

## Black Iron 271

### Chapter 271: It Sounds Great

In previous years, it always snowed in Blackhot City in December. However, 5000 miles away in Jinhai City, it had rained. Due to the rain, the air in the early morning seemed very nice.

This was the third day since Zhang Tie came to Jinhai City to reunite with his family members.

Although his father had suffered in prison for over 10 days, thankfully, the decision-makers of the Zhang clan still set Zhang Ping free due to the Mental Arithmetic by Abacus. Zhang Tie was told by Zhang Yang that it was mainly because of the sixth uncle of their father.

Because of sixth uncle's help, this tragedy, which might have caused their father to suffer in prison the rest of his life was finally cleared off.

Based on the generations, Zhang Tie and Zhang Yang should refer to their father's sixth uncle as sixth great-uncle as he was an elder of the Zhang clan who was three generations higher than them. It was said that he was a cousin of Zhang Tie's grandfather. Their sixth great-uncle was very famous in Jinhai City as he ruled the Clansmen Pavilion and was the only member of Jinhai City's bloodline in the Zhang clan's elders association. He was evidently the Jinhai City's representative in the Zhang clan's elders association.

Hearing this news, Zhang Tie bore it in mind and must repay this sixth great-uncle whom he had never met.

The Jinhai City bloodline of Zhang clan originated from the seventh wife of Lord Huaiyuan. Today, there was a total of 20,000-30,000 members of the Zhang clan in Jinhai City of Huaiyuan Palace. Although this number ranked near the last amongst the 8 cities of Huaiyuan Palace, the Zhang clan was really the number one clan and the most powerful ruler of Jinhai City.

As Zhang Tie's family had lived alone in Blackhot City for dozens of years, it really seemed like a dream to Zhang Tie's that he could be a member of such a great clan.

This morning, Zhang Tie's mom boiled a pot eight-treasures porridge[1]. She had started to prepare it since last night. In the early morning, Zhang Tie devoured the sweet eight-treasures porridge. He saw his mom's genial smile with fine wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, which reminded Zhang Tie of the time when his mom would watch him eat breakfast before going to school each morning when they were in Blackhot City.

All the risks that Zhang Tie had experienced, the fights and struggles in the outside during the past several months had all disappeared in front of his mom's eight-treasures porridge. Instead, Zhang Tie only felt a warm sense of home flowing inside.

"Eat as much as you'd like, we've got more in the pot!" Seeing Zhang Tie's spoon moving slower, Zhang Tie's mom added another big spoon of porridge into Zhang Tie's bowl.

"Save a spoon for elder-sister in law, she needs the nutrition more than me!" Eating it, Zhang Tie mumbled.

"You know that your mom knows what to do!" Zhang Tie's father flicked at his forehead.

Although he had stayed in prison for more than 10 days, Zhang Ping seemed to not be suffering from any mental or physical troubles. At the sight of his father at this time, Zhang Tie felt his father had become more relaxed and revealed more smiles.

Zhang Tie had never imagined that the Mental Arithmetic by Abacus that he had bought at the cost of several silver coins from a roadside booth was so influential. The moment he thought of the benefits that the book had brought him, Zhang Tie felt that he hadn't fully learned its secrets.

In the past two days, Zhang Tie found that he could calculate the four operations on two 13-column abacuses at the same time more fluently. He felt his mindset was becoming more and more flexible after each visualization of the abacuses. He seemed to be gradually able to focus on two totally different things at the same time which was a marvelous sensation.

"Mom, last night, I went to that building on Xinhe Street that you told me about. My grandparents and eldest uncle's family don't live there anymore. I inquired about it from others and was told that they had moved away ten years ago. It seems that they moved to Xince City. Since you had already fallen asleep when I came back, I didn't bother you." Zhang Yang reported to his parents about the news while he was eating the eight-treasures porridge.

Hearing this news, Zhang Tie's mom let out a sigh.

"Mom, don't worry, if you want to find them as soon as possible, we can release wanted posters in the newspaper. As they are still living in the Huaiyuan Prefecture, we will definitely find them!" Seeing his mother a bit sad, Zhang Tie hurriedly comforted her.

"Release it in the newspaper?" Zhang Tie's mom blinked, seemingly interested in this idea.

"Since we know they've been to Xince City, I will go to there with your mom when we're free. It's only several hours from here. We can hire people to find them too. If neither of these methods works, we will release it in the newspaper. As we are new here, it's better for us to be low key" Zhang Tie's father explained in a calm way.

Since they came back to Huaiyuan Prefecture, Zhang Tie also found that his dad became calmer in lieu of recent events.

Hearing dad's words, all the others nodded after thinking awhile.

After eating breakfast, the whole family was busy as they all started to clean up after themselves and put on the new clothes that they had recently purchased. Especially his father as it was Zhang Tie's first time seeing him put on a double-breasted suit with a tie.

After putting on this suit, Zhang Tie's dad looked completely different from before.

"Dad, you really look like a dandy in that costume!" Zhang Tie kidded.

"Alas, I've not worn it for dozens of years. I don't even know how to prepare my tie anymore." Zhang Tie's dad sighed.

Thinking back to the period when Zhang Tie's dad usually wore a set of somewhat white working uniform and struggled for the whole family's livelihood by getting up early and going back home late in Blackhot City, Zhang Tie would feel like crying. Thinking of this, he increased his resolve to join Hidden Dragon Palace. As he had grown up, it was the right time for him to assume the responsibility for his family.

When it was almost half past nine in the morning, Zhang Ping's brother, Zhang Tie's eldest uncle, came to pick them up.

Zhang Tie's eldest uncle was over 50 years old, who looked 60% similar to Zhang Tie's father. Besides, he looked a bit gentle in a pair of glasses. Nevertheless, he was a bit fatter than Zhang Tie's father and looked like he had been used to a noble's lifestyle.

Because Zhang Tie's eldest uncle usually came here during this period, they had been familiar with each other. Therefore, they got straight to the point.

Zhang Tie's family then got into a black three-row sedan and left their current residence.

Jinhai City was also a coastal city. It was not as prosperous as Yiyang City but was still a large city. Jinhai City contained 3.4 million people. As the manufacturing center of Zhang clan of Huaiyuan Palace, its manufacturing accomplishments were even above that of Kalur. Half of Jinyun Country's steamers and one-fifth of its airships came from the manufacturing factories in Jinhai City.

When the car drove onto the coastal avenue of Jinhai City, Zhang Tie saw numerous docks of different sizes on the sea and the harbors in the far.

"Let's go to visit our shipyard first, Zhang Tie and Zhang Yang have not seen it yet." Sitting in the front row, the eldest uncle turned back and spoke to Zhang Ping.

Zhang Ping nodded, "Fine, let's go to have a look then. I've not been there for a long time. I'm also wondering how it looks now."

"Dad has merged two more shipyards in past years. Now, the Milkyway Shipyard could rank top three in shipbuilding in terms of scale and strength in Jinhai City and top five in Jinyun Country. Now, our shipyard mainly builds off-shore fishing boats weighing from 500 tons to 2000 tons, Yuanjiang-class passenger liners and rapid destroyers that we've bid for from the navy of Jinyun Country. Dad is full of ambition that he prepares to start the program of 10,000-ton pelagic fishing ships next year and officially push the Milkyway Shipyard into the ranks of 10,000-ton ships manufacturers!"

"Our former shipyard didn't have the ability to produce 10,000-ton pelagic fishing ships. Is the new shipyard under construction?"

"It will be completed in two months. As our former shipyard started from building fishing ships, we've got many assets in the past years, we could also be able to build 10,000-ton pelagic fishing ships!"

"As pelagic shipping is an industry of high risk and high return, ships that are adapted to pelagic shipping are produced in accordance with orders, which pose very strict requirements on various aspects. Our new shipyard has not been completed, how have we received orders?" Zhang Tie's dad became slightly startled.

"The orders come from our Zhang clan. I also feel strange about that. Last year, the Changfeng Business Group, the Pelagic Fishing Company and the Pelagic Steamers Company under the affiliation of the Zhang clan almost tossed some development plans at the same time, which increased the demands for 10,000-ton pelagic fishing ships, pelagic passenger liners and pelagic freighters by several times. It looks very rash and a bit absurd. I don't know how could they be that confident. What is more absurd is that their plans had been approved by the council of the Zhang clan of Huaiyuan Palace. the first set of capital to renovate the Milkyway Shipyard is interest-free loan provided by Huaiyuan Bank. As for the orders sent by the Pelagic Fishing Company, as long as the first 10,000-ton pelagic fishing ship is paved with its keel, the Huaiyuan Bank will prepay 40% of the shipbuilding cost for Pelagic Shipping Company. It's great preferential treatment. In Jinhai City, besides our shipyard, all the other shipyards have received similar orders."

Hearing the discussion between dad and eldest uncle, Zhang Tie and Zhang Yang sitting in the back of the car exchanged glances with each other with astonishment. Neither of them had ever imagined that their dad was born into such a great clan, who's shipyard ranked top three in Jinhai City and top five in Jinyun Country. It sounded great.

#### Chapter 272: Relatives

Milkyway Shipyard was located in the cove of Jinhai City. It occupied 1.16 million square meters of land area and 1.28 million square meters of the sea. The dock's shoreline lasted 1400 m. Including the soon to be completed 10,000-ton dock, there were six docks and berths of different sizes. Recently, the Milkyway Shipyard could produce various fishing boats, passenger liners, and freighters as well as medium and small-sized naval vessels. It employed over 4000 workers. With assets of about 7.5 million gold coins, the Milkyway Shipyard could rank top three in Jinhai City in terms of scale and manufacturing strength.

Such a great undertaking had been accumulated by five generations after over 100 years of development. Since the beginning of Zhang Tie's great-grandfather's grandfather to Zhang Tie's grandpa, the Milkyway Shipyard of Jinhai City completely changed its status from a tiny rough berth which was opened to repair small fishing boats to a large-scale shipyard which enjoyed a high rank in Jinhai City, even in Jinyun Country.

Zhang Tie's grandfather played an extremely influential role. Since Zhang Ping's father took over the family business, its assets were less than 100,000 gold coins. Through his dozens of years of management, the scale of the shipyard increased ten times over.

Hearing his eldest uncle's introduction, Zhang Tie started to admire the elder whom he had never met.

After paying a visit to the Zhang clan's shipyard, in addition to Zhang Tie's newfound understanding about the circumstances of his father's family, Zhang Tie was able to develop a picture of the overall situation.

Zhang family's old home was a beautiful estate which occupied over 20 mu, namely about 13340 square meters. From the outside, although it didn't appear very magnificent, it was every bit that of rich and powerful family's home. In the old house, Zhang Tie finally experienced this family's background.

Zhang Tie's grandfather had four wives. Including Zhang Tie's father, Zhang Tie's grandfather had 11 children, five of which were daughters, with the remaining six being sons. Among the five daughters, two were married away from Huaiyuan Prefecture and didn't come back today, the other three daughters were in the Huaiyuan Prefecture and had all come back today. Among the 11 children, Zhang Tie's father ranked eighth. Therefore, besides two younger uncles and one younger aunt, Zhang Tie had four elder aunts and three elder uncles. After the introduction, Zhang Tie could still remember his uncles and aunts' faces and names. However, when his uncles and aunts' spouses had gathered here, making Zhang Tie feel dazzled.

Zhang Tie finally understood why Huaiyuan Palace would create a Clansmen Pavilion. Since there were so many relatives, if such a professional agency wasn't created to manage personnel affairs, nobody would know the relationships between clan members anymore.

When Zhang Tie came back to the old family home, he had 20-30 more elders. Additionally, Zhang Tie had over 20 cousins, some of which didn't join the family party due to various reasons. Additionally, many of Zhang Tie's cousins had children. Therefore, Zhang Tie also had 10 nieces and nephews.

Among Zhang Tie's nieces and nephews, the eldest had been 12 years old, only 3-4 years younger than Zhang Tie. As they were still too naughty, they didn't even feel like calling Zhang Tie uncle.

Amongst all the relatives and elders, only the members of Zhang Tie's father's blood brothers' families felt more genial. Others, although being also very passionate, looked slightly curious but mostly indifferent towards Zhang Tie's family.

Zhang Tie didn't mind this either. After all, they hadn't been in contact for dozens of years, it was impossible to have no estrangement among the brothers and sisters with the same father and different mothers. Let alone, there were many underhanded plots like struggling for family properties in such rich family. Zhang Tie's father might be viewed as a competitor who would share the properties of the family in the future in someone's eyes.

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"Zhang Ping, where does your family live?" At supper, when Zhang Haitian, Zhang Ping's father, asked him in a calm way, all the other people at the 5 tables in the dining hall instantly became quiet. Even the servants who were serving dishes in the dining hall stood aside and didn't move anymore.

"Papa, Zhang Ping's family came back too abruptly, I arranged for them an average apartment on Xinhai Road." One of Zhang Tie's elder uncles spoke out.

The Zhang Haitian slightly nodded.

"Papa, I fail to consider it properly, when eighth younger brother and sister-in-law came back. I've didn't prepared well, causing them to suffer discomfort." At the sight of their father being silent, another elder uncle of Zhang Tie's sitting at the main table hurriedly opened his mouth. He was the eldest son of the first wife and was called Zhang Lin. He was also the designated successor of the of Zhang Haitian and the future head of the family.

Of course, Zhang Lin should be meticulous at this moment.

"As we came back too suddenly and didn't want to bring trouble to the home, I didn't notify eldest brother. I beg for eldest brother's forgiveness. We feel right at home in the apartment. With three bedrooms, one parlor and one dining room, it's enough for us." Zhang Tie's father hurriedly explained.

All the elders of Zhang clan knew the details surrounding Zhang Tie's return. However, nobody mentioned the affair about Zhang Ping escaping marriage by faking death. They all knew what was happening yet didn't reveal it, making it seem as though Zhang Tie's dad had wandered in the outside for a personal undertaking for dozens of years.

