he needed to do now was to persevere.

Chapter 295: The Three Smalls

"How can we help Teacher?"

Hua Xiaoyun was thirteen years old but her cute, apple-shaped face was currently filled with worry. Her body was frail, as if the wind could easily blow her away. The brown curls on her head were the most eye-catching. Her fluffy hair resembled that of a poodle. Because of this, she was often laughed at and called Little Hua Doggy.

She was a feeble but kind girl. Upon hearing that Teacher had offended the Sha family, she got extremely worried and specially made a trip down to Peace City from Cloud Ridge City via Three Leaves Bamboo Cart, in search of Su Qingye and Zhou Wen.

Zhou Wen held onto his heavy sword without a word.

Su Qingye listlessly teased his new sand puppet. After his previous sand puppet's reported the expenses, his father finally bought him a new one. Because of Su Huaijun's praise of Su Qingye, his father was more than happy to get him a new and much more improved sand puppet.

At the beginning, Su Qingye was extremely pleased with his new sand puppet since it was much stronger than his previous one.

But when he found out that an argument arose between Teacher and the Sha family, Su Qingye became gloomy.

His new sand puppet, Cuttlefish, was a product of the Sha Family.

Fate was fooling with people. Su Qingye’s child-like face was now full of sorrow as he sighed toward the sky.

"Say something you guys!" Hua Xiaoyun spoke urgently. "Why aren’t you guys talking! I’m so worried!"

"Teacher doesn’t need our help," the mysterious Zhou Wen said all of a sudden.

"Are we just going to sit and watch? Teacher has to deal with so many enemies. What if he can’t handle them?" The more Hua Xiaoyun thought about it, the more worried she got.

"We’re so weak, how are we going to help him?" Su Qingye was a businessman’s son after all and had rich life experiences. "What we should do now is make sure that we don’t become a burden and a cause for worry."

Having said that, Su Qingye felt sullen himself.

Stupid Sha family!

How hateful!

"Then what’s going to happen to Teacher?" Hua Xiaoyun asked on the brink of tears.

"I trust Teacher." Zhou Wen said.

"Me too." Su Qingye consoled, "Don’t forget that there’s still Lou Lan. Lou Lan is powerful. We wouldn’t be able to win against him even if we joined forces."

Just then, a group of hooligans appeared from not far away. After some brief eye contact, they walked over with bad intentions.

"Hey, take out all your money!"

As the three of them were too preoccupied with worrying, the gangsters had already surrounded them when they were finally able to react.

Zhou Wen stood up coldly and kept Hua Xiaoyun close to him.

Su Qingye wrinkled his brows and berated, "Who are you guys? You all look unfamiliar. Why? Coming all the way here to cause trouble?"

While Sea Pacific Enterprise wasn’t considered big, it had been standing for many years and the local societies and businesses were beyond familiar with it. Su Qingye had been interacting with these people since he was young and had no fear. What kind of storm could a small city like Peace City cook up?

Su Qingye was more than certain that he'd not seen these people before.

There was an influx of foreigners into Peace City recently and security had become less ordered.

"How arrogant!" The lead gangster stepped out, an evil green appearing on his face. "You'd better take out all your money now if you don't wanna get beaten up. Or else, don't blame us for being impolite!"

"We can give you the money, but you have to let us go." Su Qingye said while fishing out money.

Seeing that Su Qingye gave in, the hooligan let his guard down momentarily, saying, "Don't play any tricks and you'll be fine..."

Even before he could finish speaking, he felt a sharp pain in his thigh.

He looked down and saw a sand sword jutting out from his thigh as fresh blood poured out.

Before he could react, his little brothers had already fallen into a pitiful state.

Zhou Wen had already completely powered his sword. It was like

a solid hammer. Taking a hit would usually cause a sore, bone-shattering sound. While he did not look strong on the outside, he was as brave as a fierce tiger.

Hua Xiaoyun followed closely behind as the swords made from fog became agile and sharp arrows, unceasingly landing on their enemies' bodies and leaving wounds.

"You're courting death!"

The leader had a sinister look on his face but right in front of him, Su Qingye was all smiles. Even before he could react, his other thigh got stabbed as well.

Plop!

The gang leader's legs turned weak and he sank to his knees.

A sand lock chained around his neck transformed into a collar, where sawteeth were spinning slowly around the inner side of it.

"Stop!"

Su Qingye spoke up as the sawteeth tightened suddenly and a blood streak surfaced on the gang leader's neck.

The gang leader turned pale as he quickly instructed, "Stop! All of you, stop!"

Seeing the state their leader was in, the rest of the gang hesitated a little before stopping.

Bang bang bang!

Ferocious Zhou Wen had no intention to stop. Instead, he charged forward and took down the remaining hooligans in the blink of an eye.

The gang leader’s expression worsened. He knew he had provoked the wrong person and lowered his noble head.

Su Qingye asked calmly, "How long have you guys been in Peace City?"

The gang leader answered in all honesty, "Three days."

Chuckling, Su Qingye asked, "Three days and you guys are feeling restless already?"

The leader hurriedly replied, "I must be blind to have offended you all..."

"Heh heh, let’s talk things over." Su Qingye changed the topic suddenly. "Who asked you guys to come over?"

The gang leader’s expression changed slightly but he remained

silent.

Zhou Wen and Hua Xiaoyun exchanged glances.

"I thought it was strange. Coming for money straight away, how ignorant! Not even a greeting or an excuse, do you take me for a fool?" Su Qingye smiled coldly. He was very familiar with how things went on the street. "You better be honest with us or I'll kill you. Heard of Huang Dahai? Entering someone else's territory, have you paid your respects? Still have the guts to rob? You'll get seriously hurt if I hand you over to him. He would have to thank me and invite me to attend the ritual!"

Upon hearing Huang Dahai's name, the gang leader's face turned a deathly white.

Huang Dahai was the big boss of a few streets nearby and was vicious and merciless. If the gangster fell into Huang Dahai's hands, he would have a miserable ending. The gangster's body shook uncontrollably at the mere thought that Huang Dahai might deal with him cruelly.

He bit his teeth. "Yes..."

A green light flashed abruptly and hit the gang leader right between his brows.

A grunt sounded and ended spontaneously. There was a bloody hole in between his brows as blood flowed down.

This sudden change of events stunned Su Qingye for a while. Because Teacher attached much importance to real combat, the three of them were used to confrontation. He had fought before, but killing people...

The gang leader on the ground was no longer breathing, his eyes wide open and expressionless. The emptiness was uncomfortable to bear.

Su Qinye blanked out.

Boom! A huge force knocked him down, which also allowed him to snap out of it.

It was Zhou Wen!

He had left a pit in the ground.

Habitually silent, Zhou Wen lived in an even harsher environment and thus had a higher psychological endurance than Su Qingye.

He was fighting against the attacker who launched the sneak attack now.

Soon, Hua Xiaoyun threw herself out there as well. Her fish-like cloud sword made concentrated shuffling sounds. The frail-

looking brown-haired girl was actually stronger that she appeared.

Clap! Su Qingye gave himself a slap, shame filling his chest.

Cuttlefish seeped into the ground and went for the opponent like a pool of ink.

The attacker was a middle-aged man. He had an average appearance, a face that would fade in a crowd. However, he was exceptionally strong, taking on three opponents by himself, yet maintaining the upper hand.

Zhou Wen's subtle sword strokes were effortlessly blocked off by the man. The man could also easily dodge Hua Xiaoyun's crafty cloud sword, as if he'd long predicted its moves.

Cuttlefish's speed increased and in the blink of an eye, it was already under the man's feet.

A pool of ink wrapped around his legs.

Su Qingye saw the sneer in the man's eyes. Boom! The man did not move his legs but the black ink around them exploded into a puff of sand.

Their opponent was simply too powerful!

