

Chapter 621: Trials

The three Golden Crows gazed down at Su Ping but said nothing.

They were able to determine that Su Ping had not lied that time.

This human came here to look for materials for the second level of the Solar Bulwark.

They were able to see every inch of Su Ping, inside and out. They could even find the Ashura force that he hid inside of him.

They could tell that Su Ping had indeed learned the first level of the Solar Bulwark and he had a trace of the Golden Crow's energy inside of him.

The Golden Crow sitting on the right that sounded short-tempered and majestic asked Diqiong, "Diqiong, you said you couldn't kill him, right?"

As soon as the Golden Crow started to talk, Su Ping felt some killing intent!

That Golden Crow meant to harm him!

The inevitable is going to happen... Su Ping exclaimed to himself. His only hope was the system.

Diqiong answered the elder's question. "Yes. Not only this guy, I couldn't kill those petty beasts, either. Elders, you can try and find out."

"Sure thing."

The Golden Crow was about to strike Su Ping when the Chief Elder shook its head. "Don't do that. This human man is related to that Heaven Master who once helped our race. We cannot harm the Heaven Master's descendant."

The Golden Crow on the right had to stop. "I just wanted to see if the human was as strange as Diqiong described."

The Chief Elder asked Su Ping, paying no regard to that Golden Crow's explanation, "If it is okay, can you tell us how you got here? I want to know because I wonder if there are some flaws in our formation. That would be fatal to our entire race. I do hope that you can enlighten us."

The other Golden Crows gazed at their Chief Elder in surprise. No Golden Crow expected that the Chief Elder would act so kindly toward that tiny creature.

The Chief Elder's kindness was noticed by Su Ping. Somehow, he was benefiting from some potential association with a certain Heaven Master. Once again, the fact was proof that handsome looks did matter.

“Well, I don’t know how to explain it, but I can say for sure that there’s nothing wrong with your formation. I don’t know how to tell you the details...” That question was a difficult one to answer for Su Ping.

The entire star was closed off but the system was able to send him there. He had to admit that the system was all-powerful.

“Hmm, look at how weak you are. You don’t know anything... You cannot even tell us how you got here. How could you say for sure our formation is fine?” the Golden Crow on the right questioned.

“That is strange.” The Golden Crow on the left agreed.

The Chief Elder finally responded after a few minutes. “Never mind. Since you’re here to find the materials, I will give you a chance to get them, considering that you are the descendant of a Heaven Master. Let’s find out if you can grab a hold of that chance.”

That came as a pleasant surprise to Su Ping. He didn’t believe that he would get away with that explanation.

“Thank you, Chief Elder,” Su Ping said at once.

Su Ping calmed down after he expressed his gratitude. He didn’t understand the Chief Elder. Had he successfully convinced the Chief Elder or not?

He didn’t know.

Anyway, since you don’t really mind about how I got here, why wouldn’t you just give me the materials? Why put me through so many troubles? I’m sure you must have plenty of materials that I need for the second level, Su Ping complained inwardly. The Chief Elder’s decision still felt strange.

Of course, he didn’t voice his doubts out loud.

Regardless of what the Chief Elder’s agenda was, the point was that he would do his best to get the materials. Rolling with the punches.

“The skill you’re training is an inherent skill for the Golden Crows and once you reach level four, you will have the complete Golden Crow bloodline. You will become a Golden Crow!”

The Chief Elder asked, “Have you prepared for that?”

Su Ping already knew that when he read the introduction of the Solar Bulwark. “Yes, I have,” he answered without hesitation.

Becoming a Golden Crow was not a bad thing. As long as his heart and soul remained the same, he didn’t care what shape his body took.

If he could get an invincible power, he was okay with abandoning the human form.

The surrounding Golden Crows gazed at Su Ping. Apart from the elder sitting on the right that never showed sympathy for Su Ping, the other Golden Crows felt better about him. They would feel insulted if any other creature would want to turn into a Golden Crow.

But Su Ping was the descendant of the Heaven Master after all, and that was an amazing identity. It made the Golden Crows feel good about themselves, to think that a descendant of the Heaven Master would want to become one of them.

“Good,” the Chief Elder answered. “After half a day, we will have the awakening trial hosted for the young Golden Crows of our race. I will prepare you a trial space. I will grant you the materials if you can pass the trial. On the other hand, if you cannot, you will have to go back to your world.”

Trial?

Su Ping felt this should be a cause for worry. “Which rank are the young Golden Crows at?”

“They are much weaker than me. Don’t worry,” Diqiong answered with naked contempt.

Su Ping heaved a sigh of relief. *Weaker than Diqiong. So, those young Golden Crows are probably at the legendary rank.* There was some hope for him.

“Sure.” Su Ping nodded. He had no other choice. He couldn’t have bargained with the Chief Elder of the Golden Crows anyway.

“Diqiong, take him away and have him prepared. Brief him about the trial,” the Chief Elder instructed.