Looking at Zhang Ping's face which seemed older than that of the other brothers, the Zhang Haitan went quiet. No one knew what he was thinking. "Previously, we didn't treat you well, causing you suffer a lot of bitterness outside for all these years. This time, as you've come back, you can share 5% of the shipyard of the family. With this share, you could only participate in sharing profits of the shipyard instead of daily management."

Hearing Zhang Haitan's words, Zhang Tie's father directly stood up from his chair. Look him in the eyes, he firmly told his father, "Papa, the scale of Zhang's shipyard is due to the efforts of you and my elder brothers. As I was not at home all these years and had not made any contribution to this home, I've always felt shameful about what I've done. Therefore, I will not accept this share. If you insist on that, you are forcing me and my family to leave Jinhai City!"

Zhang Tie had not realized that his dad was so strong-willed. Seeing his father looking back at him and his elder brother, Zhang Tie didn't speak but revealed a brilliant smile as he silently raised his thumb towards his father below the table. Zhang Tie's elder brother also nodded towards Zhang Ping with a smile. Looking at the two sons' expressions, Zhang Ping felt warm inside and released tears.

Zhang Tie saw that his mother was also smiling as she grasped Zhang Ping's hands under the table. At the same time, Zhang Tie's elder brother silently patted on his wife's thigh twice.

After looking over Zhang Ping for half a minute, Zhang Haitan felt uncomfortable as he also let out a sigh of disappointment.

"Dear, even though Zhang Ping doesn't want a share off the shipyard, why not directly give him the manor in Changman, letting them settle down in Jinhai City. As Zhang Ping's two children have grown up, it's time for them to get married and have their own undertakings. If you're concerned about them, it's not too late for you to take care of your grandsons." Sitting beside Zhang Haitan, his first wife slowly said.

The elderly person moved his eyebrows as he glanced at Zhang Tie and Zhang Yang and slowly nodded.

"Eighth younger brother, if you aren't even prepared to accept one manor, you'll really make us uncomfortable then." Zhang Lin opened his mouth once again.

"Thank you, dad, I will accept the manor. We will move there tomorrow!" After thinking for awhile, Zhang Tie's father made the decision as he sat at the table once again. Seeing this, Zhang Ping's elder brothers sitting on the same table nodded too.

Not knowing whether it was an illusion, Zhang Tie felt that when his dad accepted the manor, many people present let out a breath as the atmosphere became lively once again.

"Zhang Yang, it's said you've just retired. What's your plan?" Zhang Haitan turned to Zhang Yang and asked him seriously out of concern.

On hearing this question, Zhang Yang was relieved as he had discussed it with Zhang Tie in the morning. Zhang Yang had long made the decision, "As Huaiyuan Prefecture has a well-developed trading industry and gathers numerous commodities from both east and west continents, I'm preparing to start a trading firm!"

"Is there any problem with capital?" Zhang Haitan went straight to the point.

"No, I will start small. I plan to buy a storefront in Jinhai City. After slowly developing the skills, I believe that I can succeed!" Zhang Yang proudly answered.

Zhang Haitan nodded. No one present derided Zhang Yang's low threshold. This was due to Zhang Haitan usually repeating on phrase. —As long as a person could steadfastly push forward, sooner or later, he would succeed.

"What about you Zhang Tie, what's your plan?" The Zhang Haitan now focused on Zhang Tie.

"I will report in Hidden Dragon Palace next Monday!"

When Zhang Tie uttered this, the whole room became quiet once again as everyone cast their eyes onto Zhang Tie with mixed expressions of amazement, surprise, admiration and shock. Everyone present knew what Hidden Dragon Palace was. From its name it's meaning could be derived. It was the gathering of the elites of the Zhang clan. Everyone who joins Hiding Dragon Palace and survives would be the elites of the Zhang clan. Almost all the members of the Zhang clan's elders association and those big figures who ruled the crucial agencies of Huaiyuan Palace had undergone training at Hidden Dragon Palace.

Because Zhang Tie had told his parents about his plan yesterday, his family members were not stunned about this. Previously, Zhang Tie thought that his parents would disagree with his plan. Zhang Tie had not imagined that both of them would support his decision.

"Fine, fine, fine..." The Zhang Haitan started to laugh loudly, "I wouldn't have imagined that two of my progeny would awaken ancestral bloodlines and enter Hidden Dragon Palace, hahaha..."

"Your cousin is also in Hidden Dragon Palace. He's not back today. When you arrive there, you can contact him..." Zhang Lin also smiled as he said this. However, Zhang Tie saw something else in the eyes of his eldest uncle...

## Chapter 273: A Trip at Sea

The steam-driven engine of the small passenger liner had been in operation for almost five hours. Sharply contrasting to the jarring and monotonous sounds were the tweets of the seagulls that flew over the sky and the sounds of the sea waves surrounded the liner.

The passenger liner broke through the winds and the waves, creating snow white water droplets which flew high into the air and sparkled under the sunlight like silver beads, causing Zhang Tie to slightly narrow his eyes as he was standing on the deck of the second floor and gazing at the sea in the front.

Today was Monday, December 5th, the day when Zhang Tie was going to register at Hidden Dragon Palace.

It was a good day today. Thinking of when he was attending the beer festival in Blapei last month and was heading for his new life on the sea at this moment, Zhang Tie couldn't help but sigh the miracle of fate.

Thinking of those affairs, a girl with black eyes reappeared in Zhang Tie's mind——Pandora! Before he left Kalur, this was the very name that Zhang Tie concerned the most.

Pandora's family had suddenly left Blackhot City. Nobody knew where she had gone. It seemed as though she was never there in the first place. She was like a drop of water jumping and falling back into the sea without warning. She disappeared, leaving no signal at all. Even her neighbors didn't know when they had moved away.

Alice's family also left Blackhot City. When they left there, Alice left a letter and told Barley to hand it to Zhang Tie——Alice's father took her and her mother to Nordinburg, the capital city on the North Border of the Norman Empire.

Beverly worked as a nurse at a hospital in Blackhot City. The girls of Rose Association also lived their own lives like before. That absurd affair seemed having been a distant memory.

The former City Guard Army of Blackhot City had completely disbanded. The No. 39 Division that defended Blackhot City had started the official expansion of its establishment. Most of his partners and friends at school had joined the army. Only a few of them didn't pass the physical examination for joining the army.

Fatty Barley didn't pass the physical examination due to his asthma. Sharwin didn't pass because he was too weak to reach the minimum standard to be a new recruit of the Norman Empire. The other one left was Potter——the juvenile who was cheated into being a fire holder in the mining cave because of his flatfoot.

Compared to that of the former Andaman Alliance, the conditions for joining the army of the Norman Empire became much stricter.

Zhang Tie had always been sorry for Potter. Only Potter was digging in the mines when the others of the Gods Bliss Association had joined the army when Zhang Tie left the Blackhot City. He was still trying to improve the "Big Bliss Skill" through mining. Besides expecting for Potter to give it up by himself and letting Barley take care of him when necessary, Zhang Tie had no other ideas to aid him. Facing the weak Potter's eyes which were as firm as fire, Zhang Tie couldn't even stand to tell him that as a joke.

"Argh, look, dolphins..."

Hearing the surprise, Zhang Tie was instantly drawn back into the reality. Zhang Tie then shook his head and drove everything about Blackhot City out of his mind. What counted most now was to improve his own strength. If he had strength, it would be no problem for him to bring everybody that he knew in Blackhot City along with his family member to the East Continent when the holy war between human and demons started. However, for the time being, he was just a tiny shrimp in the torrents of destiny, who could only jump at the bottom of the water and could not even see the direction ahead.



On the sea in the distance, some dolphins were jumping out of the sea and played alongside the steamer. Zhang Tie looked back and five more people were standing beside him on the deck.

Three of them were male, while two were female. They were all older than Zhang Tie and carried weapons. The three males all had tiger-like shoulders and bear-like waists. The moment Zhang Tie caught sight of them, he knew that they were warriors. One of the two females was over 30 years old while the other one was 17-18 years old. The older women had a slim waist and thrusting breasts while still looking valiant and heroic. Although looking a bit experienced, she was still very enchanting and as mature as a ripe honey peach. The younger lady had almond-like eyes, peachy cheeks and a pair of long legs. She also looked very beautiful. Although being younger, she was taller than that 30-odd-year-old woman.

The exclamation just now was from this young lady. She was looking at the dolphins in the distance and clapped her hands out of excitement.

"Even now sister Fu likes dolphins so much, why not let junior brother Yu catch two for you after you've advanced to level 6 and form battle qi. I think once you make a request, junior brother Yu will never refuse no matter what trouble he will encounter. Right, younger brother Yu?" The 30-odd-year-old woman casually joked.

"Senior sister Fang, don't tease me!" The 17-18 old girl stomped her feet as she sneered at the man who was most handsome among the three male.

The male looked even more bashful than the woman as his face had already blushed the moment he heard the joke. He then stuttered, "If...if junior sister...Fu likes it, we can go see the dol...dolphins!"

Junior sister Fu...junior brother...senior sister...Hearing those official appellations with Chinese features, Zhang Tie could almost guess their status. They must belong to a certain Chinese sect as was usually mentioned by Donder.

A Chinese sect was a fresh concept for Zhang Tie. In his mind, a sect was an organization that was a melting pot that had clans, business groups, academies, churches, guilds, and even an army. It was a group that was tied together through similar interests and personal attachments.

A sect was rarely seen in other places except for Chinese countries. Zhang Tie had not heard about any sects in the Andaman Alliance. Although he had seen many churches, academies, fighting clubs and various secret teams even the relations between teachers and apprentices, he knew they were all scattered traditional inheritance systems.

In Hebrew-spoken areas, sects were most close to schools. Compared to schools, the greatest difference between sects and schools was that all the sects were involved with beliefs and idolatry, yet beliefs or idolatry might or might not exist in schools. Schools were more flexible on management. Sects focused on belief yet schools focused on secret knowledge. They all had their own features.

Because it was his first time to contact the people in a certain sect, Zhang Tie kept enjoying the scene as he paid attention to their chat. Seeing Zhang Tie was just a 15-16-year-old juvenile, they didn't care about him either as they started to chat for free.

Their topics soon shifted to their target on this trip from "junior sister Fu" and "junior brother Yu".

"It's too expensive. It takes each of us 15 silver coins for only several hours of travel on the sea. This is no different than robbery. In other places, it might not take 5 silver coins for even one day's trip on the sea!" A person complained.

"Junior brother Feng, no more complaints about that. As it's the first time for you and Junior brother Yu to come out to form battle qi, there are things you don't know. If you were in other places in Jinyun Country, you might not be able to enter the underground world even if you spent 10 times the amount. Recently, five entrances towards the underground world have been discovered in Jinyun Country. Besides this one on Hidden Dragon Island where you could enter for free, three of the others have been occupied by the big clans of Jinyun Country and you're not allowed in unless you pay 5 gold coins each time. The last entrance is in the Yangui Mountain Range. That entrance was over 1000 km away from Yangui City. You can also access them at your will; however, besides a few great fighters, nobody could arrive there."

"Senior brother An, you mean Huaiyuan Palace has done a good thing?" Junior brother Feng questioned.

"Heh heh, the Zhang clan of Huaiyuan Palace is so rich that it occupies 8 cities and enjoys the benefit by being adjacent to the sea. Even if the gold coins gained from trades between east continent and west continent were many times more than the benefits gained through this entrance to the underground world. This Hidden Dragon Island is far away from the coast. It's wiser to open it to us than building a new city and dispatching soldiers here for a good reputation. Additionally, people will gain various useful items by hunting magical beasts in the underground world which will be inconvenient to take away. Therefore, most of them will choose to trade the items directly on Hidden Dragon Island, which will definitely bring great benefit to the Changfeng Business Group under the affiliation of Huaiyuan Palace!" Senior brother An explained.

"That's really shrewd!" Junior brother Yu sighed.

"It doesn't only rely on fortune for Huaiyuan Palace to reach such a scale. Based on their means, of course, they will carry out their plan very well so that they could gain others' praise and benefit others." senior sister Fang answered.

"Senior sister Fang, I heard the magical beasts in the underground world are very large and fierce. Even the black spider of the lowest level is as big as an ox."

"Don't worry, junior sister Fu. Although those black spiders are very fierce, your senior brother An and I have encountered them before. This time, it won't be difficult for us to deal with those black spiders at all. Your senior brother An and I will definitely help you three form wind-breaking battle qi safe and sound. We will not start advancing to level 7 until you three reach level 6. By then, you can just stand aside and observe what it's like to assault level 7 from us."

Hearing this, Zhang Tie turned back and prepared to leave the deck. At the same time, a glimpse of a land could be seen from afar. Looking at the passenger liner driving towards that big island. Zhang Tie knew that must be Hidden Dragon island.

The moment he left the deck, Zhang Tie had heard the sound of splashing from under the liner. Zhang Tie felt the sound of the water was a bit strange. Before he turned back had he heard an exclamation

behind him and the powerful clashes between weapons accompanied by some furious growls and muffles.

Zhang Tie turned back and saw one more person on the deck.

A person in watertight clothing with scattered hair was standing in the middle of the deck, his hair dripping water. That man's eyes were incredibly alert as he continued to scan the deck. However, his weird fingers were tightly grasping the throat of "junior sister Fu", who looked to be in quite the amount of pain and had completely lost her ability to fight back. The people who had been together with "junior sister Fu" had been thrown away and lying far away on the deck. Junior brother Yu and junior brother Feng were struggling to climb up from the deck while senior brother An and senior sister Fang were standing several steps away with an ugly look in their eyes. Senior sister Fang's hands were quivering. She looked pale. The corners of senior brother An's mouth revealed a wisp of blood. The moment they fought the mysterious man, they had been wounded.