His realm, fight and even battle experience far exceeded theirs.

"If you meet an enemy that’s too powerful, don’t run. You can’t outrun him. Keep in mind what I’m about to teach you..."

Teacher’s words suddenly floated into Su Qingye’s conscious mind.

Su Qingye remembered these words very clearly since Teacher made sure to explain the content to them when they were all present. Teacher wasn’t very responsible in the sense that he appeared and disappeared unpredictably, and just mostly wasn’t around. Lou Lan was the one who had been monitoring their trainings. They really liked Lou Lan and felt he was more like a teacher.

Su Qingye was somewhat vexed. They’d never tried practicing what Teacher had taught them.

His relationship with Zhou Wen wasn’t considered friendly and Hua Xiaoyun only visited twice a week so no one had thought of practicing the drill together.

They could only push their way through, even if it was beyond their abilities...

"Three elements!"

Su Qingye shouted suddenly and dashed behind Zhou Wen. The dispersed ink sand on the ground assembled and moved toward

him as if it was attracted by something.

Upon hearing Su Qingye's loud roar, Zhou Wen retreated suddenly without the slightest hesitation.

He stood about ten feet to Hua Xiaoyun's right as Su Qingye stood about thirty feet to her left.

The three of them formed a polyline angle.

Their opponent did not interrupt them. Instead, he observed them calmly.

"... A pentagon has five points. The three of you occupy three connecting points. Remember, Hua Xiaoyun right at the front, followed by Zhou Wen and finally Su Qingye..."

At this moment, Su Qingye was beyond thankful for his daily trainings.

Teacher had strict requirements when it came to their sense of space. He felt that having a precise sense was very helpful in battles. As such, the three of them had undergone countless extra trainings and punishments. Basically, they suffered quite a lot of hardships to perfect this part.

And finally, in this moment, all their hard work would be put to good use.

Without any adjustments, Su Qingye knew their positions were completely accurate.

Teacher, you must mean what you say…

Su Qingye prayed inwardly to each and every god he knew. His hand movements were super fast, his arms unoccupied. The black ink sand shuffled its way up off the ground and formed a sphere, which spun around between his arms.

Gathering all the elemental energy within his body, Su Qingye made a strong push with his arms and the fast spinning black sand ball in front of his chest transformed into a black sand sword, flying toward Zhou Wen.

Zhou Wen had a stern expression on his face as he used both hands to grab his sword. Silhouette like a bow, he thrusted his sword unhurriedly.

A silver bright glow swiftly lighted up.

The black sand sword, as if attracted by something, flew toward the sword light from Zhou Wen’s attack.

The moment the black sand sword shot into the bright sword light, the light dimmed and an indescribable grandeur shrouded the whole place.

The sword ray appeared in front of Hua Xiaoyun in a flash.

Hua Xiaoyun condensed six cloud swords and like vines, they wound around this sword ray.

The middle-aged man’s face changed greatly.

Just then, the sword ray made a shocking transformation.

Chapter 296: Probe

All the force within the sword ray collided with the vine-like cloud sword.

Poof!

The cloud sword swiftly turned into a ball of fog that was even more dazzling than a rainbow, but in the blink of an eye, the splendid fog was torn apart into thin sword rays.

Su Qingye and gang were stunned by this sight. They were the most beautiful sword rays ever.

The thin sword rays were as if they'd been ground into mica sheets, overflowing with light and brilliance like the world's most beautiful colors. There were specks of golden sand on top that appeared to be moving about.

The sword produced a sweet-sounding sword chime, which spread across the whole city like surfacing ripples.

Upon hearing the sword chime, Ai Hui, who was meditating, lowered his gaze and spread open his azure wings. He flew up and saw the splendor from far away. Without hesitating, he dashed toward that light.

Not just him, but many elementalists could be seen flying in that direction.

Opposite the three students, the middle-aged man's face had completely changed. He saw the overflowing aura of death emitted by the beautiful sword ray.

Beautiful things were usually fatal. He'd seen poisonous snakes and beautiful women, but in front of these sword rays they paled in comparison. Whether it was beautiful or fatal, how did these three brats command such a sword ray?

There was a second where his heart was filled with regret. He regretted offering his support and underestimating his enemies.

In a flash, the hesitation in his gaze was swept away and replaced with unwavering determination. His experience taught him that the more dangerous a situation was, the more he had to risk his life. Any hesitation or fear would lose him his chances of survival.

With a bellow, the elemental energy within his whole body started circulating and rich metal elemental energy crawled from the ground up his body.

Elemental externalization!

Another egg-sized clay figure appeared in the middle-aged man's hand.

Concentrated earth elemental energy was channeled into the mini clay figure and it shattered with a clap, transforming into a

ray of light before disappearing.

Rumble!

A huge rumbling sound emerged from underground as a huge sandstone arm surfaced aboveground.

It was over ten meters long and extremely thick and solid. Three people would be needed to surround it and still wrap their arms around each other.

While it seemed slow-moving, all this had happened in an instant.

The enormous palm spread its fingers wide like a big web and grabbed toward that splendid, yet fatal sword ray.

Boom!

The sword ray shot into the giant palm and the palm closed up.

The middle-aged man sighed a breath of relief, but the next moment, his face changed yet again.

Countless beams of light broke through the giant palm and shot out as fragmented rays, each of which were extremely dangerous.

The middle-aged man was unable to dodge and a blood streak appeared on his shoulder. He had actually felt no pain when the fragmented ray swept past, a sign that the shattered ray was beyond sharp.

The giant palm, at this point, looked badly damaged and only four fingers remained.

The middle-aged man looked terrible. He was dealing with three schooling brats with his Elemental Externalization realm, but was still forced into this pitiful state. His face was scorching red.

The giant sandstone palm wriggled about, and in a flash, another finger grew out and the palm was just as good as before.

The middle-aged man had a malevolent look on his face as he said viciously, "Good! Very good! Let’s see what other tricks you have up your sleeves!"

The three kids turned pale. They had already consumed their last bit of elemental energy and were on the verge of collapsing. Their faces were white as a sheet but no one pled for mercy.

"... This move is pretty formidable, but most importantly, it causes a big enough scene."

Su Qingye gasped roughly for breath as he muttered to himself non-stop. Teacher, you’d better be reliable...

It seemed that he could only reduce his fear by doing this.

"Tremendous elemental devil palm, how impressive!" The cold voice sounded from the sky.

Hearing this, Su Qingye's tensed nerves loosened up immediately as he plopped to the ground.

A short-haired lady descended and landed in front of the kids. It was actually Huaijun.

Su Qingye was full of gratitude towards his aunt right now. He shouted obediently, "Aunt."

Huaijun ignored him and looked the middle-aged man right in the face, then said in all coldness, "Why? Sha Wuyuan, do you dare not reveal yourself? Or does the Sha family only dare to do such shady acts?"

The middle-aged man took the elemental energy mask off his face, revealing a meager, apathetic face. "I heard Sea Pacific Enterprise will be operating here for a long time to come. I've been so curious as to who would have such foresight to prepare the layout so early on. It's a great honor to be able to meet you today."

Huaijun remained unmoved. "Sea Pacific Enterprise is not big, but we will not tolerate any humiliation. You've actually attacked the younger generation, so there's no way around this, both families will have to settle all scores today no matter what."

There was a jade bamboo as thick as a thumb in her hand. It was a fresh, green jasper jade bamboo and there were even a few bamboo leaves hanging on top of it.

Sha Wuyuan’s pupils shrank. "Su Huaijun!"

He said slowly, "I was wondering which Su family it was. Turns out you are from the Sanmu Su family. My bad, my bad. We have been at peace and close like family. This misunderstanding was caused by my hastiness and I’d almost disrupted our harmony. I heard you’re an earth elementalist. This sand puppet, Shadow, is a little gift from me. Please accept it, Sir."