Diqiong was unhappy, being appointed to deal with the human, but still agreed. “What are you looking at? Come with me,” Diqiong urged Su Ping.

Su Ping was speechless as well. He would rather have another tour guide assigned to him but he didn’t want extra trouble so he gave up on that idea.

“You have a chance for the Golden Crows’ trial. How lucky,” the system told Su Ping.

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. “You know about this trial?”

“Of course. There’s nothing that I don’t know about the universe.” The system sounded very proud of itself.

Su Ping sneered. “You know because you snoop around.”

“Piss off.”

“You piss off.”

“You piss off.”

“PISS OFF!”

The two continued that conversation for a bit as Su Ping flew down the twig with Diqiong.

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As soon as Su Ping went away with Diqiong, the elder sitting on the right blurted out the question, "Brother, why did you decide to keep that human alive?"

The Chief Elder didn't seem to be offended after being questioned for that decision. The Chief Elder gazed at the tiny human flying across the leaves and answered, "First of all, the human is the descendant of the Heaven Master who once helped us. If the Heaven Master knew that we were treating his descendant with a hostile mind, what do you think he would think of us?"

"The world outside is not peaceful. I'd rather have one more ally than an enemy!"

"Second, this human is too weak, but he can enter our star without our first ancestor noticing a thing. That is to say, nothing has gone wrong with our formation. So, how did he get in here? What sent him here?"

"Third, you just heard Diqiong. The human cannot be killed, not even with Diqiong's flames. Diqiong has just grown up but she is much more powerful than the human being. The flames should be able to erase gods and demons alike, not to mention a human being."

The elder sitting on the right asked, "So, why didn't you let me test him? I wanted to find out why he can't be killed!"

The Chief Elder darted it a look. "That is the reason why I told him to take the trial. You and I are both elders. What do you think would happen if the human turned out to be a person sent by the Heaven Master to test us? Our relationship with the Heaven Master would come to an end."

"Do you think that he can pass the test with his strength and the thing inside him?"

"He will die in the trial!"

"And when he dies, we will find out how he can escape death. If it turns out that Diqiong was wrong, then his death shall not be regretted and no one can blame us for his death."

The elder on the right was still concerned. "I see that you're trying to use the trial to test him. But isn't that too careful when we're dealing with that puny thing?"

"We can never be too careful," the Chief Elder said, "Not even when we're dealing with a bug. If the bug was sent here by the Heaven Master, then none of us can hurt the bug."

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The Golden Crow on the right no longer spoke.

"I didn't decide to make the human go through the trial just to find out if he can escape death or not. Truth be told, I very much hope he can pass the trial," the Chief Elder added.

The other Golden Crows were confused.

"We have closed off our star for far too long and we know nothing about the world outside. It will do us good if we can learn a thing or two from that human being." The Chief Elder heaved a sigh.

The other two elders responded with silence.

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“Be prepared. Half a day here is like 10 days on the Blue Planet!” the system informed Su Ping.

The two of them would often bicker and nitpick, but the system was always serious when it came to important matters.

“Ten days?”

Su Ping was surprised. *Half a day on the Celestial Star was 10 days on the Blue Planet?*

One day here would be twenty days on the Blue Planet!

“The change of seasons here are different. We are now at the Dark Moon Season and one day is equal to twenty days on the Blue Planet. The days and nights will be even longer once the Celestial Star enters the Divine Illumination Season. One day is equal to one year on the Blue Planet!” the system educated Su Ping.

One day was equal to one year on the Blue Planet!

Su Ping was shocked by this revelation.

How did the creatures on this star calculate time?

He could not imagine the star’s movement.

“The Golden Crows are allowing you to participate in the trial. If you can pass it, they will surely give you the materials. The trial is prepared for the young Golden Crows; they need some stimulation to have their bloodline awaken completely once they reach a certain age!

“The Golden Crows that pass the trial will have their potential released and their combat strength will grow by a large margin! If you aspire to make progress, the trials are going to be a good chance for you,” the system added.

“Seriously?”

Su Ping was surprised.

Potential released?

Combat strength increased?

That was something he was in dire need of!

“Is the trial difficult?” Su Ping asked.

He was very interested.

“Of course. You won’t pass it, considering your current strength,” the system revealed the cruel fact.

Su Ping was speechless. He knew better than anyone else what he was capable of. But hearing it from the system was still a blow to his confidence.

Su Ping asked, "At least I have some hope right? If I didn't, you wouldn't have told me all those things."

The system remained silent for two seconds. "You are not so stupid after all. There are some ways but they are quite hard. Anyway, learn about the trial from that Golden Crow with emperor-level bloodline."

"Emperor-level bloodline?"

That was a new word he had learned from the system. *There were different levels for bloodlines?*

Su Ping came back to his senses. He saw that his battle pets were having a hard time in the golden cubes. "Can you let go of my friends? I want them to come back to me."

Diqiong rolled its eyes. "So troublesome."