Behind the man was a rolling fighting qi, presenting the image of a serpent.

After another splash, one more young man, less than 20 years old, suddenly appeared on the deck, who had a naked upper body and was barefoot. He was casually wearing a pair of underpants and was rotating a water-breaking dagger[1] in hand. He looked at that man in a distant way, "Let her go, as you've been reduced to such, why do you have to involve in an innocent girl to make you more guilty?"

"Bull\*\*\*\*!" Holding her throat, that man loudly shouted. As he looked at this young man, he drew the girl closer to his side and carefully hid behind her, "You jump off the boat and let the boat turn back to send me back to the mainland!" That man had been raving loudly.

"You've violated the laws of Huaiyuan Prefecture on Hidden Dragon Island, do you think that you can still escape?" Even if you can get to shore, do you think that you can escape from Huaiyuan Prefecture? Don't be that naive." Playing with his water-breaking dagger, the youth became more cordial, "As I've chased you for three days, we've gotten familiar with each other. Save me some face. I will give you a quick death so that you can go to hell as soon as possible and I can go onto submit my mission as soon as possible. From then on, we will not interfere with each other, how about that?"

"F\*\*\*\*" Before the man loudly swore just before a shiny long sword had penetrated his throat. His eyes popped out of their sockets as he tried to look back who had stabbed him but failed.

His battle qi totem and shortly after, his life, were both now gone.

The man fell down as junior sister Fu who was under his abduction also hurriedly ran away from the man with a terrified look.

At this time, a handsome male youth in white clothes was holding a long sword and standing behind that man. Nobody on the deck had noticed from when had this youth appeared behind that man, including Zhang Tie.

Seeing the man lying on the deck, the youth in white clothes shook his head, "I really wonder how could you reach level 8; after being chased for three days, you didn't even know how many people were chasing after you. With such a poor aptitude, you dare to do business at any cost? Your intelligence is

really..." The youth flicked the long sword in a cool way so as to clean off the blood dripping from it. After that, he raised his head and looked into the sky, "What a tragedy."

The moment he finished the word "tragedy", the youth in white clothes had already jumped up from the deck and spun twice in the air while putting his sword back into the sheath before he threw himself into the sea like a dolphin. He directly disappeared into the sea without making any splash.

"Why do you always act cool ahead of me and then leave me deal with the remains?" The other youth with the bare torso who was playing the water-breaking dagger muttered as he walked towards the corpse and searched it thoroughly. He then got a bag from the corpse and opened it in front of everyone. He then took out of a round red bead from the bag. After looking at it for a while, he nodded before put it back into the bag and took it away.

"When the ship arrives at the port, someone will come to deal with this corpse." After saying this, the youth playing the water-breaking dagger instantly jumped into the sea from the deck.

At this moment, the deck had been surrounded by a lot of passengers. Most of the people who came to the Hidden Dragon Island would be fighters who had been used to battles. Therefore, after noticing what happened on the deck, many people didn't feel afraid at all, instead, they all ran out of their rooms to watch.

It was really a splendid fight.

"This dead guy looks familiar!" One onlooker said.

"He's Deng Tong, the Monster of the Sea. He's the head of the pirates wanted by the Qilan Country. I didn't imagine that he could be killed today!" As there were hundreds of passengers on the deck coming from all walks of life, the moment someone felt the one lying on the deck was familiar, someone else had already recognized his status.

"I heard Deng Tong excelled at swimming in the sea and had some secret techniques. He's known for not drowning to death after staying in the sea for seven days. He's escaped pursuit many times in Qilan Country due to this excellent talent. He even reversed the situation in the sea and killed pursuers twice while at sea. I didn't think that he could be killed near Hidden Dragon Island. He was chased after by others and jumped onto the ship. Alas, his luck finally ran out."

"If he had behaved well and hadn't stolen items while killing people over on Hidden Dragon Island, why would he have been killed. It's said that Deng Tong was just level 7. I think he was here to promote himself. However, he had never imagined that he could lose his life right after promoting to level 8!"

"Who are the two youths chasing after and killing Deng Tong just now?"

"They must come from the Hidden Dragon Palace of the Zhang clan. Hidden Dragon Palace is the place where the elites of Zhang clan cultivate themselves. It's said that people who cultivate here have all awakened their ancestral bloodlines."

After letting out a few sighs, the onlookers left. However, after looking at the corpse on the deck, many people warned themselves that they should never perform any questionable activities on Hidden Dragon Island based on their own strength.

...

"Junior sister Fu, are you okay?" Junior brother Yu looked at his junior sister Fu nervously. His junior sister Fu didn't recover her composure until he repeated this question many times.

"Argh...I'm okay!"

"Thankfully, you're okay, I was really worried about you!" Junior brother Yu let out a sigh and smiled. However, he had not noticed that his junior sister Fu was absent-minded at this moment.

Only senior sister Fang sighed inside after looking at younger sister Fu's face, The two young men are too handsome and talented, especially that youth in white who had saved junior sister Fu. After seeing that person, junior sister Fu's eyes didn't even move away from him. What's that person's last sentence? Sigh! Junior brother Yu, what a tragedy!

...

"Hidden Dragon Palace..." Zhang Tie muttered this name twice inside as his eyes began to shine. After glancing at the three males and two females on the deck as well that Monster of the Sea's corpse, he returned to the cabin together with the rest people.

...

Twenty minutes later, the shadow of Hidden Dragon Island grew increasingly larger on the horizon.

Hidden Dragon Island was a big island under the affiliation of Huaiyuan Prefecture. It was 190 km away from the continent and covered 340 sq km. It was densely covered with woods and surrounded by mountains.

Being on the same island together with Hidden Dragon palace was the "Dragon Hole on the Island" which was known as 1 of the 5 entrances to the underground world...

Chapter 274: Newbie

Hidden Dragon Island was surrounded by mountains. Its coast was covered with dense rapids. Under the surging waves were strange and jagged rocks. The only wharf on the island was to the north, which was located between two steep leeward ranges which extended into the sea. The terrain was pretty precipitous.

The waterway entering the wharf was a winding path. The mountains on both sides of the waterway were covered with karst caves of different sizes which were formed due to weathering, water erosion or special geological composition. Half of the karst caves were immersed in seawater. As a response to the crashing of the waves, weird and chilling noises drifted from the inside of the karst caves like the growls of monsters.

Not until the passenger liner moved forward in the narrow and twisting waterway for about 500-600m did Zhang Tie see a large space and caught sight of the 100m long small wharf and some buildings on Hidden Dragon Island.

After anchoring the liner, everyone started to go ashore. Zhang was left alone on the deck. When almost everybody left the deck, two 16-17 years old youths in black uniforms came onto the deck with the other three men in multicolored outfits.

"That's him..." The moment they arrived onto the deck, one of the three people in the multicolored outfits pointed at the corpse on the deck and loudly shouted, "That's the one who killed my elder brother and my eldest uncle as well as robbed two centipede's cores from them...", saying this, that person couldn't wait to burst into tears. Finally, he couldn't stand still before proceeding to take out his long saber and fiercely hacked into the corpse, "Elder brother, eldest uncle, you died so miserably, I will use this evil person's head as a sacrifice for your death!"

"I've given you the centipedes' cores, here's his corpse. You are free to deal with it even by grinding his bones into ashes and throwing them away or directly peeling his skin."

"On behalf of the 659 people in Ma Village of Qingshan Prefecture, I thank the Zhang clan for your righteous deed!" Another old man among them forcefully withstood his lament and bowed towards the two youths by a holding fist salute.

"As they are already dead, please restrain your grief."

Being grieved, the other men in multicolored clothing extended their thanks to the two youths before directly carrying the corpse away from the liner.

While standing on the deck, Zhang Tie saw this scene and had been able to guess the status of the two youths. They were at least members of Zhang clan on the island, if not, from Hidden Dragon Palace.

"Wait a moment, please!" When the two youths walked onto the wharf, Zhang Tie stopped them.

"What's up?" The two youths turned back and stared at Zhang Tie who suddenly came out.

"Do you know how to get to Hidden Dragon Palace?"

"Hidden Dragon Palace?" One of the two youths started to seriously glance over Zhang Tie when he heard that Zhang Tie was going to the Hidden Dragon Palace.

"Yes, I want to go to the Hidden Dragon Palace." Zhang Tie said with a smile.

"What are you going to do in Hidden Dragon Palace?"

"To apply to join!"

"Show me your clan plate!"

Zhang Tie then took out his clan plate and gave it to the two youths. After a serious look, the two youths exchanged glances with each other and nodded together.

"You're Zhang Tie?" One of the youths returned the clan plate to Zhang Tie.

"Yes!"

"I'm Xu Lang; he's Zhang Houyu. We are all from Hidden Dragon Palace!" Saying this, Xu Lang instantly became enthusiastic. After saying this, Xu Lang looked at Zhang Houyu and asked, "Who will send him to Hidden Dragon Palace, you or me?"

"Hoho, after all, we're both surnamed Zhang, I will send him over there! You continue to patrol around the island, I will first send him to Hidden Dragon Palace. Then we will meet in Blackdragon Town." The youth called Zhang Houyu replied.

"Fine."

"Follow me!" Zhang Houyu greeted Zhang Tie and turned back to leave. Of course, Zhang Tie followed him away from the wharf.

There was a narrow street on the side of the wharf, on both sides of which were some buildings. Zhang Tie took a look and found a warehouse, a hotel, a fish market and two stores that posses items he wasn't aware of. There was one restaurant too. Most of the passengers got off from the liner poured into the restaurant. After taking a trip on the liner for 4-5 hours, they had eaten nothing at all. Therefore, the moment the saw the restaurant, they all went in at once.

Zhang Tie's stomach was still growling. Nevertheless, as someone was guiding him, he felt it improper to let him wait for him to finish a meal before continuing to walk.

"Do you want to eat something?" Although Zhang Tie didn't speak, Zhang Houyu was sentimental as he asked, "If you're hungry, you'd better eat a bit, as this place is more than 20 km away from Hidden Dragon Palace. If you're too hungry, I'm afraid that you won't be able to keep up with me."

"It doesn't matter, it's okay to eat at Hidden Dragon Palace!"

"Fine, follow me then. We can run over there. It will be faster." Saying this, Zhang Houyu started to run as Zhang Tie hurriedly followed behind him.

Thinking of Xu Lang that he had met just now, Zhang Tie suddenly thought of a question as he asked Zhang Houyu, "Hidden Dragon Palace also takes in apprentices with different surnames?"

"Besides Zhang clan's direct line of descendants, if anyone among the relatives of Zhang clan across Huaiyuan Prefecture have awakened the ancestral bloodline, they can also enter Hidden Dragon Palace. As you're new to Hidden Dragon Palace, you should bear in mind the primary rule that you should not casually ask for others' ancestral bloodlines or how many times they have awakened. You should not casually reveal to others about what ancestral bloodline have you awakened. Although you feel this information are not important, they are very important clan secrets. When you awaken your ancestral bloodline for the first time, someone might know about that. Once you have awakened your ancestral bloodline for the second time, no matter what great ability do you have, you'd better reveal it to others as little as possible. This is a card in your hand, it might save your life a critical moment!" Zhang Houyu explained as he found Zhang Tie could keep up with him. Therefore, he increased his pace.

"Ancestral bloodlines can be awakened a second time?" As it was Zhang Tie's first time hearing this, he was a bit amazed as he thought he could only awaken his throwing skill once.

"Of course! There's no limit to the amount times one can awaken their ancestral bloodline. Different ancestral bloodlines could grant you different talents and gifts. As for how many times can you awaken,

it will depend on your ability and luck. Many people who have awakened their ancestral bloodlines for the first time could awaken them twice, then thrice, even more. It takes time to improve and intensify the same ancestral bloodline that they've awakened!"

Zhang Tie slightly sighed inside, "Hidden Dragon Palace is really great. Although I've just arrived, I have received two surprises, one on the passenger liner, the other here. I wonder how it would feel if I awaken my throwing skill for the second time. Only after thinking about this question did Zhang Tie's heart begin to race and long for the future.

After leaving the wharf, the two people started up the mountainous path. At the beginning, Zhang Houyu wanted to take care of Zhang Tie by slowing down his speed on purpose. Gradually, he realized that Zhang Tie could still easily chat with him when running, Zhang Houyu started to speed up. However, no matter how he accelerated his speed, Zhang Tie could still closely follow him up in an easy manner. Zhang Houyu became really amazed about that as he grew increasingly aggressive and started to use his full strength.

Zhang Tie didn't feel tired at all while the guide's forehead had been oozing sweat. For Zhang Tie who had eaten nine Wild Wolf Seven-Strength Fruits, Zhang Tie only felt very relaxed by trotting at this speed which was even a bit slower than his "cruising speed". If he liked, he could even keep running at this speed for the whole day long.

After running 5 km over one mountain, Zhang Tie found another large-scale town on Hidden Dragon Island. The town was in a small basin on the Island, which was surrounded by forest. Its prosperity was not worse than those on the mainland. They then ran across the town from the hillside in the east of the town.

"Argh, I didn't imagine that there could be such great towns on Hidden Dragon Island!" Zhang Tie sighed.

Hearing Zhang Tie's sigh, Zhang Houyu who kept running by lowering his head almost gasped as he could not even speak fluently at this moment. He had never imagined that Zhang Tie could still speak without even panting.

"This is...White Dragon Town...there are... a total of five towns...on...Hidden Dragon Island...Besides White Dragon Town...there are Cyan Dragon Town...Yellow Dragon Town...Black Dragon Town...and Blue Dragon Town." Gritting his teeth, Zhang Houyu kept muttering intermittently. The oncoming wind filled into his mouth, almost causing him to cough.

At this moment, Zhang Houyu had inwardly confirmed that the ancestral bloodline that Zhang Tie had awakened must be related to running. If not, he could never have such amazing stamina and running ability as a youth who looked 1-2 years younger than him.