The Shadow was a precious treasure among the sand puppets produced by the Sha family. It was difficult to obtain even before Yellow Sand Corner was taken over. Unfortunately, it was unlikely that the current Sha family would be able to produce many of these Shadows anymore.

Huaijun’s face softened slightly as she said to Su Qingye, "It’s okay, stop now."

Su Qingye gave Sha Wuyuan a hateful look, but knew he had to listen. He could tell that while his father was the one managing the enterprise, his aunt held a more admirable position.

Sha Wuyuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Within the information gathered on Wang Han, Sea Pacific Enterprise was Sha family's only doubt. Su Qingye was Wang Han's student. What kind of relationship did Wang Han and Sea Pacific Enterprise have? Who was backing up Sea Pacific Enterprise?

The ways of the world were chaotic, enterprises without any backing wouldn't be able to survive. For being able to live in Peace City for so long, Sea Pacific Enterprise must have its backing.

Sha Wuyuan had bribed the gangsters to target Su Qingye in order to scout out information about the Su family and to get a gauge of Wang Han's standards.

Who knew the gangsters would be so useless, causing him to have to deal with the kids himself. Su Huaijun's choice to end the fight made him feel rather embarrassed as well.

The good thing was that he'd already gotten the answer he wanted the most.

The whole Sha family knew that they simply couldn't afford to lose this time. Once they lost, it was inevitable that they would be swallowed up. Sha family's decline in the past three years had been observed by many, and Yu Wei had been the one bracing the family.

If they lost, their last semblance would be taken down and Sha family's vulnerability would be completely exposed, revealing exactly how weak they were. The wolves in wait would pounce on

them without hesitation and swallow them whole.

The Sha family simply couldn’t lose.

This put them under extreme pressure.

Sha Wuyuan’s gaze was shrewd and ruthless. He could feel the whole of the Su family’s attitude from Su Huaijun’s bearing. Su Huaijun did not mention Wang Han at all from start to finish.

The Su family did not want to get involved in the dispute between the Sha family and Wang Han!

This was the outcome he wanted, so he felt much more relaxed now. As long as the Su family did not chime in, what kind of storm could Wang Han raise alone?

Almost losing his life, Su Qingye wasn’t planning to let things go so easily, but his aunt had no intention of making a move. He rolled his eyes and shouted out loud, "There are three of us!"

Su Huaijun gave him a look, warning evident in her eyes.

Sha Wuyuan was taken by surprise, but he’d been around for a long time. Seeing that Su Huaijun glared but did not outright oppose Su Qingye, he said calmly, "The other two kiddos, five hundred elemental energy points each. A little gift from the bottom of my heart. What do you think, Miss Su?"

Su Qingye’s gaze fell upon a silhouette within the crowd and was stunned for a bit.

Su Huaijun nodded. "Okay."

Zhou Wen burst out, "Who wants your money!"

Surprise filled Su Qingye’s face. He knew how poor Zhou Wen was, yet this fellow actually had backbone despite his horrible personality. He quickly pulled Zhou Wen and winked at him vigorously. Zhou Wen did not really understand what Su Qingye was trying to do, so he just shut his mouth and said nothing.

Su Qingye winked at Hua Xiaoyun this time and she nodded subtlely.

It wasn’t the first time Sha Wuyuan had heard an angry rebuke like the one made by Zhou Wen. With a slight smile, he threw a bag of essence elemental beans toward Su Huaijun before turning around to leave.

Without opening it, Su Huaijun threw the bag to Su Qingye before leaving as well.

The sky was packed with observing elementalists. The resounding sword chim from earlier had alarmed all of them.

"Who would've thought that Sea Pacific Enterprise has the Su family backing it up!"

"Sanmu Su family is also a well-known family."

"Why didn't they go to Jadeite Forest?"

"We have to say something good about Avalon of Five Elements. The Avalon's never treated these families badly."

"Things are going to get lively in Peace City. The Sha family, Su family, and perhaps other families are also here."

...

Tongues were wagging in the sky as the Sanmu Su family suddenly emerged from beneath the water's surface, causing a stir.

Fu Renxuan was moved. "I can't believe the Su family is here too, but it makes sense. The earth elemental, fire elemental and wood elemental families are all waiting for the construction of the lesser Avalon of Five Elements."

The Fu family sister turned around suddenly to ask Fu Yonghao, "Was that move worth four essence elemental beans?"

Fu Yonghao's face turned red and he kept silent.

The move from earlier was beyond breathtaking. Although people only saw the aftermath of the sword ray and heard the sword chime, they were all shaken by the swordplay. Thinking about it again, this impressive swordplay was executed by three immature and inexperienced babies. How deep were Wang Han’s sword mastery and achievements?

Upon noticing this, Fu Renxuan hurriedly smoothed things over. "Who knew Wang Han’s sword master would be this excellent. Wonder if it has anything to do with Karakorum?"

The Fu family big sister seemed lost in thought as she commented suddenly, "Sha family is likely going to have a difficult time."

No one was surprised and Fu Renxuan couldn’t help but add, "Perhaps Sister thinks Wang Han can win this battle?"

Fu Yonghao blurted, "Sister, you overestimate Wang Han! The Sha family is a big family after all. A skinny camel is still bigger than a horse. Can one person like Wang Han overturn the whole family? Unbelievable!"

The Fu family big sister did not answer. Instead, she gazed at Sha Wuyuan’s disappearing figure and said faintly, "Acting cowardly before the battle. Not a good omen."

No one noticed a figure left the crowd quietly and followed far behind Sha Wuyuan.

Chapter 297: Silent Strike

Although Sha Wuyuan had embarrassed himself somewhat, he had still obtained the result he'd wanted and, compared to victory, a blow to his pride meant nothing.

Ultimately, the Sha family was still a big family. It was absolutely not an easy task to migrate and redevelop the whole family.

Those managing now were only the vanguards.

Sha Wuyuan felt that he had enough power since there was just one person in the so-called swordsman school. If not for the association between Sea Pacific Enterprise and Wang Han, Sha Wuyuan would've gone straight to the front door.

He was in a foreign land, so it did not hurt to be more cautious.

After probing came a thunderous fury. Only then would the world be able to witness the Sha family's power, and only then could the family crush the ingrates' desire to take them down.

Amidst the steady flow of people moving about the busy streets, a heroic spirit rose suddenly within Sha Wuyuan's chest.

Having been poverty-stricken for three years, members of Sha family had been indecisive and at a loss, but also held in a certain enthusiasm. The construction of the mini Avalon of Five Elements finally gave them some hope.

The Sha family of the past had been beyond well-regarded. The no-puppet-without-sand, mighty and well-celebrated Sha family had carried an unparalleled influence amongst all wood elementalists. Countless numbers of them had travelled thousands of miles to visit the family to request for a sand puppet. When the Sha family had been about to release a new series of sand puppets, all the business giants had responded instantly by waiting anxiously outside the Sha family's door.

The current situation was all thanks to that damned Blood of God!

The claim over Yellow Sand Corner had not only caused the Sha family to lose its most important raw material supply, but had also swept away all its power in Yellow Sand Corner. Close to seventy percent of the Sha family's power had been in Yellow Sand Corner, so its occupation greatly damaged the family's strength.

Otherwise, the Sha family wouldn't have fallen into such a predicament!

Sha Wuyuan's thoughts started to float away.

During the decaying, bleak period of war, the big-scale construction in Peace City was exceptionally attention-grabbing and spirit-raising.

There was an endless stream of people brushing past him, their faces full of urgency but also carrying an unique type of liveliness,

just like the Peace City which was full of vigor.

Just then, a warning signal rose in Sha Wuyuan's chest.

Even before he could react, he felt a sudden, sharp pain in his lower back.

A wisp of sharp elemental energy had pierced into his lower back!