Even so, Diqiong did move the golden cubes toward Su Ping and then all the golden cubes merged into one large golden cube.

He sent his pets back to the contract space as soon they were next to him. If anything happened, he could choose to revive at a random spot and get away from that place.

He learned from the system that the trial could be beneficial for him. The Golden Crows didn't try to get to the bottom of his background and allowed him to participate in the trial. He wondered what the Chief Elder was thinking about.

That Chief Elder must have lived longer than he could imagine; it wasn't a creature that Su Ping could understand.

"You, they were..."

Diqiong was surprised when Su Ping stored away his battle pets. "What is that space? You shouldn't be able to open up a space like that!"

Diqiong could not believe that.

It could not even do that.

Su Ping was surprised by Diqiong's surprise. "That's a contract space. You haven't seen one before?"

"Contract space?"

It was clearly a first for Diqiong to hear the term.

Su Ping had an idea and he verified it with the system. "Do Golden Crows not know about battle pets and summoning?"

The system answered after some hesitation, "The Golden Crows have sealed the star for years; it's not surprising that they are unaware of it. The pet system came into being after they closed the star and they haven't seen it."

Su Ping was speechless.

Huh. The Golden Crows indeed were ignorant in this regard.

Chapter 622: Self-enlightenment

“What is that contract space?” Diqiong asked again.

Su Ping came back to his senses. “Well... they are my battle pets. They are kind of like my servants, but they are more like my friends in battle. The contract space is where they live. The power of the contract opened up that space, not me.”

“Battle pets? Servants?”

Diqiong was still perplexed. But it did start to understand why Su Ping would stay with those odd-looking creatures. It turned out that they fought in battles together.

No wonder they would risk their lives for each other when they were of different species.

“What is that contract? How come you have one?” Diqiong’s curiosity was not yet satisfied.

Su Ping suddenly realized that the pompous bird was kind of innocent. He could not help but develop an urge to... trick it into leaving with him!

But he gave up on that idea as soon as he remembered the crow’s rank.

His mind would explode if he were to sign a contract with the Golden Crow!

I wish I was at the Fate State... Sadly, Su Ping thought to himself. His blood boiled with the mere thought of tricking a Golden Crow into leaving with him.

The Golden Crow was a creature from the ancient times, the first creature in creation. If he could get one as his battle pet, he would almost be invincible among others of his rank!

“That is a strength that everyone can have. They use themselves as the media and sign contracts with different creatures to become partners in battles...” Su Ping tried to simplify the explanation because he himself wasn’t quite able to explain it; the bird might not understand it if he spoke in complicated terms.

“Everyone can have it? Do you mean all humans can do that?” Diqiong was amazed. “So, the lives that you sign contracts with must obey you?”

Diqiong seemed alerted. Su Ping had realized that his prior idea was only wishful thinking. The Golden Crow didn’t understand what the contract meant but it wasn’t a silly bird.

“Basically, yes,” Su Ping said.

Diqiong immediately placed some distance between itself and Su Ping. “You’d better not use that wicked strength in me or you will die a miserable death!”

“...”

Su Ping was speechless.

He was offended by Qidiong’s warning. “But it’s already too late. I established a contract with you when we first came into contact. It’s just that I haven’t given you any orders and the contract power is lying dormant in you. You’ll have to follow my orders once I mobilize that power.”

"I don't believe that!"

Diqiong was startled. The Golden Crow was more powerful than Su Ping but all creatures were born to be wary of the unknown. As far as Diqiong could tell, Su Ping was a strange creature because it couldn't be killed, even though it was an awfully weak creature!

"If you dare to do anything to me... The elders will imprison you here for the rest of your life!" Diqiong warned Su Ping.

Su Ping burst into laughter. "I can leave just like I get here without you detecting it. Try me."

"I will find out."

Diqiong stopped. It was going to fly back to the elders.

Su Ping was startled, since Diqiong was actually getting serious. "All right, all right, I was just messing with you. If I had cast some curse on you, the elders would have noticed right away. Okay, stop wasting my time. Tell me about the trial so I can get ready."

Diqiong gazed at him with some doubts in its eyes but it was less angry.

Well, Su Ping was right.

The informed and experienced elders would have found out if he had done something!

Also, while they were far from where the elders were perching, Diqiong knew that the elders were still able to monitor their movement and hear their conversation. Since the elders didn't react and issued a warning, it was most likely that the human was joking!

Hmm!

Mean human!

Diqiong found Su Ping's smile even more repulsive. "You will never be able to pass the trial. It is the rite of passage for us crows. Even the worst of us is hundreds of times better than you are!" Diqiong sneered.

Su Ping was not surprised since he had learned from the system about the trial's difficulty. "Whether I can pass or not is none of your business. Tell me about it, maybe I will do it. What a slap on your face would that be if I can pass it!"

"Fat chance!" Diqiong answered with resolution.

Su Ping was riled up by Diqiong's confidence. "Really. How about we make a bet?"

"A bet?"