After following Zhang Houyu running for less than half an hour, they finally arrived at Hidden Dragon Palace. It was a combination of three castles built on a steep location with beautiful scenery, which extended to the top of the mountain. The castles were connected with each other by various types of villas and pavilions that hid in the woods. It looked pretty magnificent. With only a glance at these buildings, Zhang Tie could tell that Huaiyuan Palace was truly rich.



A 20m high memorial archway marked with "Hidden Dragon Palace" was erected in front of Zhang Tie. Under the memorial archway were two huge and magnificent stone lions.

"This...this is Hidden Dragon Palace. When you enter there...you will see someone greeting you inside!"

After saying this, Zhang Houyu had already left before Zhang Tie said thanks.

Zhang Tie scratched his head as he felt Zhang Houyu's attitude was a bit weird. He didn't know that this "elder" who brought him to the Hidden Dragon Palace had been so embarrassed on the way due to Zhang Tie's great endurance. Therefore, the moment he arrived at the destination, he hurriedly escaped.

...

After taking a deep breath, Zhang Tie touched his clan plate as he entered the memorial archway. He walked towards the first castle at the foot of the mountain. The guardians outside the castle were all young. At the sight of Zhang Tie, a young man less than 20 years old moved forward on his own. After seeing Zhang Tie's clan plate and understanding Zhang Tie's intention, the young man took Zhang Tie inside the castle.

...

Several minutes later...

"Zhang Tie, 15, level 5 warrior. Having awakened a bloodline for the first time. It's your first time entering Hidden Dragon Palace. Here's the key to your room, No. 73 of Xingzhi Department. Here's the map of Hidden Dragon Island. You can go to register in Xingzhi Department today. Before you leave, you can reconfirm whether you've already handed in all your money. We've recorded your money, 8 gold coins and 13 silver coins in total. Before you leave Hidden Dragon Palace, we will return it back to you. If you are found to have hidden money privately, even one copper coin, the result would be very severe!" A 60-year old man with an obscene look and a goatee stood behind a high counter like an owner of a pawnshop. He pushed a key, a map and something else in front of Zhang Tie as he raised his head to warn Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie had not imagined that the first step was to hand in all of his money when he entered the Hidden Dragon Palace. Besides this money, he had 5000 gold coins and 5000 gold coin notes in the Castle of Black Iron, which was his reserve funds. There were the remains of the returns by auctioning the ring of energy after Zhang Tie went to the Blackhot City and gave a part of them to his elder brother.

"Excuse me. Don't I have to pay for buying items on Hidden Dragon Island and in Hidden Dragon Palace? Why should I have to hand in my private money?"

"Of course, it requires money on Hidden Dragon Island and in Hidden Dragon Palace. It even requires a lot of money. Money is required everywhere. But for we apprentices of Hidden Dragon Palace, we have to make each copper coin on the Island, instead of from home!" This voice came from Zhang Tie's back. Zhang Tie looked back and found four youths at this age walked towards him, each carrying a wire sack.

The four youths only wore a simple coarse-cloth velvet. They were oozing sweat. It seemed that the items on their back were very heavy. The taller youth in the front was better while the skin of the faces

and arms of other three youths behind him were as dry as bark and were cracking in places. Zhang Tie could imagine their former tender look.

Because their forehead corners sweated too heavily, fine white salt granules could be seen over there. Their cracking skins were dipping in their sweat, causing their eye corners twitch out of control.

The moment they drew close to him, Zhang Tie could smell the sea odor on them. Zhang Tie took a look at the fine wounds on their arms and hands. If they were not here, they would definitely be taken as being mistreated in other places.

"Newbie?" That youth in the front asked Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie nodded.

"Follow us then, we're also from the Zhixing Department!" The front youth replied.

"Hahahaha, welcome to Hidden Dragon Palace!" Another youth whose face was like the crust of cooked rice seemed as though he wanted to laugh as he saw Zhang Tie's dumbfounded look. However, the moment he forced a smile, he controlled it...

This Hidden Dragon Palace seems to be different than what it was in my imagination.

#### Chapter 275: The First Pass in the Secular World

Walking behind the juveniles and observing them teetering and gritting teeth with wire sacks on their back, Zhang Tie started to feel a bit weird about Hidden Dragon Palace.

Before coming to Hidden Dragon Palace, Zhang Tie also imagined the scene when he entered it for the first time. In his imagination, an immortal old man with wholly white hair and a beard was holding a pile of secret books to teach students; a perverted one-eyed coach was strictly training plenty of juveniles under the hot sun; great piles of various marvelous weapons and fighting skills books were put in front of him which made it hard to even choose. Zhang Tie had fantasized all kinds of scenes with the exception of that where some mistreated slave laborers were teasing him——welcome to Hidden Dragon Palace

Among the four juveniles in front of Zhang Tie, the weakest one was in the back with a wire sack on his back. He was also the shortest one. The moment he walked out of the castle and stepped onto the steps of the mountain pass, this juvenile suddenly felt soft on his feet as he continued forward. Thankfully, Zhang Tie, who was behind him, had a pair of sharp eyes and caught the wire sack on his back to keep his balance.

"Can I help you?" Zhang Tie smiled as he directly took over the sack from the juvenile's back. The weight of the wire sack was less than 150 kgs, which was trivial for Zhang Tie. After taking over the sack, Zhang Tie found the skin on his shoulder had been broken, exposing a bloody skin.

"Argh, no need, I will be alright soon..." With tears rolling in the juvenile's eye sockets, the juvenile kept it from dropping off.

"Yunfei, are you okay?" The stronger juvenile in the front stopped as he turned back to ask.

"It's okay, I lost my footing just now and almost fell down."

"Hold on a little longer, we'll soon arrive at the Items Center."

"That's fine!" The juvenile called Yunfei responded as he looked at Zhang Tie, "Thank you, but I have to carry the sack over there by myself. If you help me carry them there, they will not pay me. This is the rule of Hidden Dragon Palace—no other's assistance is allowed when one performs labor."

Seeing the juvenile called Yunfei being so persistent and learning the rules here, Zhang Tie then returned the sack back to this juvenile as he became increasingly curious about the rules of Hidden Dragon Palace.

They then kept walking upward. Thankfully, less than 100 m away on the stone steps, Zhang Tie had heard a bell ringing.

Walking through the bamboo woods and the shallow stream, Zhang Tie saw the smoking chimney and the blast furnace outside the tall wall while a house with a courtyard marked with "Items Center" appeared in front of Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie and some juveniles then entered the courtyard. On the left of the first door was a warehouse. Zhang Tie followed the juveniles into the warehouse and pulled the items out of the sacks. After that, they weighed them on the scale. Zhang Tie found all the items inside their sacks were ores that radiated a pale blue metallic luster.

The housekeeper was also a 15-16 juvenile. As he weighed them, he told them the weight. After that, he would take money out of the drawer beside him and gave it to the juveniles one by one, making them very happy.

"The total price of 241 kg of navy-blue iron ore is 24 silver coins..."

...

"The total price of 203 kg of navy-blue iron ore is 20 silver coins..."

...

"The total price of 195 kg of navy-blue iron ore is 19 silver coins..."

...

"The total price of 148 kg of navy-blue iron ore is 14 silver coins..."

"Argh, it's too pitiful. With 2kg more, Yunfei would get 15 silver coins!" Another guy sighed. Hearing their words, Zhang Tie found that juvenile called Yunfei was slightly clenching his fists. Meanwhile, Zhang Tie understood the terms of payment—10 kg of navy-blue iron ore for 1 silver coin. Those less than 10 kg would not be included inside.

"You will also come here later on." That stronger juvenile put his money in his pocket as he told Zhang Tie.

"Does everyone entering Hidden Dragon Palace have to do these things?" Zhang Tie asked.

"Yes, everyone entering the Hidden Dragon Palace should at least submit 30000 kg of navy-blue iron ore at first so as to gain 30 gold coins as your personal property on the island. It's mandatory." The juvenile turned back as he recalled something, "Oh, I'm Zhang Keliang, what's your name?"

"I'm Zhang Tie!"

"I'm Wei Wei!" That juvenile who told Zhang Tie "Welcome to Hidden Dragon Palace" also introduced himself.

"I'm Zhang Hongsheng!"

"I'm Zhang Yunfei!"

After introductions, they all felt more familiar with each other.

"Come on, let's go back to take a good rest. In order to bring these ores back, we've been staying outside for almost 2 days. We will take a rest today to recover before going back there tomorrow." Zhang Keliang waved his hand and said while the others nodded.

After that, Zhang Tie and the others left the Items Center.

The Zhixing Department was not far from the Items Center. Walking out of the gate of the Items Center, they walked 200 m towards the east of the hillside along the stone path in the bamboo woods before arriving there. On the way there, through their introductions, Zhang Tie gradually understood many things.

People had to face the most important first hurdle in the secular world——making money!

In regards to money, you can despise it by treating it as dung, but you could need it at any time. Therefore, you have to accept its importance.

All the juveniles entering the Hidden Dragon Palace should first learn how to survive on their own on the island instead of mastering great fighting skills, secret knowledge, poems and ancient Chinese classics or the laws on ruling the country.

Each new arrival lived in the Zhixing Department. They were given 3 days to adapt to the living environment here, during which period, you can eat and live for free. After 3 days, you had to think about how to survive on the island as by then the Zhixing Department would not provide you food or accommodation for free.

One had to pay 5 silver coins for the lodging and 2 silver coins for food, namely 7 silver coins each day in the Zhixing Department. Credit was allowed, but an interest of 5 cents a day was also required. It would be calculated as compound interest. When your credit was as high as 1 gold coin, if you couldn't pay it off, sorry, you had to roll out of the Hidden Dragon Palace and stay wherever you had to stay.

"Do you mean one can leave the Hidden Dragon Island then?" Zhang Tie asked.

"Leave Hidden Dragon Island?" Wei Wu gritted his mouth and mocked, "No more than dream of it, those driven out of Hidden Dragon Palace are not allowed to leave the island at all. Instead, they have to make money to pay off their credit on the island. If one owed 1 gold coin to Hidden Dragon Palace when he was driven out of it, he had to pay off 2 gold coins in 2 weeks at the compound interest of 5 cents a

day. After 1 month, one had to pay off 4 gold coins. The longer one lasted, the more one would owe. Those people being driven out of the Hidden Dragon Palace might not be able to pay off in the rest of their lives if they could not pay off the debt in half a year and have to stay on the island for the rest of their lives..."

"Stay on the island for the rest of their lives?" Zhang Tie felt very chilly inside, "Is there anyone like that?"

"There is!" Zhang Keliang replied, "Those people who could not pay off 1 gold coin and could not even survive alone on the island could only be regarded as trash by their clans. It's better to keep them on Hidden Dragon Island safe and sound than letting them out to be killed or stir up troubles."

"There are rules on Hidden Dragon Palace in the Zhixing Department. If you go there, you would know that you need money in many places..." Zhang Yunfei added.

As they chatted, they had arrived at the Xingzhi Department.

The Xingzhi Department as a whole was like a huge triple-layer quadrangle. There were all sorts of pavilions, terraces and fish ponds and a martial-arts arena that covered 1334-2001 square meters. On the martial-arts arena, there are all kinds of drill weapons. When they arrived, Zhang Tie saw nobody else except for an old man in green clothes sitting under a persimmon tree outside the gate of the Zhixing Department who was staring blankly at a stone desk under the tree. He could only hear chirps of birds and insects in the courtyard, which made it very tranquil.

"Have you seen that old man? He has been staying on the island for more than 50 years as he could not make enough money to pay off his debts when he was young. Because he's old now and is a member of Zhang clan, he was brought back by Hidden Dragon Palace and is responsible for watching the gate for Zhixing Department!" Zhang Hongsheng murmured to Zhang Tie.

"Argh!" Zhang Tie became really startled.

"What are you shouting loudly over there for? I've just thought up a marvelous play step, yet was driven away by your noise. Look at your disheveled hair and dirty face, where are your elders? I will definitely let them teach you well!" It seemed that their words had disturbed the old man as he raised his head to blame Zhang Tie and the others. After that, he took out of a black player from the side of the desk and lowered his head again with frowning eyebrows to consider the next step on the desk like before.

Zhang Tie and the others exchanged glances at each other and stuck out their tongues as they hurriedly walked inside.

"Room No. 73 is over there. The rules and instructions of Hidden Dragon Place are on the stele in the pavilion beside the pond." Zhang Keliang pointed at the two places in the Xingzhi Department, "We will eat supper at 6 pm in that canteen over there. We need to go back to our rooms to take a rest first!"

"Fine." Zhang Tie nodded as he departed from the others.

Zhang Tie held his key and came in front of No. 73 room. When he opened the door, Zhang Tie stared blankly at the empty room for quite a while.

Nothing was inside the room except for a bald wooden board bed.

"F\*ck!"

...

10 minutes later, after recognizing the reality of his situation, Zhang Tie went to the pavilion which held the rules and instructions of Hidden Dragon Palace and read them carefully. He then gradually understood the situation of the Hidden Dragon Palace.

Those who came to the Xingzhi Department were all new arrivals of Hidden Dragon Palace. All the newbies had to meet two minimum standards before left Xingzhi Department: first, reach level 6 to become a fighter and form battle qi; second, submit 30000 kg of navy-blue iron ores.

After leaving the Xingzhi Department and entering Lingtian Department which was 1 level higher, one would start his or her life within Hidden Dragon Palace. Entering the Lingtian Department, one could enjoy more of the resources belonging to Hidden Dragon Palace. Accordingly, one should pay more there. Although one needed to pay at least 7 silver coins for lodging and food each day in the Zhixing Department, the fee would become at least 30 gold coins per month, almost 1 gold coin a day.

The 30 gold coins that one gained by submitting 30000 kg of navy-blue iron ores in the Xingzhi Department could only afford one's first month's living in Lingtian Department.