Not good! Sha Wuyuan's face changed completely. The enemy was so good at concealing their odor that Sha Wuyuan wasn't even able to detect them standing by his side.

The moment the elemental energy invaded his body, the elemental energy within his body started resisting. This wisp of elemental energy was like a sharp awl, however, and broke open his elemental energy to destroy his body effortlessly. Pop, a faintly discernable sound rang in his ears like a clap of thunder.

Clap!

Densely packed cracks started surfacing on a round-headed mini sand puppet that hung on Sha Wuyuan's neck. Shortly, it shattered into a pool of quicksand and spilled onto the ground.

His standin puppet!

Fear and anger flooded Sha Wuyuan's heart simultaneously. The

shattering of the standin sand puppet meant that the earlier blow would've killed him if not for the puppet. The standin sand puppet was the Sha family's supreme puppet. It was absolutely not for sale and had no combat abilities. Its only use was to help its owner take a blow during a disaster.

Every single one of the ingredients needed to manufacture a standin sand puppet was extremely precious, and the secret method used in the production process would overdraft the creator's life. Even during its peak, the Sha family had not produced many of these standin puppets. The one on Sha Wuyuan's neck was one of the three left in the family.

Sha Wuyuan knew that the most important thing was not to attack the opponent or attend to his injury, but to increase the distance between the enemy and himself. Only then would he be able to unleash his power and gain the opportunity to strike back.

Ignoring the acute pain in his lower back, he suddenly charged toward the side of the street.

Ai Hui felt the elemental energy that he'd released get absorbed by something as a feeling of emptiness came through.

Standin sand puppet!

Ai Hui immediately understood because thanks to Lou Lan, he had a rather deep understanding of sand puppets. Why wouldn't Ai Hui know about the standin sand puppet? It was a rare gem among all sand puppets. He was rather shocked that such a precious item

would be in Sha Wuyuan's hands.

Stirred up by the Sha family's riches and overbearing attitude, Ai Hui attacked more ruthlessly.

Sha Wuyuan's sudden dash forward sent the streets into chaos.

There were people all around, but that did not give Sha Wuyuan a sense of security. The wisp of faintly discernable odor followed behind him like the undispersed soul of a deceased person. It was like a bone gangrene.

A chill went down his spine and overtook his whole body.

He dared not turn around, but dared not hesitate as well. There was no time for him to open his azure wings since the enemy was a proficient assassinator. Currently, it was as if he was standing on the edge of a cliff. Any mistake would mean a horrible death.

The elemental energy within his body rushed frantically toward his back. A layer of thick, sandy soil armor appeared on his back, growing visibly to the naked eye.

A ruthless expression flashed across Sha Wuyuan's face as he ran madly for his life. He had no intention to stop. He arched his back, covered with the sandy soil armor, as if he was raising a thick and solid shield and charged backwards with full force!

The next moment, Sha Wuyuan's face changed thoroughly.

There was nothing but emptiness behind him!

How was that possible?

Wasn't the opponent following close behind? Had it been an illusion? No! It definitely wasn't an illusion!

While Sha Wuyuan was feeling bewildered, a sword ray as bright as stars rose high into the air from beneath his feet.

Sword ray!

Sha Wuyuan's pupils shrank as he realized who the perpetrator was.

Wang Han! Swordsman Training Hall's owner, Wang Han!

Was this fellow crazy? How dare he...

A fellow he'd never paid attention to, a fellow that was as good as dead to him had actually... actually initiated an attack on the Sha family!

What was the Sha family? A huge monster dominating the food chain. A sneeze by the Sha family would cause many to tremble in fear. Today, however, he had actually been harassed by an insect-like, powerless fellow!

This slight to his dignity seemed to forebode the Sha family's decline. Disappointment and humiliation flashed past Sha Wuyuan's heart, accompanied shortly by an intense fury. His rage was so intense that he couldn't help but shake uncontrollably.

How gutsy! What a daredevil!

Not only did Sha Wuyuan not dodge, he charged toward the sword ray with a bellow.

In front of the ray, the thick, sandy soil armor was like paper. The pain in his abdomen seemed to have turned Sha Wuyuan into a wounded wild elephant as he started acting even crazier.

With a flip of his hand, a yellow glowing ring appeared on his palm.

[Heavy Soil Ring]!

This skill formed a confinement area with a radius of about a hundred feet. Those trapped within would feel their bodies become exceptionally heavy. Sha Wuyuan was particularly skillful with this move. He could make his enemies feel as if their bodies were twenty-six times heavier!

Those confined would be unable to move a single step and their heavy bodies would make even breathing a challenging task.

Unknowingly, a giant arm rose up from the ground far behind Sha Wuyuan. With its fingers spread open, the palm swatted at Ai Hui like a huge web.

A shadow descended upon Wang Han’s head. The giant palm was pressing down towards his head with a horrifying whizzing sound.

An evil grin appeared on Sha Wuyuan’s face.

Let’s see where you’re going to run!

Boom!

The giant palm clapped down fiercely and everything within a fifty foot radius, Sha Wuyuan included, turned into fine powder.

The solid ground rose up like a soft water surface and an intense shockwave carried and blasted the shattered rock pieces in all directions at a shocking speed.

"Hahaha..."

Wild laughter sounded from underground. Sha Wuyuan was still in one piece as he emerged from the sandy giant palm, looking as if he were floating up to the water’s surface. The fresh blood oozing out of his abdomen was a horrible sight, but he did not care at all.

Earth elementalists usually disliked air warfare because their

elemental energy became thinner once they left the ground. As for earth elementalists in the realm of elemental externalization, they were like a firm fort, difficult to destroy as long as their feet did not leave the earth.

The weakening effect was stronger in the city because he was unable to control as much elemental energy as when he was in wild areas. To Sha Wuyuan, however, this was sufficient.

He felt very clearly that he'd managed to trap the opponent!

The power of the devilish, giant elemental energy palm could pulverize all living things!

The passers-by observing from afar were all terrified and in awe, making him laugh uncontrollably. That was all. He had thought that Wang Han had powerful tricks, but that was all.

His laughter spontaneously came to an end as he suddenly felt danger from somewhere below. He spread his azure wings hurriedly and charged toward the sky.

A sharp, curved sword ray shot out from the giant elemental devilish palm.

The palm was like a lump of soft dough, splitting into two around the ray.

Sha Wuyuan opened his eyes wide, his expression stiffening up.

His giant palm wasn't just an earth elementalist's inheritance, but also a sand puppet. It was just that this sand puppet had a unique form. It was in the shape of a giant's arm. It possessed unmatchable power and force, and was exceptionally solid. Even a diving, high speed javelin would not be able to damage it at all.

Yet, it had actually split because of a sword ray…

What kind of sword ray could possible have such formidable power?

Fear overtook Sha Wuyuan like an oncoming darkness, abrupt and boundless.

Ai Hui's body and bones were about to fall apart as his limbs went weak and his forehead started buzzing. He had suffered greatly from that hit by the giant elemental devilish palm.

But thanks to One Thousand Yuan lady!

If not for the remodeling effect the blood plum blossom had on his body, the fact that his body was much stronger than others and that he had the protection of the blood bandage, that hit would've sent him to his last breath instantly.

The elemental energy within his body recovered faster than his flesh and shortly after he lost control, his speed returned to normal, allowing him to execute [Crescent Moon]!

The [Crescent Moon] today was more powerful than it had been when he was still in Central Pine City.

Be it his understanding of swordplay or the vigorousness and purity of the elemental energy within his body, both had improved tremendously and incomparably.

Ai Hui thought about how to claim victory with his weakened limbs. His body was numb and he could only utilize elemental energy. This was undoubtedly the most dangerous moment.

Just then, he suddenly noticed a change in Sha Wuyuan's expression. His eyes lit up.

Perhaps...