"Yes, if I don't pass the test, I'll comply with one of your demands. Anything you tell me to do. But, if I can pass the trial, you'll do something I say," Su Ping taunted.

Diqiong understood the concept of "bet" at once. It was about to say yes when it heard a voice in its mind, "Qiong-er, behave."

It was the Chief Elder.

Diqiong looked back. The elders were still gazing at them.

Even though they had flown away from the twig, the elders could still see them and hear them. Diqiong was not the least surprised.

“Chief Elder, the human won’t pass the trial!” Diqiong answered in its mind.

“This human is strange and he is a descendant of the Heaven Master. He may have some skills that have escaped our understanding, for example, the one that makes him unkillable,” the Chief Elder said slowly.

Diqiong remembered how Su Ping was able to come back to life again and again under its flames.

Diqiong came back to its senses and turned around, only to see Su Ping’s sneer. Suddenly, the crow found the human’s sneer was sinister!

It was all a ruse!

Diqiong felt lucky that the Chief Elder had alerted it in time. If Diqiong had agreed to that bet, it would have been beholden to deliver on that promise and Su Ping could ask for something outrageous!

Close call!

Diqiong thanked its lucky stars and then sneered at Su Ping. “I won’t make that bet with you. I am much more honorable than you, and I can do a great deal of things. What can you do? I don’t need you to do anything for me. In fact, you would have to follow my orders if I wanted to, whether you like it or not!”

Diqiong sounds too bossy.

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. *Well, the bird didn’t take the bait.*

“I didn’t know that a creature of ancient origins would wuss out.” Su Ping snorted.

“What is a wuss?”

“It means you’re fainthearted.”

“You!”

Diqiong would file its teeth if it had any.

“I won’t waste time arguing with you. Since the Chief Elder said you can participate in the trial, I can only oblige and tell you the rules, just in case you go back to that Heaven Master and decide to change black to white!” Diqiong snorted. Since young, all the other Golden Crows would speak with respect and no bird would argue back; Diqiong knew that it could never win against Su Ping when it came to quarreling.

Su Ping felt sorry for not being able to provoke the young crow; Diqiong’s reply also came as a surprise. That pretty bird enjoyed a high status and it had the ability to see the big picture. But the thing was, Su Ping had never known or heard about someone called the Heaven Master.

If he knew, he wouldn’t have gone there to find materials. He would have simply gone to beg the Heaven Master for materials, and he could get all of them, not just for level two!

“Fine,” Su Ping agreed.

“There are three locations for the trial. Your strength, spirit and skill will be tested!” Diqiong explained, “Strength would be the first to be tested. Your strength has to meet the standard in the trial space, or you will be ousted!

“The test on spirit is also a test of your willpower. Strength alone cannot carry you long enough!

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“The test on skill is to find out your power of understanding! The specific details of the trial vary each time; we would know about it until the elders construct the trial space.

“In addition to the three, you will have to deal with the comprehensive trial!

“When you get to that place, you will have to use all the powers you know. The higher your score is, the more you will be liked by the elders!”

Diqiong suddenly added a touch of pride in the following remark, “The ones that can get the highest score will be qualified to try for the royal guard; once they pass the test, they would become members of the reserve. They will have a chance to stay with me to protect me and admire my good looks!”

“...”

Su Ping was speechless...

Diqiong had sounded dead serious at first, but then it all turned into a joke.

And yet, he could tell that Diqiong didn’t think it was a joke... That made things even funnier!

He had never seen a bird that shameless!

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It seemed that arrogance was a trait which had existed since the beginning of life...

“What’s that look in your eyes?” Diqiong questioned Su Ping.

Su Ping gave a hollow laugh. *What do you think?*

But he didn’t say anything. His laugh said more than his words.

“So, you’re saying that you have a high status. Are you of the noble family lording over all of the Golden Crows?” Su Ping asked. He could tell from the elders’ attitude that the uppity bird was an important one. Also, the system did say something about an emperor-level bloodline. That wasn’t a common bird.

“Hmm!”

Diqiong didn’t say anything else. Its snort conveyed more than words did.

Diqiong flew forward and said to Su Ping, “You will be the first to be expelled in the comprehensive test. You should know now that it is a great honor for you to be able to talk to me this close and for such a long time.”

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“...”

Su Ping produced a force smile.

So, that's what this conversation was about.

“The trial will start in half a day. Think about it. Do not bring insult to your Heaven Master,” Diqiong said. The implied meaning was that he would never pass the test!

Su Ping was not in the mood to argue. He was certain that the trial would be difficult for him.

That would have to be the trial with the highest level he had ever experienced!

The trial to get the old dragon king's legacy was insignificant compared to that one.

The Golden Crows were the earliest lives in creation; if the trial was difficult for them, it would be more than difficult for other races!

Su Ping believed that his talent was above that of humans. After all, few titled battle pet warriors could fight against a Fate State creature.

Still, he was nothing when compared to the Golden Crows, he was nothing.