Reading this, Zhang Tie almost swore out loud, "1 gold a day, for a presidential suite?"

However, another paragraph on the stele made Zhang Tie calm down at once.

—Money was an influential power. It was one's basis for freedom. If one could not make enough money, freedom would be an illusion.

Zhang Tie gradually understood the real meaning of those rules in the Hidden Dragon Palace—to force each one here to strive for "freedom with money". The best attitude to money was to step on it ferociously instead of spitting towards it and being stepped on by it. The former attitude belonged to the powerful ones while the latter one belonged to the weak ones...

Those who could survive on their own on Hidden Dragon Island which was covered with powerful creatures and dangerous environment, could definitely make money to survive when they were back on the mainland. What the Hidden Dragon Palace would like to train were not those "powerhouses" who could not even survive by themselves by doing hard labor and finally had to be restricted by others.

After knowing that, Zhang Tie instantly accepted the rules on money inside Hidden Dragon Palace, instead of being disgusted by them like before.

'It's just making money, I don't think that I will lose out to anyone else on this aspect. If others can do it, I can do it too, even by imitating them!' Zhang Tie mumbled.

When he read the rest of the rules and instructions of Hidden Dragon Palace, Zhang Tie finally found a benefit to entering Hidden Dragon Palace.

All the people who had awakened their ancestral bloodlines could gain 100 clan donation points automatically, which, for those people who had no foundations in martial arts, could be exchanged for some simple and fundamental secret techniques or fighting skills to help them form battle qi, breakthrough level 6 and finish the initial task of submitting 30000 kg of navy-blue iron ores.

Those navy-blue iron ores were not on the land, instead, in the sea. Before one carried those navy-blue iron ores from under sea level, one needed to master a secret technique that allowed them to stay underwater and move freely.

Preliminary Fish-like Diving Skill——

Exchange price: 50 clan donation points.

Exchange site: Secret Technique Pavilion of Hidden Dragon Palace.

When he read this news, Zhang suddenly came up with an idea, "I wonder what kind of fruit can I gain by setting free fishes..."

Chapter 276: The Secret of Battle Qi

Early on the second morning, before the sun rose, Zhang Tie had already fumbled around and arrived at the Secret Technique Pavilion of Hidden Dragon Palace.

The Secret Technique Pavilion of Hidden Dragon Palace was a 7-floor octagon. It was a traditional Chinese building like a pagoda. He had already caught sight of it when he was at the foot of the mountain.

The Secret Technique Pavilion of Hidden Dragon Palace opened 3 days a week, from 7 am to 3 pm. Zhang Tie had planned to arrive here at 8 am.

The moment he entered the gate of the Secret Knowledge Pavilion, Zhang Tie saw a 60-odd-year-old man sitting before a large tea table in the middle of the lobby on the first floor. He was leisurely tasting tea over there. The moment Zhang Tie entered the gate, he smelt the dense fragrance of tea.

Noticing Zhang Tie enter, the old man cast a glance at Zhang Tie as he put down the teacup and politely asked, "Young man, what do you want to learn, the preliminary fish-like diving skill or a battle qi technique?"

Zhang Tie estimated that the old man must have known that he was new here. That was why the old man directly asked upon seeing him.

Zhang Tie wanted to learn the preliminary fish-like diving skill; however, when he heard the old man mentioning the battle qi, Zhang Tie's heart had raced, "Can you tell me about battle qi?"

The old man cast another look at Zhang Tie, "You can exchange for one of the five battle qi techniques with 50 clan contribution points here; they are Fury-Wave Battle Qi, Robust-Ox Battle Qi, Raging-Flame Battle Qi, New-Crescent Battle Qi and Iron-Blood Battle Qi!"

Zhang Tie had not imagined that he could also learn Iron-Blood Battle Qi at the Secret Technique Pavilion. He was a bit amazed about that. However, after thinking for a second, he had already thought it through. For the battle qi and secret fighting skill that was widely spread in the Waii Subcontinent, even the entire Blackson Human Clan Corridor, how could it not exist in Hidden Dragon Palace?

"Can you explain the features of the different battle qi?" As he had no teacher, Zhang Tie had not been familiar with much fundamental knowledge till now.

"Fury-Wave Battle Qi is powerful when one fights in the water; Robust-Ox Battle Qi could greatly improve one's strength; Raging-Flame Battle Qi could scorch enemy's skin; New-Crescent Battle Qi could improve the cultivator's fighting strength in the darkness and at night; Iron-Blood Battle Qi is extremely overbearing and unrivaled which could overcome many other battle qis. It was a secret technique of the imperial household of Norman Empire. Iron-Blood Battle Qi was a high-end battle qi, which would not be easily provided for you; however, it had been widely spread and could be hardly formed as less than 1 out of 10000 people could form Iron-Blood Battle Qi. Therefore, we put it here together with other basic battle qi. If you have just started your cultivation, I suggest you to choose one of the previous battle qis to cultivate to avoid wasting time." The old man patiently explained.

Zhang Tie became a bit pleased inside as he had not imagined that the Iron-Blood Battle Qi that he was cultivating could win such a high praise in Hidden Dragon Palace.

"If I choose a battle qi now, do I have to give it up when I meet other better battle qis in the future? Will it waste my time?"

Zhang Tie thought about it as he asked. Zhang Tie believed that there must be many collections of high-end battle qi techniques and fighting skills if so many battle qis are provided for newbies. If those people cultivating these basic battle qis at the beginning met any high-end battle qi techniques due to chance, will they give up cultivating them?

After asking this question, Zhang Tie found the old man becoming a bit stunned as he stared at him for quite a while like looking something strange. Zhang Tie remembered that it was like how some residents of Blackhot City saw those people who had been living in the wild.

"Hasn't anyone taught you about the properties and relevant theories on basic battle qi?"

Zhang Tie smirked as he scratched his head.

Seeing Zhang Tie's behaviors, the old man understood instantly, "No one is born with battle qi. Upon final analysis, battle qi is just a tool, which could be produced due to each one's potential and hard work. Because of different manufacturing methods, the tools also became different in terms of looks and effects. The functions of these tools would also be different for the same people. You can understand the alleged high-end battle qi as a tool being made of more sophisticated materials in more complex patterns with more powerful functions. Although these tools have more functions than that of the low-level tools, there was no essential difference between them. These surplus functions could be regarded as an upgrade of the previous tools. Am I clear?"

Zhang Tie nodded. He seemed to understand a bit, but he was still confused.

"Battle qi is a tool; however, the greatest difference between it and those tools that we usually see is that battle qi is born to be shaped. Its shape is not fixed when it is produced just like other tools in our daily life. The flexibility of battle qi is like plasticine. As long as you constantly add materials to it, you will gradually make a breakthrough and add new abilities to its original foundation. You can also directly use more plasticine with more functions to completely cover the smaller one. It will not be wasteful."



"You mean, if I practice Raging-Wave Battle Qi, I could also practice high-end battle qi in the future. In that way, my high-end battle qi not only has a higher starting point than others but also might have the feature of Raging-Wave Battle Qi—being powerful in water?"

"That's true. Different battle qis could be integrated with each other like how different tools could be combined. After the combination, the power of the battle qi would be much greater!"

Hearing such words, Zhang Tie instantly became thrilled, "According to you, the more battle qis a person practices, the greater he will be?"

The old man revealed a smile, "Young man, if you weld a pair of pliers with a screwdriver, you can truly turn them into a new tool with more functions. However, if you weld a pair of pliers that weighs 1 kg with the head of a steamer that weighs 2000 tons, what will you get? Can the pair of pliers still play its role? If you want to exert the functions of each battle qi after combining them, you have to follow the Equivalence Principle. If the two battle qi are greatly different in content, the functions of the battle qi with less content might not be exerted."

"What's the Equivalence Principle?"

"The Equivalence Principle is the most important principle in cultivating battle qi. You will know about it in the later. As you have not yet formed battle qi, you don't know the situation and feeling after level 6. Each one's battle qi could be measured by quantity and quality. The world of battle qi is very mysterious which can't be thoroughly explained in a short while. You should keep in mind that you reap where you sow. Especially on the road of cultivation, you have to practice hard. A person who's absent-minded in practicing Raging-Wave Battle Qi for 3 years and a higher-end battle qi for 4 years might not be able to defeat a person who had tried his full efforts to practice Raging-Wave Battle Qi for 10 years. Neither might he defeat a person who has practiced hard a high-end battle qi for 6 years!"

Zhang Tie was suddenly enlightened...

"Of course, there are also powerhouses who could combine different kinds of battle qi very well. Those who could do that have always been exceptions. However, among the three roads of upgrading and expanding battle qi, the combination of battle qi is more difficult. It can't be easily achieved. Comparatively, if someone has the chance and ability to form high-end battle qi, it would be better to use high-end battle qi to swallow low-end battle qi. In that way, although the attributes and functions of high-end battle qi could not be extended, one could increase the accumulation of high-end battle qi on absolute quantity at once. For the third road...", the old man shook his head as he picked up the teacup and slightly blew over it...

"What about the third road?"

"Fewer people can succeed on the third road. After forming battle qi, one might have a very small chance to promote his or her battle qi to another level and gain some more attributes and abilities. It's accidental and hardly duplicated. It's as rare as winning the lottery. After explaining so much to you, have you made your decision?"

"I've decided!"

"Which battle qi will you choose?" The old man solemnly asked as he picked up his teacup.

Zhang Tie seriously said, "I've decided to choose the preliminary fish-like diving skill..."

"Pfft..." The old man instantly spit out his tea. Seemingly choking, he coughed for quite awhile before recovering his composure.

The old man glared at Zhang Tie while the latter spread his arms in an innocent way, "We have to learn it."

Hearing Zhang Tie's explanation, the old man almost coughed again...

...

1 hour later, Zhang Tie touched his head which was in pain due to the old man's flick and left the Secret Technique Pavilion. He kept walking as he was recalling the preliminary fish-like diving skill that he had learned for the first time. The alleged great truths were the simplest; however, Zhang Tie had not imagined that the preliminary fish-like diving skill could be that simple. He just needed to constantly practice in order to master it.

According to the old man, as long as one mastered the preliminary fish-like diving skill, after practice, one could be able to dive longer than 15 minutes in water. Additionally, this secret technique is related to a person's spirit energy. The higher a person's spirit energy is, the longer they could stay in the water.

When he returned to the Xingzhi Department, Zhang Tie saw that Zhang Kejie and the other guys had already prepared everything well and were waiting for him to head over in order to carry more navy-blue iron ores.

"Have you learned it?" Zhang Yunfei asked Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie nodded.

"Let's go make money then!" Wei Wu made a weird noise as the others burst out loud laughing and left...

## Chapter 277: A Good Practice in the Sea

There was a beach covered with dense reefs to the west of Hidden Dragon Island. Only one tortuous path was accessible from the beach to the 100-m high steep cliff. The reefs on this beach were different from those in other places as these reefs slightly radiated a blue metallic luster. The beach was called Iron Ore Beach, where people on Hidden Dragon Island got the navy-blue iron ores from.

It was noon when the hot sun was like fire in the sky. Over the sea, near the Iron Ore Beach, more than 20 juveniles were working hard to get navy-blue iron ores out of the sea.

The exposed reefs in the sea stopped ships from drawing close but became the best bases for those juveniles who were getting navy-blue iron ores out of the sea.

With the rippling of the water, Zhang Tie exposed his head beside a reef as large as a house. He heavily breathed in the fresh air over the sea and spat out all the dirty air out from his body as he slightly rose and fell along with the waves.

"Zhang Tie...will you take a rest? As it's already noon, come here to eat something..." Zhang Hongsheng, who had been tired and was lying on the reef greeted Zhang Tie with a faint smile.

Beside Zhang Hongsheng was Wei Wuying, lying in the shape of the Chinese character "大" like a salty fish, who was too tired to utter a sound

With another ripple of the waves, Zhang Yunfei whose face turned a bit white revealed his head out of the water beside the reef and forcefully swam and climbed onto the reef before faintly laying down.

"I have a bit strength left. I can dive again." After talking loudly to Zhang Hongsheng, Zhang Tie made another dive by kicking the water by his feet.

"How...how long has Zhang Tie dived for this time?" Zhang Yunfei gasped as he asked Zhang Hongsheng.

"It's been almost 20 minutes. Damn, what a freak!" Wei Wu sat on the reef as he gritted his teeth and said, "This guy only knew how to swim like a dog yesterday and didn't even know how to dive. He couldn't even hold himself underwater. In order to learn how to dive, he had to foolishly hug a huge stone and jump into the sea, causing the other guys laugh loudly. I'd never have imagined that he could really learn how to dive in such a stupid way. Only after practicing for one day, this guy has already been impatient to make money here..."

"Alas, don't mention it anymore. If you keep talking about him, I'll lose face. Having been here for over a month, I could only stay underwater for 15 minutes. However, this guy has already been able to stay underwater longer than me on his second day. Comparisons are just..." Zhang Hongsheng sighed, "The ancestral bloodline that this guy has awakened might be related to water. I've heard about this bloodline in the Palace before."

The juveniles chatted on the reef while they heard movement in the water. It was Zhang Keliang who popped his head out beside the reef. After gasping for quite awhile, Zhang Keliang looked over the reef and asked, "Where's Zhang Tie? Has he come up?"

"Yes, he's already come up, but he dived in again..." Zhang Yunfei replied.

"This guy is really..." Zhang Keliang forced a bitter smile as he took two breaths and dived in again.

...

There were beautiful coral reefs beside him. Cute little fish were swimming across the coral reefs. The sea water near Iron Ore Beach was as translucent as a mirror. The sunlight cast on the sea caused large patches of fish-scale-like light shadows. It was an enchanting sight.

It was a brilliant world under the sea, which could never be matched on land.