Ai Hui's heart shook as the sky palace between his brows started operating.

His body jolted and a devilish glow lit up in his eyes.

A few fine threads appeared within Ai Hui's field of vision like floating fishing lines in water. Each 'fishing line' tip was connected to a mini Dragonspine sword that swam silently like a fish and vanished in mid-air.

Fear overtook Sha Wuyuan's last wisp of fighting will and so he turned around to flee.

Just then, the silent strike happened.

Chapter 298: Sha Wuyuan's Death

A fine sword ray flashed before Sha Wuyuan's eyes.

Sha Wuyuan's face turned pale in fear. He felt his enemy was everywhere, appearing and disappearing, at times before him and at times behind him. He simply couldn't guard against such unpredictability.

All he wanted to do now was escape. The further the better. Hatred grew within his heart. He planned to show his best hands when he got back and that damned fellow Wang Han would have nowhere to run.

Sha Wuyuan's attack was beyond vicious and once he'd decided to escape, he did it without the least bit of hesitation or sloppiness.

Protecting his vital organs with both arms, he operated the elemental energy within his whole body as if he was getting ready for battle. With a bellow and a spread of his azure wings, he charged forward!

Bang!

A sword ray that was directed at his throat hit his arms, causing sparks to fly in all directions.

Sha Wuyuan noted that this fine sword ray was much less powerful than the one from earlier.

At this point, elemental energy was circulating within his whole body. He wasn't operating any high-level moves, but rather [Sand Armor], which was a skill most earth elementalists knew. It was a staple, inherited skill that was actually considerably practical when in the realm of elemental internalization. Sha Wuyuan was in the realm of elemental externalization, so the ordinary [Sand Amor] was impressively formidable in his hands.

It appeared as if his whole body was heavily armored as the light ray was circulating. The veined patterns on the armor were exquisite and clear. A true armor indeed.

The most praise-worthy aspect of the [Sand Armor] was that there were no blind spots. It could form successfully wherever the elemental energy could reach and circulate.

Ding, ding, ding!

Fine sword rays hit his body continuously but were unable to break his sand armor. Sha Wuyuan could finally calm his worried heart. He did not know if that curved sword ray was his opponent's fatal move, but at this point, being almost exhausted, he dared not gamble. These consecutive hits left quite a major trauma in heart and mind.

Going back for assistance was still the safer choice...

Just then, the wound on his abdomen ached suddenly.

Sha Wuyuan’s body stiffened as there seemed to be something that pierced into his abdomen.

He was frightened soulless and his face turned deathly pale.

The sand armor covered every corner of his body, but he had forgotten about his wound. Where there was a wound, elemental energy would not be able to circulate smoothly, and thus it became the armor’s only vulnerable spot.

A sword ray had entered his body through the wound.

Sha Wuyuan did not understand how his opponent could do something so unimaginable. What technique was this? No, what swordplay?

He now knew he had been defeated thoroughly without a chance of overturning the situation. Between life and death, he had to make a choice. Decisively, he said, "I surren..."

The words that were about to come out stopped suddenly.

Flying at high speed in mid-air, Sha Wuyuan’s eyes flew wide open and his body went rigid. He lost control of his wings and, like a bird with a broken wing, dove straight down into the signboard of a roadside shop.

Crash! Both Sha Wuyuan and the signboard smashed onto the ground.

Alarmed cries could be heard on the street and no one dared approached the scene. Those who recognized Sha Wuyuan turned pale.

The devilish ray in Ai Hui’s eyes gradually dimmed and his numbed qi and blood started to recover.

Shortly after, he landed beside Sha Wuyuan.

Sha Wuyuan’s eyes were wide open and completely absent of life. A grievance-filled death. Without needing to check, Ai Hui knew that the fellow was already as dead as could be. The mini sword that had entered his abdomen had already destroyed his body.

No one could, under any circumstances, survive this.

Without delay, Ai Hui skillfully swept up all the valuables from Sha Wuyuan’s lifeless body.

Getting up, he saw a pale belonging to a shop assistant whom he recognized as Zhang. With a flick of his fingers, an essence elemental bean fell before the assistant. "Money to fix the signboard."

He then turned around to leave.

He moved fast as lightning and vanished into the crowd in the blink of an eye.

Before, Ai Hui had held the Sha family's housekeeper and guards captive merely to collect a ransom. However, seeing how Sha Wuyuan had attacked Su Qingye and gang, he felt the desire to kill.

While the three smalls were not his official students, three years of interaction had built a certain level of affection.

Ai Hui could more or less guess Sha Wuyuan's intention towards the three smalls, but that was unimportant. What was important was the fact that Ai Hui would absolutely never tolerate people hurting those around him.

Since it was going to be a death match, you should die first.

Ai Hui's logic was simple and practical.

Alone, Sha Wuyuan was the ideal target to sneak an attack on. Ai Hui had confidence in his assassination skills.

The Assembly of Patriarchs was an underground organization, so naturally it did not lack skills for assassinations. Ai Hui had never thought that he was gifted since he had a poor affinity with elemental energy. If not for Lou Lan's elemental energy soup, his energy growth would be as slow as a tortoise. Swordplay wise, he had also been a mess. As compared to those who had started

creating their own absolute art even before they hit twenty, Ai Hui wasn't considered great.

But when he'd been introduced to assassination techniques, he'd found his talent for the first time.

He wasn't sure if it was because he had trained with the sword embryo or because he had been battling in the Wilderness for three long years, but he had a keen intuition when it came to sensing danger. His calmness, patience, and perseverance made him an even more dangerous assassin.

This was also the reason why Chu Zhaoyang, who had achieved only elemental internalization, could gain a decent reputation.

Sha Wuyuan never would have thought that Ai Hui would attack him so soon, so timing wise, Ai Hui had already gotten the upper hand. If he couldn't even get rid of Sha Wuyuan at such an opportune moment, it just meant that their disparity in skills was too wide.

Then Ai Hui would immediately take Lou Lan and flee to the other end of the world.

Su Huaijun sat herself down upon bringing the three smalls back to Sea Pacific Enterprise's training hall. The kids were in low spirits and a sulky mood. Without straightening anything out, Su Huaijun instructed, "Do not leave the hall these few days. I will ask for letters to be sent to your families and they will pick you up."

The kids ignored her, but she did not mind as long as they did not cause any trouble.

She had Su family's interests at heart. Getting involved in this battle brought no benefits to the family.

Not just the Su family, but no family would get themselves tangled in this war.

Wang Han simply overestimated his abilities.

She shook her head and reached for a teacup.

Just then, Su Qingye's father dashed in, looking flustered. "Sha Wuyuan was killed by Wang Han."

The teacup stopped by her lips as Su Huaijun's face froze up. She spoke up not long after. "What happened?"

"After parting with you guys, he was secretly followed by Wang Han and eventually got taken down in the middle of the street. He died on the spot."

Father Su's voice was trembling.

The three kids' eyes lit up as they gave each other a look. They saw the same excitement in each other's eyes.

Su Huaijun's mind was buzzing non-stop and only one voice echoed within.

Wang Han had actually initiated an attack on Sha Wuyuan!

How daring! How ruthless! How crazy!

It wasn't any secret that the Sha family was after Wang Han, but it was beyond her imagination that as the weaker party, Wang Han had actually dared to make the first move.

An indescribable shock overtook her, but when she calmed down, she realized how exquisite Wang Han's move was.

She had to admit that she had belittled him. He was actually such a powerful and fierce character!

Back in his own training hall, Ai Hui was sure that he would face the Sha family's outburst.

He'd better prepare for it.

Lou Lan was upgrading his body. If he hadn't been, Ai Hui would have gotten his assistance and not killed Sha Wuyuan personally.

He was used to being hands-free. Now that he had to deal with these things, Ai Hui couldn't help but laugh bitterly.