I merely have ten days and I cannot go anywhere else. I won't be able to gain more strength, no matter what I do. That is, unless I get the materials for the second level of the Solar Bulwark... Su Ping pondered.

Previously, he would find a cultivation site and use the harsh environment to tap into his potential as a way of training, and the repeated deaths made him stronger.

Even so, as time moved on, the effect of such training began to diminish.

After all, it was just a primitive approach.

That was not an option for him at the moment. All of a sudden, Su Ping realized he could not find a way to develop in ten days.

He had been relying on outside help and the cultivation sites. He had to rely on himself.

Su Ping realized that he had never gained strength by himself, ever since he got the system.

He had been relying on the system to better himself.

But that time, he was all that he had.

Su Ping sat in the golden cube, contemplating.

Diqiong did not disturb Su Ping; it was flying toward a seemingly far off twig.

That twig was not that far away for the elders, but it still took Diqiong a dozen minutes to arrive. The rest of the younger Golden Crows would have traveled for days so that they could reach that twig!

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“I have to rely on myself...” Su Ping murmured.

He took a deep breath to calm himself and deal with his anxiety.

Cultivation was the only thing possible for him!

Speaking of cultivation, Su Ping thought of the many people’s voices which belonged to the conversations he had with Joanna’s subordinates in the Demigod Burial.

Those subordinates were all at the Fate State or even the Star Rank. Their conversations were sometimes inspiring for him.

“Strength needs to be accumulated...”

“Willpower needs to be toughened...”

“Skills need to be learned...”

Su Ping closed his eyes. Soon, he decided that he would have to focus on “skills.” As of that moment, the only way for him to make progress was to learn a new skill.

Still, that was the most difficult way to go.

Chapter 623: Resistance

For strength, quantitative change leads to qualitative change. But learning a new skill needs an enabling chance; one can try for an entire life without ever learning a single skill...

Su Ping calmed himself down.

The more anxious he was, the worse it would be for him.

He needed to stay calm in order to think straight.

First, he went through the skills he had mastered.

He had learned the elementary rules of thunder and flames; as for the other elements, he didn’t even reach the elementary level yet.

Those were more like skills for trainers but he could use them in battles as well.

He had learned the Sin Cutter from Dust and he had gotten the Fist of Exorcist from the system!

He had other combat skills such as the Sword of Blood and Demon Possession which he had taught to Tang Ruyan.

He had skills to assist his battle pets, like the augmentation skills and killing intent that could inspire the battle pets.

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He had another special thing, the Force Field.

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Su Ping heard Diqiong's voice in his mind while going through the list, "We're here. You'll stay here for half a day. No one will come to disturb you."

Su Ping opened his eyes. He saw the surface of a leaf, of which he could not see all the edges. By the closest end of the leaf was a luxurious nest made by golden threads. Some Golden Crows lingered about like guards.

Diqiong flew toward the nest; the nest's scorching heat made Su Ping feel he was going to be burnt.

The golden cube isolated much of the heat and that was why he was able to get there.

"Your highness."

A Golden Crow flew over. "You're back."

"Yes. This is my guest. It will rest for a bit here," Diqiong said.

The Golden Crow darted a look of surprise at Su Ping. Diqiong's guests couldn't have been any of the common creatures and yet the Golden Crow failed to find anything special about Su Ping.

But the Golden Crow didn't ask anything. It bowed and excused itself.

Diqiong threw Su Ping into the nest and said to him, "Stay and do not wander around. No one will disturb you here but I cannot guarantee your safety if you get out. Those who don't know you will eat you up like a bug."

Su Ping was not in the mood to argue with Diqiong. This nest was vast and he didn't know what the golden threads were; golden flames were burning on the golden threads. Diqiong went to another corner of the nest and bathed in the flames. Diqiong didn't feel bothered by the heat. If anything, it was a pleasing sensation.

Su Ping felt he was getting a headache.

The heat was insufferable. He felt he had been placed on a grill.

"Inferno Dragon!"

Su Ping summoned the Inferno Dragon and sat on one of its shoulders so that the pet could help him fend off some heat.

He could hardly concentrate while he endured that excruciating pain.

The Inferno Dragon's feet were aflame as soon as it placed its feet in the nest. Upon hearing Su Ping's order, Inferno Dragon unleashed dark flames to fight back the golden flames.

Diqiong noticed this in the distance. It seemed to be scornful.

"I think your battle pet looks quite nutritious," Diqiong commented.

Su Ping: "..."

Su Ping was not in the mood to converse with the bird. He had to focus on himself. He didn't have time to waste.

The Inferno Dragon was helping to resist the heat but the temperature in the nest was still high. Su Ping felt he was in a sauna room where the temperature was reaching the limit. His eyebrows were knitted together. He was sweating through his shirt; he realized that concentrating was a difficult thing for him.

But he could not afford to complain.

Su Ping had to toughen his willpower so that he could calm down for real.

"What?"