Zhang Tie was like a clumsy yet curious little fish. With his eyes widely opened, Zhang Tie enjoyed the unprecedented fantastic submarine world as he tried his best to swim towards the nearest oceanic trench.

The topography in the sea was very weird as there were all sorts of deep trenches whose width varied from 10 plus meters to dozens of meters. The deep trenches became wider and deeper. The drop between the two trenches would be over 10 m. Those navy-blue iron ores were buried in the sands in the deep trenches.

These deep trenches were really like they had been carved due to the movements of glaciers several million years ago. Zhang Tie didn't know why these special navy-blue iron ores were buried here. However, now that there were exposed iron ores on the land, it was not weird to see such things in the sea.

Of course, all the navy-blue iron ores near Hidden Dragon Island belonged to Huaiyuan Palace.

As Zhang Tie had just learned how to dive, he was not adept at diving. Although he could hold his breath for a long while, he could only look for navy-blue iron ores in the oceanic trenches at the depth of over 30 m.

However, those juveniles in Zhixing Department who were better at diving could reach 50 m or deeper into the sea to look for navy-blue iron ores. The deeper they could dive, the more navy-blue iron ores could they find.

There were green marine plants that looked like water weeds in the oceanic trenches. Under these plants were a layer of soft silver-like fine sands. The navy-blue iron ores were buried under these fine sands. A part of some bigger ones could be seen above the sands, radiating a faint blue luster. There was a sharp comparison between these ores and the surrounding environment in color.

The moment Zhang Tie found two fist-sized navy-blue iron ores from the sands of a sea trench and was preparing to put them into the wire sack no far away, Zhang Keliang had already swum towards him and made some hand gestures to Zhang Tie, telling him to pay attention to his surroundings.

Zhang Tie then nodded in the water. It was not absolutely safe in these waters. It was said that there were guardians of Lingtian Department in the distant waters who were arranged to kill those dangerous and mutated marine creatures near the Iron Ore Beach, such as mutated magical sharks.

However, there were also many dangerous creatures below the water within 1 square kilometer of Iron Ore Beach such as poisonous sea serpents, which once bit, their poison would kill a person in five minutes if one didn't take the antidote.

The price of the antidote per vial against sea serpents was 20 silver coins, which would be taken by everyone here besides dried rations, except for Zhang Tie who had not yet made even one silver coin.

This time, Zhang Tie stayed under water for less than 20 minutes. After collecting ten more kg of navy-blue iron ores, Zhang Tie gradually felt it hard to breathe. He then insisted on another 1-2 minutes. When he felt that he had stayed a bit longer than last time, Zhang Tie returned once again and revealed his head above the water. After gasping twice, he swam back to the reef and climbed onto it.

The Preliminary fish-like diving skill was also a skill that required increasing amounts of practice before one was adept in its use.

However, Zhang Tie had already reached this in two days, which already surprised many people. Nevertheless, Zhang Tie still didn't feel pleased about it. Zhang Tie felt that he was still not adept at

holding his breath while moving flexibly in the water and had not fully exerted the essence of the Preliminary fish-like diving skill.

"I should make it better!" Zhang Tie mumbled. However, when he looked at Zhang Yunfei and the other pals when they watched him, Zhang Tie knew that he should not be too anxious about that and could only slowly improve it like how he practiced the Iron-Blood Fist Skill.

Although he could still dive many times due to his strong body, Zhang Tie didn't want to stand out too much. Therefore, he also climbed onto the reef to eat his dried rations and took a rest under the sun.

Several minutes later, Zhang Keliang also swam onto the reef. Sitting on the reef, he took a rest while drinking water and eating dried rations.

From the early morning to now, the five people had worked for 4-5 hours underwater. With the exception of Zhang Tie, all the others felt very tired.

Looking at the vast sea and eating the dried meat and preserved fruits in his hand, Zhang Tie felt like returning to the New Crescent Prairie as the water waves were like the grass waves across the prairie.

Thinking of the New Crescent Prairie and those wild wolves, Zhang Tie forcefully slapped his forehead as he swore inside, "Zhang Tie, how stupid you are?! How could you forget such a thing? It's just a Preliminary fish-like diving skill, would it be as sophisticated as the Iron-Blood Fist Skill? Have you forgotten how you practiced your Iron-Blood Fist Skill? Have you forgotten your Trouble-Reappearance Fruit?"

"Hahahaha..." Zhang Tie suddenly burst out laughing loudly, causing Wei Wu and Zhang Keliang glance at him.

"What's wrong with you?" Wei Wu asked.

"I was thinking of a funny thing..." Zhang Tie said in a mysterious manner.

"What's that?"

"I realized that I haven't seen sea serpents!"

"Argh? Lunatic..." Wei Wu twitched his mouth as the others showed the whites of their eyes to Zhang Tie.

"Where can we find sea serpents?" Zhang Tie asked Wei Wu.

"Are you seeking death or have you made enough money? A vial of antidote for sea serpents would cost you 20 silver coins. That's one day's work!" Zhang Hongsheng urged.

"It doesn't matter. I want to see how sea serpents look so as to prepare for their attack in case I'm ever bitten. Even if I was bitten, I could borrow your antidote first and pay you back when I get enough money!" Zhang Tie explained innocently.

"Do you really want to see what sea serpents look like?" Zhang Keliang seriously looked at Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie nodded.

"Over there..." Zhang Keliang pointed at the sea with some desk-sized reefs exposed out of the water 100 m away to the left, "They are over there. There is a wide area of red kelp forest in the water over there. I was bitten by sea serpents over there last month. These sea serpents like to hide in seaweed. There are black and white circular grains on them."

"I will take a look over there..." After saying this, Zhang Tie stood up from the reef and dived into the sea once again before rapidly swimming towards the sea serpents.

## Chapter 278: A Good Practice in the Sea II

Within one day, Zhang Tie had upgraded his swimming from a doggy paddle to a freestyle.

The kelp forest was over 100 m away; however, it took Zhang Tie less than two minutes to reach the place where Zhang Keliang had pointed to by easily moving his arms in the water. He then took a deep breath before diving into the sea.

After diving deeper than 10 meters, Zhang Tie had already seen a great area of red seaweed at the bottom of the sea. They were as tall as a person and were slowly waving along with the surging seawater. The bottom of the forest was like a fire while a great shoal of finger-long silverfish was swimming around there like changing clouds, making it very beautiful.

Because there were sea serpents and not too many navy-blue iron ores here, few people would like to pick up navy-blue iron ores here. Only Zhang Tie who had a special purpose would be here.

When he drew close to the seaweeds, Zhang Tie had become very careful and started to look for his target.

Within three minutes, before Zhang Tie noticed one, a sea serpent had already found him. When Zhang Tie swam across the red seaweeds, a fierce sea serpent instantly launched out of the reefs, intending to bite Zhang Tie's shin.

Thankfully, the sea serpent didn't swim very fast in the sea. The moment it drilled out, its black-and-white grains had already formed a sharp contrast with the surrounding colors and was noticed by Zhang Tie. Zhang Tie immediately pulled back his feet and rapidly turned around. He slightly moved his hands to remain balanced in the sea while directly facing the sea serpent.

It was a 2-m long sea serpent with a terrifying head. Its tail was flat, making it look like an eel.

Even though sea serpents were not good swimmers, it could definitely swim faster than Zhang Tie. It was impossible to outrun the sea serpent. Therefore, Zhang Tie just stayed to wait for its attack.

Although failing to hit Zhang Tie, the sea serpent didn't leave; instead, it swam around Zhang Tie once before launching another attack towards Zhang Tie's arm, as was expected by Zhang Tie.

Zhang Tie didn't move until it almost bit his arm when he instantly stretched out another hand and seized the place where its heart was. All in a sudden, the sea serpent tightly wrapped Zhang Tie's arm. Feeling its great strength, Zhang Tie became a bit amazed. He was wondering whether this sea serpent was mutated or not as he felt it was very powerful. Ordinary people might not be able to deal with it when being wrapped by this 2-m long sea serpent, no matter where it was.

However, for Zhang Tie, the fight between him and the sea serpent had already ended the moment he touched its body. After calmly assessing its strength, Zhang Tie had already infused his iron-blood untouchable strength into its body. If he used iron-blood hidden strength, the sea serpent must have become a bloody fog; however, with iron-blood untouchable strength, Zhang Tie could display his greater controlling force and destructive power.

In a split second, under the impact of iron-blood untouchable strength, each bone of this sea serpent became a fine powder. However, no wound was found on the sea serpent at all.

The sea serpent was like a lifeless soft rope which slid into the seaweeds from Zhang Tie's arm.

"Two more!" Zhang Tie told himself before he continued to search for them among the seaweeds more carefully.

After 20 minutes, Zhang Tie exposed his head out of the water and took two breaths before diving again.

After 10 more minutes, Zhang Tie swam back.

"Have you seen the sea serpents?" The others who were resting on the reef asked Zhang Tie.

"Yes, I've seen them."

"How do you feel about them?"

"They're cute." Zhang Tie smiled. They are truly cute. Without them, how could he form Trouble-Reappearance Fruit?

Zhang Tie made it!

After taking a rest at noon, everyone was busy as they entered the sea one by one to pick up navy-blue iron ores. After working for almost two hours, before the dusk arrived, the juveniles were already preparing to leave. As they had to walk over 10 km of a treacherous mountain path before arriving at the Palace, everybody could only carry a limited number of ores back.

Although it was Zhang Tie's first time to here, Zhang Tie also had some achievements as he almost lifted over 50 kg of navy-blue iron ores today. After practicing for several hours, Zhang Tie felt that he had greatly improved his diving abilities.

When they finished work, the juveniles dived into the sea again with wires in hand. They buckled one end of a wire onto a sack before returning back to the reef. They then pulled their sacks up and carried them back onto the bank using a canoe. It was a painstakingly tedious process.

After arriving at the bank, everybody started to climb the mountain while carrying the sacks full of navy-blue iron ores and walked over 10 km of a mountainous path before arriving at Hidden Dragon Palace.

Actually, Zhang Tie felt nothing by carrying over 50 kg of navy-blue iron ores as he didn't feel tired at all. However, Zhang Keliang, Zhang Yunfei, Zhang Hongsheng and Wei Wu looked pretty exhausted as their foreheads were already sweating when they arrived at the top of the mountain.

Actually, Zhang Tie really wanted to help them; however, as he had gradually realized the intention of Hidden Dragon Palace to force them to do this, he didn't do that; instead, he just watched them carrying the navy-blue iron ores up with their own strength.

Besides teaching the juveniles of Hidden Dragon Palace to learn to survive on their own, this mandatory task had other two functions: first, letting them adapt to diving as it was another survival skill. If the people on the island drowned, that would be the greatest joke and an insult to the Hidden Dragon Palace; second, during this period, the juveniles would become stronger, temper their will and develop hardworking mindsets.

No matter how weak the person was, after carrying 30000 kg of navy-blue iron ores to Hidden Dragon Palace from the sea, he would become strong. Take Zhang Yunfei as an example. He was living like a young master since he was young as his family had a steamer in Yiyang City. After he came to the Hidden Dragon Palace for one month, the young master had already learned to disregard his dignity using his weak shoulders. He started to survive on his own by working hard.

None of them had suffered this before. At this moment, everyone could only persist. No matter how well you lived before and what kind of great family you born into and what reason you had, everyone had to grit their teeth and tough it out. No one dared to show off their status and family background to seek special treatment——because——the one who held the record for weight of navy-blue iron ores when he entered the Hidden Dragon Palace was Zhang Taixuan, the head of Zhang clan, who had carried 760000 kg.

Even the head of Zhang clan had worked so hard here without any complaints like a willing ox, nobody else dared to seek any special treatment with their great family background and status.

The record was carved on the 100-m high cliff near Iron Ore Beach in scarlet letters so that each juvenile who came to Iron Ore Beach to finish task could catch sight of it the first time they arrived here. No matter how displeased they were with the task, after reading the record, they would have to lower their heads and start working hard.

The first day Zhang came here, he was also shocked by the record and the status of the record holder.

It was an over 10 km mountainous path. It took them over one hour to go back to the Palace to submit their achievements. When they were on the way back, they kept encouraging each other although they moved slowly.

Compared to the weight two days before, they all got more ores. Zhang Yunfei carried back 152 kg' navy-blue iron ores and gained 15 silver coins. Holding the 15 silver coins, the juvenile who was a young master in the Yiyang City stared at them and cried.

"I can finally survive by myself. I can finally make above 7 silver coins a day, wu...wu...I can finally survive by myself..."

After crying, Zhang Yunfei started to laugh. From today on, his debt to Hidden Dragon Palace could be gradually paid off. Before today, Zhang Yunfei's debt to Hidden Dragon Palace had already reached 34 silver coins. As he could make 15 silver coins today, it meant that his debt would not keep growing if he kept carrying so many ores a day; instead, it would gradually decrease. For this 15-year old juvenile, it was his first time surviving on his own since he had arrived at the island for more than a half month.



Zhang Tie carried 56 kg' navy-blue iron ores today, which brought Zhang Tie 5 silver coins.

"It's really not easy. From tomorrow onward, I have to make at least 7 silver coins a day to survive on my own." After weighing the silver coins marked with a huge scale issued by Huaiyuan Palace, Zhang Tie felt it was becoming more and more interesting here. For Zhang Tie, it was of course not difficult for him to make 7 silver coins a day.

After getting their payment, everyone became very happy and returned to the Xingzhi Department together. This time, Zhang Tie found that the girls living in the Xingzhi Department also came back. Compared to the male students' task, the female students' task became relatively simpler yet not easier. When male students picked up ores, the female students had to pick up pearls in the sea. Although not requiring great labor, this task also meant great exercise for them.