Dashing into the warehouse, he opened a chest lying in a corner. The boss of the shop he frequented would go crazy if he were to see this open chest!

The chest was filled with weasel bristle arrows, commonly referred to as ‘See You Later’.

Why wouldn’t the boss go crazy? When had See You Later ever come in a whole chest? Selling eight or ten arrows was like dripping blood. As such, every time the boss sold See You Later, he would feel an inevitable sense of guilt. There would always be a devil-like voice urging him to sell one less arrow. Just one less arrow…

When the boss finally became determined to sell them, that voice started shouting, raise the price a little, just raise it a little…

The whole chest was filled with See You Later and Ai Hui hadn’t kept records on the exact number. Each time he made them, he would keep a third aside for rainy days.

Who knew that rainy day would really come.

Ai Hui took out another chest that was much smaller. It was as small as a jewellery box.

Upon opening it, all kinds of light rays shone through the cracks at the edges.

There were many compartments inside the chest and each contained a piece of artifact remnant. The box was full of artifact remnants. There were around forty pieces of them. They were of different shapes and sizes, and were evidence of the King of Angler's military successes.

Within each compartment was a label indicating that these remnants had been analyzed.

While Lou Lan's Midnight sand core was unable to operate at full force, it could still do many things like analyzing artifact remnants. These remnants must be of excellent quality for them to have survived the test of time. Other than that, there must have been some kind of seal that allowed them to be preserved during the elemental energy era.

These seals were what Lou Lan had been trying to analyze.

Although they were in poor condition, the research value was still exceptionally high in Lou Lan's eyes.

Lou Lan had already drawn out many badly damaged seals and even then, they were extremely complex. In this elemental energy era that placed simplicity and practicality above all things, no elementalist would waste time and effort on something so fruitless, just as how few would practice swordplay like Ai Hui.

The reason why Ai Hui was interested in these seals was because he found similarities between them and some of Teacher's plans.

Teacher's [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] had been very complex and he knew every detail inside out. He would even ponder over it at times.

This was the only way he could reminisce about his Teacher.

The forty artifact remnants all had different kinds of seals, which gave Ai Hui sufficient options.

He had a few backup plans on hand that he and Lou Lan had come up together. He offered ideas while Lou Lan perfected the details. When it came to complicated and dull details and calculations, no one could settle them better than Lou Lan.

Ai Hui took out whatever essence elemental beans he had. There were a few hundred.

The biting cold rays of See You Laters, the brightly-colored remnants' glow, and the soft light of the elemental beans lit up the whole warehouse along with Ai Hui's somewhat agonized but resolute face.

He had sacrificed everything and returned to the state of poverty that he lived in before the blood catastrophe broke out. He would lose too much if he created too small a stir. It's time to intensify the storm!

Chapter 299: God-subduing Peak

The golden wind whistled above the sea of clouds, and under the jade blue dome of heaven. The sunlight here was much more glaring and blazing as compared to when it reached the ground.

A rarely seen mountain peak was flying speedily. Elementalists that flew past it looked at it with curiosity in their wide open eyes.

The topography of the mountain peak was precipitous. From its waist down, the mountain was enveloped by clouds so it looked as if a big sheet of cloud was propping a mountain peak.

There was a metal-made silver pond on the summit and the pond water was so clear that the bottom of the pond could be seen. The walls surrounding the pond were engraved with complicated, silvery patterns. Light circulated within these patterns along the walls, one round after another relentlessly.

The pond spurted a steady flow of water. The fine vapor which was floating around the summit converged with the sunlight to form a rainbow.

The overflowing pond water meandered down and along the windings of the mountain to form a waterfall. From afar, it looked like a snow-white stretch of shining silk. Pouring into the clouds, the waterfall formed mist ceaselessly.

The mountain peak was lined with shade-providing trees and the tough and solid old vines hung down, reaching within the clouds

and mist like an anchor and chains hung off a ship. Threads and wisps of wood elemental energy flew into caverns of the mountain. Deep within the caverns there was raging lava and its entrance flickered with a blazing red glow, resembling the breathing and heartbeat of a mythical animal.

Nine lava caves could be found throughout the mountain and they were connected by a silver line, as if they were stars of a constellation in the sky.

There were a few terraces of different heights laid out disorderly on the mountain peak. There were buildings everywhere: A pavilion, a pagoda, an arrow tower and an ice castle hidden at the foot of the mountain amid the clouds and mist. The most eye-catching was a palace located beside the silver pond on the summit.

Each building emitted different, faint light rays. They were the metal, wood, water, fire and earth elemental energies.

The emitted lights blended in with one another to form a huge dome of light that enveloped and wrapped over the whole peak. This layer of faint light cover was close to being transparent, but occasionally a magnificent light ray would flash across the top of the cover, reminding people of the dome's existence.

The mountain moved steadily, the biting cold metal wind unable to defeat it.

There were four vermilion words, 'Guardian of Five Elements'

engraved on one of the cliff walls. The calligraphy was strong and powerful.

Next to the words was the emblem of Elders Guild, a mark that showed that this mountain belonged to them.

"It’s all thanks to you, or else we would have to travel by the bamboo cart and not feel as comfortable."

The man who spoke up stood on the peak admiring the scenery. He couldn’t feel the gale and shake at all. He could only feel the sea of cloud beneath his feet moving backwards as fast as lightning.

He was tall and had long arms. He looked older than he was, which contributed to the majestic aura that surrounded him even as he stood casually.

Shi Xueman looked at Jiang Wei from behind. They hadn’t met for three years and Jiang Wei had become even more mature and stolid. She had more inside news and knew that many of the higher ups thought highly of this man, the young leader of a small team in Sky Edge Division, and his future.

Sang Zhijun was very happy to see Jiang Wei as well since they’d been partners for two years and got along well.

Three years ago, after Ai Hui’s departure, Jiang Wei rejected Shi Xueman’s invitation and joined Sky Edge Division alone. He worked his way from the bottom as a soldier, up to the small team

leader that he was currently.

Sang Zhijun took up the role of Shi Xueman's assistant and helped her to organize and manage the troops.

Sang Zhijun introduced, "This is a newly manufactured God-subduing Peak. It is faster than Fiery Floating Cloud and has greater defense and combat power. This is, in these past few years, Elders Guild's greatest achievement. The release of Guardian of Five Elements sent Fiery Floating Cloud and bamboo carts to the bin. Elders Guild used this on a diplomatic mission in order to display its power. You can tell who it's going to be used against just by its name "God-subduing Peak".

Jiang Wei's eyes lit up. "Who knew Elders Guild kept something this good hidden!"

Blood of God called itself God Nation and practitioners were called god elementalists, so it went without saying that "God-subduing Peak" aimed to deal with them.

Shi Xueman agreed. "Although they based it on Master Wang's theory, Elders Guild must have its own talent for them to be able to fashion something so great."

Jiang Wei was stunned. "Which Master Wang?"

Knowing she had been unclear, Shi Xueman explained, "Ai Hui's teacher, Wang Shouchuan. Elders Guild has already decided to

confer the title of "Master" on Wang Shouchuan, except that they have yet to announce it. The plan of [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] had been sent to Elders Guild as top secret. I've heard that over these three years, Elders Guild has been concentrating their research on it, and indeed, results have been produced."

Ai Hui, Wang Shouchuan...

The stifling image of the final war of Central Pine automatically surfaced in Jiang Wei's mind, causing him to feel all sorts of emotions rising in his heart. Wang Shouchuan wasn't a well-known individual with memorable accomplishments. What was Ai Hui's reaction upon hearing this news?

Thinking about that unique fellow, Jiang Wei couldn't help but inquire, "Where's Ai Hui? Haven't heard about him as if he's evaporated from this world."

Shi Xueman replied, "That fellow will live very well, wherever he is."

Jiang Wei felt at ease. "Haha, that's true."