Diqiong noticed that Su Ping was gradually relaxing and in the meantime, there seemed to be a faint figure behind him, something like a spinning Force Field.

"That guy..."

Diqiong no longer belittled Su Ping.

Diqiong was able to tell that this creature which called itself a human being was not used to the high temperature, and yet he was able to focus his mind despite all distractions. It was rare and intimidating for one to have those nerves of steel.

Diqiong simply watched quietly.

...

I'm using the Chaos Star Chart methodology; if I progress far enough, I'll be able to reach the legendary rank. But I am not even close...

Su Ping focused on his body. He could see the vast world inside him. Each cell was glistening like a star and the light came from the astral powers within those cells.

There was a tiny vortex spinning in each cell.

Once he managed to form a large star vortex would he enter the Star Vortex State; he would be reaching the legendary rank by then. His astral powers would be more profound than the average warriors at the Ocean State.

I only have ten days. I don't have enough time to make a breakthrough in rank...

Su Ping eventually gave up on that idea. He had too little time and he didn't think he could improve his rank that fast.

He came back to his senses. He was sitting on a vast and open land with many virtual images of himself surrounding him while viewing with his mind's eye.

Every image of Su Ping was using a separate skill.

That is, including Sin Cutter, Fist of Exorcist and the others.

Su Ping gazed at the image using the Sin Cutter. The virtual him was moving faster and faster.

Improving the Sin Cutter is too difficult. I have no idea how to do that...

To master the Fist of Exorcist's third move is also hard!

Su Ping frowned.

To improve each skill would be difficult. Of course, his combat strength would increase if he made progress!

And yet, he was not as confident that he could improve any skill within ten days.

He was getting restless.

Strength augmentation, killing intent, Sin Cutter, Force Field...

Those skills flashed past in Su Ping's mind. His thoughts were increasing and becoming chaotic; his eyes were moving fast and his mind was working at a fast speed.

All the skills revealed their entire working mechanisms before Su Ping's view.

The magnificent figure in the Force Field was also giving Su Ping some inspiration. He felt there was something invisible which he couldn't fully grasp.

Maybe I can't make my swordplay progress further by following the same methods I used when I learned the Sin Cutter, but I can use my own method to make it progress by half a step!

Why can't swords be as aggressive as fists?

There's not enough power in my swordplay...

If I can combine some spatial techniques in my swordplay, wielding one sword will be like wielding ten thousand of them. That would be fast and violent enough!

...

Time flew. Three days passed.

Wait a minute. The sword merging into the void can have some surprising effects, but the strength is not enough yet...

I have to make my swordplay become more destructive at the trial...

...

On the sixth day.

One cut will be enough!

No, the sword is as overbearing as a punch but it's not sharp enough...

I need something else...

...

On the ninth day.

Sword of the Undead... Sword of Silence...

What is the point of using a sword if the sword cannot bring death?

Little Skeleton...

...

On the tenth day.

“Wake up!” Diqiong shouted; Su Ping slowly opened his eyes. The moment his eyelids opened, two rays of dark light glistened in his eyes and then immediately vanished.

Diqiong felt its heart had skipped a beat, as if something had just cut it.

Merely half a day passed, and this human seems to be different.

He was like a sharp unsheathed sword.

Su Ping gradually came back to his senses. He lowered his head; there was nothing in his hand and yet he felt he was holding a sword.

He had been studying swordplay in his mind in the past ten days.

He had some difficulties in making a decision at first, but then he eventually followed his heart and began to seek breakthroughs in sword moves.

He no longer had other distractions after having made his choice.

He integrated everything else he had learned in his swordplay. Some of the testing had little effect and some tests didn't get him what he wanted.

But ten days had already passed; Su Ping felt he needed more time.

He had never been so concentrated on anything else before.

“Buddy, I will get you back...” Su Ping murmured, as he thought of the Little Skeleton.

Since he missed his pet skeleton during that period, that void had inspired him somehow.

He integrated his inspirations into the swordplay.

He was no longer using the Sin Cutter; he had improved it.

Whoosh!

The dark Force Field appeared and then vanished.

Su Ping looked at the faint figure and offered a thank-you in his heart.

That magnificent figure had also enlightened him.

He stood up and asked Diqiong, “Is it time?”

Diqiong was still eyeing Su Ping strangely. “Yes. Come with me.”

“Good.”

Su Ping nodded.

He looked at the Inferno Dragon. To his surprise, he noticed some golden grains on the Inferno Dragons' scales, especially on its legs; it seemed to be more powerful than before.

Su Ping had forgotten that the Inferno Dragon had been trying to protect him against the heat during those ten days.

The Inferno Dragon survived the ten days.

I don't think I have... died once, either.

Su Ping looked at himself. He noticed that the scorching heat had become mild to him. He felt he was standing in a desert, no longer on a grill. He was able to deal with the heat himself.

Have I become more resistant to fire? Su Ping asked the system at once.