There were totally 43 people in Zhixing Department, among which 31 were male students and only 12 were female students. The ratio between male and female was close to 3:1. Among the 31 male students, 23 of them were still finishing the first task at Iron Ore Beach while the other 8 male students and 2 female students had already reached level 6 and had accumulated enough money to go to Dragon Cave to form their battle qi.

Amongst peers, once there were girls, male students would always care about their own images. The other juveniles who had come back together with Zhang Tie all hurriedly returned to their own rooms to take a bath and put on new clothes so that they didn't look that awkward when eating supper together with the girls in the canteen.

Zhang Tie also returned to his room. After taking a bath, he put on his clean clothes and washed his dirty clothes before drying them in his room.

After doing all this, it was almost supper time. Therefore, Zhang Tie left his room for the canteen.

When it was supper time, almost everybody in the Zhixing Department had come back. Therefore, it looked very boisterous in the canteen. After picking up their own supper, the male and female students obviously sat on two sides of the canteen as they murmured to each other. Among them, there was a short boy whose voice was so loud. Zhang Tie glanced at those male students in that circle and realized that they were of his age had all reached level 6 and were preparing to form battle qi in the Dragon Cave.

They were talking about fighting level 6 magical beasts—the huge black spiders in Dragon Cave.

"As long as I could kill some more black spiders, I would be able to form the New Crescent Battle Qi and officially enter the Lingtian Department!" The juvenile said proudly.

"We will be there soon too. Wanjie and I killed 1 black spider. After practicing over 2 years in the Zhixing Department, it's time to show off our real strength!"

His voice gained the approval of the group.

Seeing them loudly talking about their strength while listening for the girls' responses on the other side, Zhang Tie shook his head inside, "You want to attract the girls' attention in this way? You are really innocent."

Zhang Tie had not realized that he had been utterly different from those juveniles of the same age with him after experiencing the dense "intoxication" of the girls of Rose Association.

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"Who's Zhang Tie?"

When Zhang Tie took his supper and arrived at the table where Zhang Keliang and the other pals sat, a loud voice at the entrance of the canteen instantly arouse everybody's attention as everybody looked at that direction.

A tall, robust and handsome youth who was over 20 years old and wearing a set of black warrior clothes were standing at the entrance of the canteen and looked around the people in the canteen with his gleaming eyes.

This 20-year old youth had a pair of dense eyebrows which were as sharp as a sword and looked very powerful. His eyes presented an unknown sense of oppression, making nobody dare to look directly into his eyes.

Given that look which was a bit similar to his, Zhang Tie identified his status——his cousin!

Chapter 279: Gamble

It was very quiet in the canteen. Nobody knew why this person was asking for Zhang Tie. Therefore, nobody spoke but fixed their eyes on Zhang Tie.

Under many strange stares, Zhang Tie naturally stood up and walked towards the newly arrived juvenile. The moment he stood up, the juvenile had already fixed his sharp eyes on Zhang Tie's face. After seeing that Zhang Tie gazing straightly at him without any timidity, that person showed a faint smile.

Walking in front of the juvenile, Zhang Tie obediently greeted, "Cousin!"

"Good, very good! That juvenile nodded as he heavily put his hands onto Zhang Tie's shoulders, "Let's talk outside."

They then went out of the canteen.

"I didn't know that you were in Hidden Dragon Palace until I received a letter from home. How about that? Have you adapted to the living style here?"

"It's alright, I went to pick up navy-blue iron ores and made 5 silver coins today." Zhang Tie touched his nose.

"Don't ignore this task. Keep practicing your diving skills. When you enter the Lingtian Department, you will find that there are many more ways to make money. For newbies, it's not that easy to make 1 gold coin a day. If you are to excel at diving, you will have more chances to make money after entering the Lingtian Department."

"What other tasks are there in the Lingtian Department?" Zhang Tie asked out of curiosity.

"When you enter the Lingtian Department, you will not be forced to perform tasks to make money. But you will have to perform some fixed tasks to gain clan contribution points. By then, if you want to make money, it will depend on your ability as there are many chances for you to make money in the sea. However, they require great diving skills. Therefore, you have to practice your diving skills well!" Zhang Tie's cousin seriously admonished.

"Thanks, cousin, I got it!"

"You are my brother, don't be so polite." Zhang Tie's cousin smiled, "Oh, what battle qi do you practice? When you reach level 6, I can take you to Dragon Cave in order to form battle qi."

"I'm practicing Iron-Blood Battle Qi."

"What?!" Hearing Zhang Tie's words, his cousin became slightly shocked, "You're ambitious; even in the Palace, there are still very few people who have formed Iron-Blood Battle Qi during the past dozens of years. This battle qi is very hard to form. So, you'd better make a plan for yourself. If you cannot form it, you'd better change to another battle qi. If you have other chances in the future, you can continue to practice advanced battle qi! Otherwise, it might take you a lot of time to reach level 6 which would be disadvantageous to you."

After feeling this cousin's good intentions, Zhang Tie modestly nodded and received his suggestion without mentioning that he almost had met no obstacle when he practiced the Iron-Blood Fist Skill, "Got it!"

Zhang Tie's cousin then continued, "There are sky-reaching stages and many opportunities that could change your fate in the Hidden Dragon Palace. However, these items are all for the truly powerful people of the Palace. You could only gain these opportunities by yourself. Nobody else can help you. It's rarely seen that two brothers of the same generation in a clan like you and me could enter Hidden Dragon Palace at the same time. It means that our clan's bloodline is very excellent and eye-catching. The relationship between you and me might be known to the public, therefore, you will catch a lot of attention here. I have two opponents in Lingtian Department, they are also cousins. I ferociously beat them down before. As you are now in the Xingzhi Department, you don't need to worry about them as they will not find trouble for you. However, when you enter Lingtian Department, they might come looking for you. You should be prepared for that."

Zhang Tie became dumbfounded, "Do you mean they will set me up?"

"Not that bad, but they could ferociously beat you up in the public according to some rules of Lingtian Department!"

"Argh..." Zhang Tie became stunned. He had never imagined that he could gain this cousin's troubles in such a way.

At the sight of Zhang Tie's expression, his cousin became bashful as he forced a smile, "At the beginning when the two brothers entered Hidden Dragon Palace, they were also very eye-catching and arrogant. I didn't like them. I had not imagined that someone else in Zhang clan could enter Hidden Dragon Palace, therefore, I thought they were from other clans and beat them up according to the rules of Lingtian Department."

Zhang Tie finally understood it. Because his cousin always beat up others, now, it was his turn to be beaten up.

When they talked, Zhang Tie saw two men entering the Zhixing Department, one was 18-19 years old while the other was as old as Zhang Tie's cousin. The two men looked similar. The moment the two entered the Zhixing Department, they had walked directly towards Zhang Tie and his cousin.

"Zhang Su, I heard you've got a brother entering the Zhixing Department. Is this the one?"

Walking over here, the two guys fixed their eyes onto Zhang Tie at once.

Zhang Tie's cousin then turned back and peered at the two men walking towards them, "This is my brother Zhang Tie. How about that? Do you want to see how you are beaten up by my brother?"

Zhang Tie realized that his cousin's mouth really drove him mad. Even if he was in such a disadvantageous position, his mouth was still unyielding.

Hearing Zhang Su's words, the two guys' smiles instantly became stiff. At the same time, their faces blushed.

"Trust me, when your brother Zhang Tie enters Lingtian Department, we will definitely 'guide' him!" That person of 18-19 years old gritted his teeth.

"I've forgotten to tell you that my brother is practicing Iron-Blood Battle Qi, you'd better not be afraid of that by then!" Zhang Tie's cousin still urged.

"Ha..." As if having heard a joke, that person who was as old as Zhang Su glanced at Zhang Tie in a contemptuous way, "Do you mean to stay in Zhixing Department longer this way? This trick is too low, don't you think so?"

"You can't form Iron-Blood Battle Qi, it doesn't mean that others can't. Additionally, how would you know without having a tried?" Zhang Tie's cousin said in a calm way.

"Hahahaha...it seems that you are very confident about your brother!" The one as old as Zhang Su ridiculed as he rolled his eyes, "Zhang Su, dare you bet with me?"

"What's the wager?"

"The wager is on whether your brother could form the Iron-Blood Battle Qi."

Zhang Su slightly hesitated...

"Are you afraid? Were you not just talking about your confidence in your brother? If not, I've guessed it, your brother just wants to stay longer in Zhixing Department for this reason?" That person further urged, "If your brother can form Iron-Blood Battle Qi, I will pay you 300 gold coins. How about that? Dare you wager 300 gold coins to bet that your brother will definitely form the Iron-Blood Battle Qi?"

"300 gold coins?" Zhang Su looked at the two people as he frowned his forehead. Although this figure was not too much outside the Hidden Dragon Island, it was already a lot for people in Hidden Dragon Palace. It's not that easy to make so much money on the Hidden Dragon Island. Even though they were in Lingtian Department, many people could not make that much money in half a year. Now, Zhang Su

only had a bit more than 200 gold coins. He knew that it was a trick, sending him in the dilemma by using his own words.

"Argh, I almost forgot it. As Iron-Blood Battle Qi is very hard to form, how can I profit at your expense? I remember that you don't have that much money. If you are confident about your brother, I can give you a concession. Once you can pay 200...no, once you can pay 100 gold coins, we will reach the agreement. 1 for 3, how about that?" That person pretended to be serious.

"300 gold coins, that's a deal. I don't need others to make a concession for me. I will bet with you!" Saying this, Zhang Su raised his head. He could lose a fight, but he could not lose his personality. This was what Zhang Su firmly believed.

"Fine, how long will you give your brother to form his Iron-Blood Battle Qi?"

"2 years. Before we leave the Hidden Dragon Palace, if he still couldn't form his Iron-Blood Battle Qi, you win then!"

"That's settled then!"

"It's settled!"

Zhang Su then clapped that person to settle it.

After that, the two people peered at Zhang Tie and sneered in a contempt way before left.

"Wait a moment!" Zhang Tie who was always being silent suddenly opened his mouth.

The two people then turned back and glanced at Zhang Tie.

"I will also participate in this bet. I bet that I will form Iron-Blood Battle Qi by then!"

"You? Bet what?" One of the two glanced over Zhang Tie from his head to his feet.

"I will also bet with 300 gold coins." Zhang Tie calmly said.

"Hahahaha. You're just a newbie. You won't have that much money. You'd better not cry while asking for your parents to pay for you. According to the rules in Hidden Dragon Palace, each cent you spend here, even the wager should be made by yourself on the island. How much have you made now? By what dare you bet 300 gold coins with us? No debt is allowed by then!" That person continued to look at Zhang Tie in a contempt way, "Young man, it's easy to boast, but you should concern your real ability before you bet. Do you want to say that you prepare to pick up 300 tons of navy-blue iron ores for me if you lose it, ha...ha...ha..."

"That's what I'm thinking about! I bet that if I lose it, I will go pick up 300 tons of navy-blue iron ores for you. If I cannot fulfill this bet, I will never walk out of the Hidden Dragon Island in the rest of my life" Zhang Tie faintly said.

That person's laughs suddenly ceased. At this moment, the three people fixed all of their eyes onto Zhang Tie. Even Zhang Su, the cousin of Zhang Tie seriously watched Zhang Tie, seemingly having never recognized him.

"Do you dare to take my wager?" Zhang Tie gazed at that person.

"What a joke, of course I dare. But if you lose it, I will have no time to wait for you to pick up navy-blue iron ores to exchange for 18 silver coins each day. By then, the money you exchanged for with the navy-blue iron ores might not even match the interest of the 300 gold coins. If you pick up navy-blue iron ores on the island for 20 years, do you want me to wait for your debt on the island that long? What if you cannot pay it off in the rest of your life? Who will pay it off for you? If we bet, of course, we will bet with real gold and silver coins. There's no reason for you to bet just by saying! Do you think it is that easy to make 300 gold coins on the Hidden Dragon Island?" That person sneered.

Zhang Tie had not imagined that this guy was that shrewd, "What do you want then?"

"It's very simple. Now that you want to play, certainly, it has to count when you show us your wager. Before you reach level 6 and try to form Iron-Blood Battle Qi, I will regard all the money that you make through picking up navy-blue iron ores as your wager..."

"Fine, that's settled then."

"Zhang Tie..." Zhang Su wanted to stop him.

"Cousin, as you dared to bet 300 gold coins for me to form Iron-Blood Battle Qi, dare I not bet for myself? It's nothing serious even if I lose it. Additionally, I'm thinking about picking up more navy-blue iron ores so as to practice my swimming skills and built my body. As it's our first time to meet with each other today. We will bet with them. According to a traditional Chinese phrase, father and son will go to battle hand in hand while brothers will beat tiger shoulder to shoulder. I also want to be on your side when betting."

"Fine!" Zhang Su's eyes gleamed as he loudly shouted. He had not imagined that his cousin was that manly. He felt very interesting to be a friend of Zhang Tie.

"Heh...heh, this time, we will make you brothers lose everything!" After that, he clapped with Zhang Tie's hands to show his consent to Zhang Tie's participation.

"Everybody knows that Iron-Blood Battle Qi could be hardly formed. The odds between you and my cousin is unfair. My cousin is forced to accept 1: 1 with you. For me, as I'm younger than you and don't like to suffer from a loss, how about 1: 3 between you and me? If I win, how about paying me 3 times the wager?" Zhang Tie smiled as he set a trap for that person at once.

That person had not imagined that Zhang Tie was that shrewd either who wouldn't suffer any loss at all. 'But, 3 times...' That person quickly racked his mind. "Even though the comprehensive ratio between him and Zhang Tie and Zhang Su is 1: 2, as the opponent is practicing Iron-Blood Battle Qi which was hard to accomplish even in Hidden Dragon Palace. Actually, this ratio is also quite reasonable for me. If it were others, they would never bet with me on this. But this brat looks too calm. It seems that something is wrong with him..."