The name "Wang Shouchuan" carried a certain graveness and braveness and wasn't suitable for casual chit-chat, so Jiang Wei initiated a change in topic. "God-subduing Peak requires how many elementalists? Are there any minimum requirements in terms of the elementalists' realms? When will the frontline be equipped with it?"

Sang Zhijun answered in all familiarity, "Elementalists have to attain elemental externalization and any element type will do. A minimum of five is required to control it, but approximately fifty will be needed to unleash its full potential. Of course, this is in the case where there's no expert. If there are experts, less manpower is required. A Master can control the whole God-subduing Peak alone. As to when the frontline will be equipped, I'm not too sure."

Shi Xueman added, "The second God-subduing Peak is about to be completed and will be given to Sky Edge Division. The name your division suggested to Elders Guild has already been approved. Sacred Blood. I heard that the name originated from the remains of a book, which talked about the bizarre land, where Sacred Blood was the first demonic sword. There was a row of small words, 'consume the Sacred Blood to know its taste', on it. Your division leader really liked this sentence. Elders Guild felt that this name symbolized the determination involved in this death match between the Avalon of Five Elements and god elementalists."

Jiang Wei muttered, "Sounds too aggressive."

"God-subduing Peak is a good thing but whether or not it is able to change the outcome of the war, we can only find out after combat. The problem now is that God-subduing Peak consume ingredients too fast. Even the usually ample supply of cloud material is starting to become a problem. The cloud-based material produced by Palette Cloud Village has been stuffed into all of it, causing the market price to rise exponentially. If this supply problem isn't solved soon, God-subduing Peak will not be able to be engaged extensively at the frontline, and a third will not be produced in the near future.

Shi Xueman pointed out this bottleneck calmly.

"It’s always a good thing." Jiang Wei was a practical guy. He had always been on the frontline and understood it better. "The people needed something to boost their morale. At least they know that Elders Guild is actually doing something instead of plotting against one another."

Shi Xueman couldn’t help but feel concerned. "The soldiers at the frontline had such low morales?"

"Very low." Jiang Wei added helplessly, "We haven’t clenched any decent victories, and lost Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie instead. Many enemies used to be friends and no one wanted to fight. Not just us, but the other side as well. Jadeite Forest is independent as well so people are more separated now. Sigh, the conflict between new citizens and influential families is more intense than ever."

Shi Xueman stayed quiet for a while before asking him to continue.

"Blood of God is putting in a lot of effort to rope in new citizens. Furthermore, the process of elementalists converting into blood elementalists is much more safer and easier now. Blood of God promises that these elementalists could bring their families along and even raise their family names. The new citizens from Old Territory mostly had families, so being able to take them along to live better lives wavered their decisions naturally. You definitely know more about the aristocratic families than I do."

Shi Xueman did indeed.

Ever since Jadeite Forest became independent, it had undoubtedly set an example for the aristocratic families. Although, having learnt their lesson from previous mistakes, Elders Guild held even stricter control over Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village. But the vast Wilderness carried unlimited opportunities.

Shi Xueman knew much more. She hesitated before speaking softly, "Elders Guild is considering whether or not to grant people the liberty of building cities in Wilderness."

Sang Zhijun gave an alarmed cry as Jiang Wei stood dumbstruck.

It pained Shi Xueman to say this but she did anyway, quietly, "To the higher ups, it’s enough for the frontline to persevere. What’s the point of snatching Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie back? Elementalists can become god elementalists but not the other way round. The land there’s already been corroded by blood poison. It cannot be restored even if we get it back."

Seeing Jiang Wei’s soulless expression made Shi Xueman crestfallen as well.

Getting Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie back had been their war slogan and Jiang Wei had witnessed countless people sacrificing their lives for this. The fact that this was merely a scam was hard for Jiang Wei to digest.

Jiang Wei asked suddenly, "If that’s the case, why fight against Blood of God? Why not negotiate instead?"

"Blood of God is not down for negotiation." Shi Xueman shook her head. "Don’t you think it’s strange? The speed at which the blood poison is corroding Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie is so fast, but have you heard of the Wilderness being corroded?"

Jiang Wei was stunned.

Giving him a look, Shi Xueman continued, "While the reason is still unknown, Elders Guild is certain that the blood poison is unable to invade the Wilderness."

Jiang Wei understood it quickly. "So the Blood of God can only expand in our direction?"

"Yes. Blood of God has three directions to expand itself: Silver Mist Sea, Old Territory and Jadeite Forest, but ultimately it will be us," Shi Xueman added, "On the contrary, if we are unable to rebuild the Avalon of Five Elements and the elemental energy is unable to circulate, it will only wither, causing us to weaken. So, we can only advance in the direction of the Wilderness and obtain resources from there. Breaking sufficient grounds would allow us to rebuild the Avalon of Five Elements."

Thinking about his own mission, something dawned upon Jiang Wei. "Lesser Avalon of Five Elements was a trial?"

"Yes." Shi Xueman continued, "The frontline is a protective screen to obstruct Blood of God's expansion. It's purpose is to win more time for the reconstruction of the Avalon of Five Elements. Elders Guild created God-subduing Peak in the hope that it can stand guard and advance forward steadily, so as to reduce the number elite troops needed on the frontline. The Elders Guild also hopes to find a method to destroy the blood poison in the Wilderness."

All at once, the three fell into silence.

Only silence was appropriately describing their complicated emotions. There was disappointment, hopefulness, uneasiness, indecisiveness, and more so, they were at a loss.

The future was clear to none, like a faraway place that was enveloped by a thick fog.

Chapter 300: The Allure of Red Muslin

Sha family did not attack them directly, this took Ai Hui by surprise.

They must be preparing for a big move!

He had to be better prepared. Unassured Ai Hui was like a diligent bee. The details he had been too lazy to ponder over are filling his mind up.

He was still unaware that Sha Wuyuan, whom he murdered, was the in charge of Sha family's branch.

After Sha Wuyuan's death, Peace City's Sha family branch was leaderless. Plus, Ai Hui's ruthlessness intimidated the remaining people and none of them dared to make a move.

What made them feel more at ease was the fact that Sha family's elite troops were all deployed and were rushing to Peace City without resting at all.

Sha Wuyuan's violent death on the street shook Sha family greatly.

With a big dip in Sha family's strength, Sha Wuyuan was considered the cream of the crop. Or else, he wouldn't be sent to lead the fight and be the in-charge.

It wasn’t Sha Wu Yuan’s death that shocked Sha family but the absolutely unrestrained and powerful attack Wang Han had displayed.

In the eyes of Wang Han, Sha family meant nothing.

This was a ruthless and firm, exceedingly strong, reckless yet calm and meticulous enemy!

Sha family was having a headache already.

Enemies like Wang Han were those they did not want to provoke. Even when the family was at its peak, these kind of enemies were to be avoided, as learnt from past mistakes.

There used to be a well-celebrated An family that developed an animosity towards a misfortuned earth elementalist. For twenty years, that elementalist harassed and attacked the family perpetually. An family brought together many to hunt him down but he was extremely crafty and managed to escape every time. What followed was an even more intense revenge operation as An family branch kept getting wrecked. Their disciples were killed and the enterprise was burnt.

Each revenge added a wound to the colossal An family.

After twenty years of feud and blood loss, the colossus finally succumbed and collapsed. On the twenty second year, this earth elementalist secretly persuaded seven less powerful clans to join

forces to dismember An family, causing it to perish.

No one knew this period of history better than Sha family since they had been one of the seven clans. Sha family's sudden rise in status also attributed to that military campaign against An family.

Revenge exacted, the earth elementalist went on to become a grandmaster five years later. He then accepted Elders Guild's invitation and became the leader of Lordsand Division for twelve years. Within these twelve years, Lordsand Division leapt its way up from the bottom, into becoming the head of the Thirteen Divisions. The younger generation he carefully natured was as brilliant as he was and in the next sixty years, Lordsand Division maintained its position as the top three.