He remembered that the system had mentioned that he was quite resistant to fire, that he could survive for 15 minutes there. It had also said that I could live on the Celestial Star if I could be more resistant to fire.

He had been sitting here for ten days. He did survive.

The heat would no longer kill him!

“Yes,” the system answered, “You ate half of that Yang Fruit which helped you. Plus, your body was adjusting by itself when you fell into a trance during cultivation. If your mind doesn't disturb your body, your body can become used to the heat. You're at the top-grade of fire resistance at the moment!”

“Yang Fruit?”

That was the first time that Su Ping had heard the name of the fruit. He asked, “Does that fruit have any other effect?”

“Of course. Didn't you notice that your understanding about the rules of fire has improved?” the system asked.

Su Ping did notice it after the system pointed it out. He had solely been focusing on swordplay during the past ten days, attempting to integrate the rules of thunder and the rules of fire into the swordplay and he did notice that he had gotten better in the rules of fire!

He felt that all he needed was a single chance and he would be able to improve to the middle-level in the rules of thunder and rules of fire!

“So, my battle pets are also quite lucky.” Su Ping remembered that the Inferno Dragon and the other battle pets had also eaten the Yang Fruit; they must have learned some skills from the fire family. It was just that they hadn't realized that, since they had not encountered any battle, which would have eventually forced the new skills out of them.

“The usual Void State skills of the fire family can no longer hurt you. The fire skills of those at the Fate State can hurt you, but the damage will be minimal. Only Star Rank fire skills can inflict substantial harm on you!” The system pointed out calmly.

Su Ping’s eyes glowed.

Fire skills of the Fate State would only hurt him mildly?

That was to say, he could be an invincible opponent to the beasts of the fire family!

“Yes,” the system answered.

“...”

The system is snooping around again!

Su Ping filed his teeth.

He ignored the system and looked at the tree that the Inferno Dragon was still carrying on its back. He had not been able to place the tree inside his spatial scroll but he could at the moment.

He took out the scroll. The images on the scroll were disappearing and the edges were burnt.

Buzzing!

Su Ping waved his finger and a tiny ray of black light came out to expel the heat around him.

“Come here!”

Su Ping pulled the tree into the scroll and stored the scroll as fast as he could.

Chapter 624: An Individual Venue

“Huh?”

Diqiong felt something as it was about to leave the nest. It turned around and cast a look at Su Ping, only to see a wisp of dark light disappearing. Diqiong wondered. Just then, it had perceived a strange power, something that Diqiong was aspiring to obtain...

That had to be an illusion...

Diqiong shook its head. Su Ping was so much weaker; he couldn’t have used that power. *That had to be an illusion...*

“Let’s go.”

Diqiong flew out of its nest and dragged Su Ping along.

The proud crow took Su Ping to the gathering place for the trial.

Su Ping stood in the golden cube which was no longer unbreakable for him. He felt that he could—when exerting his full strength—break the golden cube!

But he didn't have to do that.

He stood in the golden cube with his hands crossed behind his back and looked around, then at the ancient tree and its leaves. He was certain that if he were to pick a hundred leaves from the tree, the leaves themselves would be large enough to cover up the entire Blue Planet!

But for the ancient tree, losing a hundred leaves was nothing.

Vast and boundless.

Su Ping felt that even his mind had been broadened. *What a miraculous feeling.*

...

"That human..."

Three Golden Crows were sitting on a twig. It was as if their sight could see through the whole universe and time, the past and the future. One could hardly look into their eyes.

At the moment, the Chief Elder looked through the clouds and leaves and saw that wisp of dark light disappearing from Su Ping's fingertips.

"He's not so bad after all..."

The Chief Elder nodded. Its eyes were glistening.

...

...

"Are they all here for the trial?" Su Ping asked.

Diqiong took him out of its nest and flew past many leaves that were as large as ten base cities. Su Ping gradually began to see more and more Golden Crows gathering.

All those Golden Crows were as large as aircraft carriers; much larger than beast kings found on the Blue Planet.

There were much larger crows surrounding the relatively smaller Golden Crows. The two groups were traveling to climb further up the tree.

Su Ping realized that those had to be the Golden Grows that had prepared for the trial.

Diqiong looked at the Golden Grows and threatened Su Ping, "Yes. All of them are your opponents. I will make sure they do their worst and crush you without mercy."

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. "So, the many bullying the few?"

"Not really. We don't need to rely on a large group to crush you." Diqiong snorted.

Su Ping was not in the mood to argue; he only gazed at the grand view.

More and more Golden Crows of various sizes were approaching the ancient tree. It was as if many rays of glistening light were reaching the ancient tree.

Even the young Golden Crows were at the legendary rank, not to mention the adult Golden Crows.

Being an ancient race, Golden Crows were indeed threatening.

“The trial...”

For the Little Skeleton’s sake, he had to get through the trial!

...

Under the tree crown.

The elders were on a twig, while perched on the surrounding leaves were countless Golden Crows. All the crows perched on the twigs had some high status; the general public could only fly around followed by their kids.