"What, you don't dare to? With the exception of the imperial households of Norman Empire, across the Waii Sub-continent, the chance to form Iron-Blood Battle Qi is even less than 1 out of 10000. The rate should be at least 1:1000 to make it fair. Considering that we are all in the Hidden Dragon Palace, I set the odds between you and me at 1: 3, I've already made a concession for you by over 300 times. Do you want me to take another step back for you? How about 400 times then. Even though I'm new here and have not reached level 6, even though I have no money, I should at least show my respect to seniors. Do

you want more? How about 500 times?" Zhang Tie glanced at that person with contempt. He treated that person in the same way that he treated him. With the same tone, he instantly took advantage of them. Just like how he dealt with Samira, Zhang Tie would never be polite with them.

That person then gritted his teeth and said, "Fine, 1 for 3. I will see how many navy-blue iron ores can you pick up from the sea!"

After clapping with Zhang Tie to fix the bet, the two people then left. After walking a few steps away, that person turned back and sneered, "Iron-Blood Battle Qi is not that easy to form. I hope your boast today will not become a joke across the Palace!"

After the two people walked away, Zhang Su patted Zhang Tie's shoulders, "Well done! Be a man! Don't care about the bet. Even though we may lose the bet, we will not lose face! I can still afford the several hundred gold coins. You should treat this bet as a rare experience!"

Although what Zhang Su said was to encourage Zhang Tie, he was still not confident about whether Zhang Tie could form Iron-Blood Battle Qi. What faced Zhang Tie were two tasks: to pick up navy-blue iron ores; to form Iron-Blood Battle Qi if he wanted to win. Each one of the two tasks is very difficult to achieve. Zhang Tie had no other choice now.

"Cousin, trust me, we will win." Zhang Tie revealed a smile, "I'm worried about whether that guy can pay off the wager or not."

"That guy is called Zhang Haige, who's one of the figures who are very good at finding ways to make to make money in the Lingtian Department. He has about 2000 gold coins now. But he's also known as a mean guy. If he dares to repudiate the debt, I will peel off his skin!"

"That's fine."

"Additionally, based on my acknowledgment to him, he must have thought that he's set to win this time. So, he will definitely spread the news on the bet across Hidden Dragon Palace in case we repudiate when we lose it."

"Hoho, I will let them know how it feels when they lift one rock only to drop it on their own feet..."

After chatting with Zhang Tie for awhile, Zhang Tie's cousin left.

After Zhang Tie returned to the canteen, Wei Wu and the other pals started to be very curious about that person who came here for Zhang Tie just now.

"He's my cousin." Zhang Tie briefly introduced Zhang Su without even mentioning the bet at all.

As was expected, hearing that two of Zhang Tie's family entered Hidden Dragon Palace at the same time, the other guys sitting together with Zhang Tie all became very surprised as their eyes showed a sense of curiosity.

After eating supper, the girls in Zhixing Department set up a booth in the pavilion of the courtyard. They were beautiful pairs of seashells. In the seashells was oil extracted from seashells. This kind of oil, when being pasted on face and body, could be used to protect people from being scorched by sun. It could also help recover skin after being scorched.

The cost of seashell oil was 1 silver coin a box. A great amount of boys were surrounding their booths. God knew whether they were there to buy commodities or to get acquainted with girls. Even Zhang Kelian and Wei Wu were moving there along with the masses.

After glancing at the sky and touching his 5 silver coins in his pocket, Zhang Tie left Zhixing Department.

"Zhang Tie..." Zhang Yunfei caught sight of Zhang Tie's shadow as he hurriedly shouted, "The seashell oil is nice, will you want one?"

"No need, that item is useless to me. It's purely wasting money to buy them. I'm heading for the wharf!" Zhang Tie waved his hands as he left, "Are you kidding me? As I have preliminary recovery body, do I need any seashell oil at all? The tiny problem of being scorched in the daytime will be healed overnight. With such money, it's better for me to buy a great amount of seashells and set them free in the sea and check what kind of fruits will I get."

Zhang Tie left while some girls who were selling seashell oil started to glare at his shadow. "This bastard is really disgusting! His words are really jarring!"

Zhang Tie didn't know that because of his honest words, he had been drawn into the blacklist by the girls.

After leaving the Palace, thinking of that wharf where he first came, Zhang Tie started to increase his pace.

"As I've made the bet with them, of course, I will win. My expenditure on Hidden Dragon Island will depend on this bet."

In the breeze, Zhang Tie felt that he was a bit sinister...

"It's all because of that disgusting bastard!"

Chapter 280: To be the Public Enemy of Girls

Because Zhang Tie had been there before, he was familiar with the path. Therefore, after speeding up, he arrived at White Dragon Town in a short while. After running across White Dragon Town, it took Zhang Tie less than 10 minutes to arrive at the wharf on Hidden Dragon Island from where he had landed on Hidden Dragon Island several days ago.

Zhang Tie remembered that when he landed on the wharf last time, he saw some fishing vessels next to the wharf. Close to the hotel was a fish market. Therefore, Zhang Tie directly rushed towards that fish market.

As the only fish market on Hidden Dragon island, most of the booths had already sold out when Zhang Tie arrived, except one, the owner of which was also preparing to leave although he had some fish left.

Zhang Tie hurriedly ran in front of that booth. For the god's sake, there was still a barrel of fish which had not been sold out! All the fish inside the barrel were finger-long small fish with silver scales. The head of the fish had a fine needle-like spine. As there were so many kinds of fish in the sea, Zhang Tie could not identify its name.



"Will you sell them?"

Zhang Tie asked the booth owner, who was over 40 years old with an experienced face. Hearing Zhang Tie's words, that man stopped and cast a glance at Zhang Tie.

"You want to buy these sand-scale fish?"

"These are sand-scale fish?" Zhang Tie realized at once, "Yea, I want to buy them all!"

"How many do you want? They are not sold in small quantities!"

Zhang Tie pinched the five silver coins in his pocket and further asked, "How much is one barrel of sand-scale fish?"

"A barrel weighs about 20 kg. As I'm going to leave, you only need to pay 1 silver coin for them."

"1 silver coin?" Zhang Tie instantly let out a sigh as he had not imagined that they were so cheap.

That man thought that Zhang Tie felt it was too expensive, so he gave a further explanation, "Sand-scale fish have less meat and more bones. Although they are not that valuable, they can be used for making fish sauce. If you like it, you can dry them before frying them with oil. Then you can eat them while drinking alcohol. They're tastier than peanuts. If you really want to buy them, you can pay me 90 copper coins for 1 barrel of them."

Zhang Tie directly pulled out of a silver coin and put it in the hand of the booth owner, "1 silver coin is okay. I will come here every day in the future. You can leave all the sand-scale fish for me!"

Having not imagined that Zhang Tie was that generous, that man took over the silver coin and revealed a smile, "Fine, I will leave all these sand-scale fish for you from then on."

"Can I borrow your barrel? I will be back in 5 minutes."

Zhang Tie didn't bring any containers to load those sand-scale fish which were all put in the iron-sheet barrel in front of the booth.

The booth owner nodded at once. Therefore, Zhang Tie lifted the barrel of sand-scale fish before heading directly for the wharf.

The sand-scale fish might have realized what Zhang Tie was going to do as many of them started to jump happily when Zhang Tie lifted the barrel. Two of them even jumped out of the barrel and fell to the ground. Zhang Tie then hurriedly picked them up and put them back into the barrel.

"Little fish, little fish, I will send you back to the sea and set you free..." Zhang Tie mumbled to those little fish.

Zhang Tie came to the seaside very soon. He chose a place with crystal clear water and poured all the little sand-scale fish out of the barrel into the sea. Watching them return to the sea happily, Zhang Tie also felt a sincere pleasure.

Nobody would catch fish here, let alone these worthless little fish. Even if they wanted, they could not easily catch them. Therefore, after setting them free, Zhang Tie won't worry about them being caught by others.

The sun was setting, creating a golden hue over the horizon. Some little sand-scale fish jumped out of the sea, seemingly greeting Zhang Tie.

"Watch out next time, don't be caught again!"

When setting free earthworms, Zhang Tie had already understood a law—no life in this world was humble. Zhang Tie felt very happy about setting free a barrel of sand-scale fish with only 1 silver coin.

When he returned that barrel to the booth owner in the fish market, that 40-odd-year-old man gazed at Zhang Tie with a strange expression, "You put them back in the sea?"

What Zhang Tie was doing had all been observed by this man. He felt it difficult to understand that someone would buy fish to set them free. "Is there anything wrong with his mind?"

However, Zhang Tie had long prepared for that question.

"Erm, I met an old man before, who told me that by setting lives free, I could accumulate good karma from God. He urged me to set free more animals if I was able to do that!"

"Setting free animals to accumulate karma?" Hearing this theory for the first time, the booth owner became stunned. Obviously, he could not accept this. However, Zhang Tie won't discuss that with him. After giving back the barrel and agreeing with him to buy sand-scale fish here at the same time tomorrow, Zhang Tie left the wharf.

After walking for a short while, Zhang Tie had already returned to the Zhixing Department of Hidden Dragon Department at night.

Sparkling light radiated from each building of Hidden Dragon Palace and extended from the memorial archways at the foot of the mountain all the way to the top of the mountain, making it pretty beautiful.

Outside the gate of the Zhixing Department, the old man who played the game of Go by himself under the tree all day long was still mediating at this moment. Because people were all very tired in the daytime, when the dusk arrived, many people had returned to their own room for a rest or practicing fighting skills. Therefore, Zhang Tie could barely see any people in the courtyard of Zhixing Department at this time.

...

"Sister Yuhan, I really want to go home, I miss mom, wu...wu..."

"Don't cry. Staying here isn't so bad. We have a lot of friends."

"But it's too difficult to make money here, wu...wh...I only picked three very common pearls for 6 silver coins and sold two boxes of seashell oil for 2 silver coins today. My hand was lacerated in the sea yesterday. If it touched the seawater, it would ache. I want to go home, wuwuwu..."

"You're just not used to it yet. When you are used to it and have better diving skills, you would reach deeper into the sea. If you are lucky, you could even pick up colorful pearls, each one of which would at least worth 1 gold coin. We girls could make money easier than the badass boys as they have to pick up iron ores in the sea. They are not afraid of that, what would we be afraid of? You will definitely make it, Shasha..."

The moment Zhang Tie drew close to the front corner of the corridor, he had heard two girls' voices. In order to avoid misunderstanding, when he drew close to them, Zhang Tie coughed twice and made his footsteps heavier on purpose. As was expected, the moment they heard about someone coming, the two girls became silent.

When Zhang Tie moved to the corner, he saw two girls who were also watching him. One of them was 15 or while the other seemed a bit older, about 17-18 years old. The younger girl had a good-looking round face whose eyes were like red peaches. Seeing Zhang Tie coming here, her face blushed as she hurriedly mopped off her tears. The other girl seemed to be comforting her.

Zhang Tie had formed a sharp instinct that the moment he saw a girl, he would know her key sizes. He didn't mean to, but he would know naturally. After a glance over the two girls' faces, his eyes had already scanned across their breasts, waists, butts, and thighs which had outstanding curves.

"Erm, compared to Alice, Hanna and the other girls, Chinese girls truly have a smaller figure at this age."

"Humph!" The moment she saw Zhang Tie, the girl called Yuhan cast the whites of her eyes at Zhang Tie. Even the weeping girl was glaring at him and turned her head to the other direction.

Zhang Tie felt a bit strange about that...

When he walked a few steps away, he heard the two girls' voices through his acute auditory sense.

"Humph, he's that disgusting guy called Zhang Tie..." The girl called Yuhan said.

"His eyes were so terrifying. After being glanced by him, I felt uncomfortable all over!"

"I wouldn't have imagined that this person is so lecherous. His eyes were too lecherous. Shasha, you have to warn other sisters to be careful about this boring guy who kept looking at your body under the neck. He's not only boring but also dangerous to girls. Remember to not be tangled with this kind of person alone!"

Zhang Tie became depressed as he almost wanted to return to argue with them. "Damn, I've been here for only two days innocently, how could I have been hateful?"

...

Returning to his own room, Zhang Tie recovered his composure and constrained his impulse to enter the Castle of Black Iron to see what fruit did the sand-scale fish bring him. Instead, he took out the crystal pyramid which was put on the windowsill to refill its energy. After putting it under his bed, he calmly and patiently sat on the bed to start cultivating.

He started to polish the 6th surge point on his spine. Within 2 hours of cultivation, the 6th surge point started to radiate very bright orange lights. When it almost broke through to radiate yellow light, Zhang Tie stopped. He then started to practice mental arithmetic by two abacuses. He kept making sophisticated divisions and multiplications on the two abacuses respectively at the same time. After a while, he started to do multiplications and additions on the two abacuses at the same time.

After finishing mental arithmetic by two abacuses, Zhang Tie's mind felt highly spirited and flexible. He was in an unusually vigorous and pure condition.

At this moment, he could only hear insects chirps in the Zhixing Department. The two exotic moons were hanging high in the sky. Along with the sound of the wind blowing through the window was the sound of the waves in the distance. Zhang Tie stood still at the windowsill and looked outside at the bright moons. He felt everything was so fantastic that it couldn't be described.

Standing still over there for quite awhile, when the fantastic sense in his mind gradually faded away, with a sound of "Zhi", Zhang Tie pulled off the curtain, leaving a great darkness in the room at once.

The darkness in his eyes soon disappeared; instead, a vigorous manor appeared in front of his eyes.

In a black swallowtail, Heller whose handsome face made Zhang Tie so envious that he even wanted to ruin Heller's face walked towards Zhang Tie.

"Handsome and magnificent Castle Lord, welcome to the Castle of Black Iron!" After bowing towards Zhang Tie, Heller looked at Zhang Tie, "Castle Lord, as the basic energy storage in Castle of Black Iron is going to be used up, I have to stop much work. You seemed having forgotten about our appointment."