Historically speaking, this earth elementalist was a legendary Grandmaster, whom countless other earth elementalists worshipped greatly, and his name was Mo Qishi, Lord Mo of Sand.

Leading Lordsand Division, Mo Qishi charged to the frontline. It was a piece of news that shocked the Wilderness, immediately causing them to pull back over 900 miles. He was then crowned Lord Mo of Sand, a name that rose to extreme fame. An family's land had already became ruins where weeds grew rampantly and filled with jackdaws' calls. The bones that covered the fields were left unburied.

If Sha family knew how powerful Wang Han was, they would never have provoked him.

It was a pity that this world did not allow what ifs.

Sha family's only choice was to calm the dangers before the bloom of Wang Han's feather wings. The family's current situation was even more dangerous than that of An family's.

Sha family was like a patient gasping for oxygen. They could not afford to fail.

But their enemy was craftier than they had imagined. He had seen through their weakness.

"Ah, if you ask me how melancholy I am now, I can tell you I feel like a poor man who is gifting his head away!"

A sorrowful cry sounded in the shabby training hall. Ai Hui looked at the organized spoils of war in front of him, his face full of anxiety. Didn't Sha Wuyuan have a high position in the family? A significant figure?

'Sha Wuyuan, Sha Wuyuan... Are these scraps that you carried around worthy of your identity?"

As compared to Shi Youguang, the items found on Sha Wuyuan was simply unpresentable.

Sha family was really in a bad state, as evident from Sha Wuyuan's belongings. There wasn't even a sand compass. Ai Hui stroked his chin as he was thinking about how he could get rid of

the melancholy caused by his poverty-stricken self.

He was crazily poor!

War was indeed a gold-swallowing monster. Although he did not once hesitate when fixing up the place, once it was completed he felt a piercing pain. It was like he was a starving beast, searching for food everywhere.

Since Sha Wuyuan was to be stationed here first, he should've prepared many things including money.

Yet, Sha family had yet to make a move. They were most likely still on the road preparing their big move, which required time.

Wouldn't Sha family branch be empty at this time?

Ai Hui's eyes lit up and without a word, he dashed into the warehouse and pulled the fat housekeeper out. Even before he could question anything, the fat housekeeper started pissing in his pants, his tears carried the music down his nose. As if pouring beans out from a bag, he revealed everything he knew.

Sha Wuyuan was the in-charge of Sha family branch and also the strongest member within the frontline troops. Sha family branch was located at a compound in the east of the city, where there were huge volume of goods and money. Their mission was to construct the house ahead of time for the arrival of Sha family's main army force.

This fellow even revealed the exact positions of the guards in full details.

The information he forced out of the fat housekeeper proved his assumption right. The branch was meaningless and Sha family was in a bad state. Ai Hui could even gauge the strength of Sha family from Sha Wuyuan's position in the household.

Being cautious, Ai Hui questioned a few other guards and received unanimous information. The housekeeper wasn't lying.

Without hesitation, Ai Hui took this fleeting chance and headed towards the Sha family branch when the sky turned dark.

There were no starlight amid the pitch black sky. The Starry Gem Swordwing Ai Hui carried with him transformed into a deep black color allowing Ai Hui to silently glide across the sky like a big black bat.

The city below was brightly lit and filled with pedestrians. The construction site outside the city was buzzing with activities.

What a great time for murder and arson!

Shortly, Ai Hui arrived and stopped above Sha family's compound.

The yard was a typical one within this locality, which had a garden that was roughly two acre big. Previously the land in Peace City wasn't worth much, but highly priced these days.

The compound was also brightly lit and dog barks could be heard occasionally. There was an elementalist guard standing atop the arrow tower, which was built at the last moment. There was an inexpressibly tense atmosphere that surrounded the whole compound.

Sha Wuyuan's death caused panic to the branch. Everyone was feeling jittery and extremely nervous.

Ai Hui saw gaps and loopholes everywhere. For example, there wasn't any warning indicator neither was a light zone that showed where flying was prohibited built.

Ai Hui chose not to infiltrate. Instead, he chose a more provoking move.

The Starry Gem Swordwing on his back opened up in a swift movement and he shot up into the sky like a sharp arrow.

Ai Hui only stopped when he was thousands of meters above. The golden wind up in the sky was bitingly cold, just like knives. However, it no longer caused any disturbance to him.

Holding the Dragonspine, Ai Hui loosened up his body, allowing it to drop like a meteorite.

His descending speed increased continuously as he fixed his gaze on the compound that he was about to land on.

His wings were majestic and motionless. A spark lit up at the edge of the wings, illuminating Ai Hui's cold eyes. His grave as stone face was filled with murder lust.

The spark became brighter as Ai Hui's speed increased continuously.

People on the ground started to notice something peculiar in the sky and many stopped to look up. The spark that was descending was like a meteor that lit up people's faces, causing them faintly discernable.

Their eyes were all wide open.

That was...

A whistle sounded and in a flash, the sky rumbled and shook, as if there was a hurricane rolling in and sweeping across Peace City.

Countless people rushed out of their rooms and looked towards the sky.

Boom!

The sparks surrounded Ai Hui burst into flames. The fiery blaze that flickered and swayed amid the surging airflow was like a demonic fire from netherworld, enveloping Ai Hui completely.

The rumble was deafening and Ai Hui, who was wrapped in raging flames, had cold-as-ice eyes that were expressionless, desolate and deep.

Suddenly, a speck of ray lit up from the depths of his dark as night pupils. It was as if a little glow had just lit up in a faraway, absolutely dark place.

Ai Hui used his sword suddenly.

He thrusted the sword out unhurriedly. Dragonspine was as heavy as a thousand catties and the elemental energy in his whole body was stimulated to its greatest point as every bit of his muscle was engaged. Sweat poured out but it evaporated into mist in the blink of an eye, and the mist disappeared into the raging blaze.

In the eyes of the audience below, the ball of flames seemed to be stretched, by a pair of invisible hands, into an elliptic shape with its front being slightly sharp.

The strange thing was, as the flames dimmed gradually, the sword ray burned even fiercer, like a red hot branding iron.

Just then, the silhouette wrapped in flames revealed itself.

Rushing out of the room and looking up into the sky, Su Huaijun shouted as her pupils shrunk, "It’s him!"

Wide in shock, the three young ones simultaneously cried out in alarm while looking at that figure in the sky, "Teacher!"

Fu family members were all stunned upon witnessing this scene. Fu Yonghao called out in surprise, "Wang Han!"

The rest were all overwhelmed with shock.

By now, those in the Sha family compound had gotten a clear view of that meteor-like figure in the sky and were all panic-stricken. They were like a nest of ants, frenetically gathering close together.

The sword in Ai Hui’s hand trembled incessantly but did not take away his focus. His control over the sword was now instinctive thanks to the arduous trainings he had been through. His move had been majorly improvised but his profound accumulation were like dried firewood, ready to ignite and blaze up the moment an inspirational spark appeared.

The elemental energy circulated within his body.His sword seemed to possess a boundless, attractive force as all of the newly born flames entered Dragonspine’s sword ray.

The hurricane-like rumbling turned into a mosquito-like lingering sound and finally into a silence that belonged to the

night. Everyone couldn’t help but to hold their breaths as the whole scene unfolded before them. They were bound to remember this for life.

The figure that dove down from the the vast dark sky carried a red hot sword ray, and the aftermath it stirred up was like a long, dull red muslin that covered several hundred meters.

As the whistling sound gradually softened, the red muslin seemed particularly alluring.

Time seemed to stop at this point where amid the silence, people were staring blankly at the breathtaking scene that happened in the sky.

The more beautiful things were, the more dangerous it was.