Of course, those kids were Su Ping’s intimidating opponents.

Diqiong took Su Ping to the twig the elders were sitting on.

Diqiong’s appearance startled many Golden Crows. They made way for her and greeted her with respect. The other Golden Crows were interested in Su Ping, since it had been dragged there by Diqiong. That was the first time they had seen such a “strange” thing... *Is that her royal highness’s snack?*

A Golden Crow in its infancy asked a larger one, “Mother, what is that thing? I don’t think it looks tasty.”

A massive Golden Crow poked its kid’s head with the tip of its wing. “Be quiet and listen to the elders. I’ll break your third leg if you can’t pass the trial this time!”

2

...

The Chief Elder looked down at the Golden Crows from a height. It didn’t say a thing to Diqiong and Su Ping. The Chief Elder announced when all the Golden Crows had arrived, “The awakening trial begins now. All participants, please come forward and gather in front of me!”

The Chief Elder’s sonorous voice was heard across half of the ancient tree.

The Golden Crows were awed by that voice.

Some adult Golden Grows bowed to show their respect. Once the elder finished, they urged their kids to go in case they would be left out of the trial. Su Ping felt that the sight was just like the time when human parents were sending their kids to school. All of a sudden, he felt those Golden Crows were not so distant from him after all.

They weren’t just merciless ancient creatures; they were living creatures with hearts.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The Golden Crows flew and approached the Chief Elder.

Those Golden Crows were “smaller” young Golden Crows. They landed on the twigs behind Diqiong and Su Ping. The wind they had stirred up blew Su Ping’s hair into a huge mess.

The young Golden Crows came one after the other; their strengths varied, as some of them seemed to be more powerful.

“Look, her Royal Highness Diqiong!”

“Her Royal Highness, bearer of the ancestral bloodline!”

“Squeak~”

The young Golden Crows noticed Diqiong; the looks in their eyes were full of admiration and respect. Some Golden Crows were stepping aside, afraid to look at Diqiong.

“The He family!”

“The Qiong family!”

Diqiong glanced over at the young Golden Crows. There wasn't a whiff of admiration as it looked down on all of them, just like a queen picking a dress.

Su Ping remembered that Diqiong had told him the Golden Crow that aced the trial would potentially become part of the royal crow's private guard. All of a sudden, he felt sorry for those magnificent, young Golden Crows.

Diqiong said to Su Ping all of a sudden, “If you can manage to reach the last round, which is the comprehensive trial, you'd better hope you don't meet any of them or you'll end up in trouble!”

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. *Was that a warning?*

Still, it sounded more like a taunt.

“That guy is from the He family; it can easily win first place and join the reserve of my Guard!” Diqiong raised its chin toward a certain direction.

Su Ping turned around, confused.

All the Golden Crows looked alike. Which one is Diqiong talking about?

“You can't find it? It's the ordinary looking one,” Diqiong said to Su Ping.

Su Ping was still confused.

Ordinary?

All of those Golden Crows seemed ordinary; he felt as if he were visiting a chicken farm. Well, he wished he were in a chicken farm because he could tell the differences from the chicken's feathers, but those Golden Crows... All of them had golden feathers. How could he tell any of them apart!

“That one is from the Qiong family. You want to stay away from it as well,” Diqiong said again.

That Golden Crow felt Diqiong's look and immediately wore a respectful face; the others around it did the same thing. Each and every one of them was thinking Her Royal Highness Diqiong was looking specifically at themselves.

Interesting.

Su Ping glanced over. The young Golden Crows were lowering their heads as if they were feeling shy...

“Well, well.”

Su Ping curled his lips. He could tell that Diqiong was cautioning him kindly, although he was completely clueless as to why Diqiong would do that. But... that was of no help!

“I’m bird blind,” Su Ping said to Diqiong.

Diqiong was perplexed.

Su Ping decided not to explain. He didn’t think a Golden Crow would enjoy being referred to as a bird.

The space in front of the Chief Elder suddenly began to ripple as an opening appeared. Inside there was a venue with towering stone columns which had carvings of Golden Crows. Su Ping also saw a bridge made of clouds.

Across the bridge was a small venue, but you could also see a bottomless pit by the edge.

There were boulders lying around.

“Go ahead, kids,” the Chief Elder said.

All the Golden Crows were excited.

The young Golden Crows squeaked and chattered. Suddenly, Su Ping felt his ears were going to bleed. Next, he heard the wind and the flapping wings.

The Golden Crows flew toward the swirl in the air.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

The countless Golden Crows vanished as they entered the trial venue.

Although young, the Golden Crows were majestic; Su Ping could see nothing but the rays of golden light. He was amazed.

Even the entrance to the trial venue was marvelous for an ancient race!

Soon, many Golden Crows had entered the testing grounds and only a dozen were still outside. Some of the large Golden Crows began to squeak in anxiety and heave sighs of disappointment. They were the parents of the kids that had not flown into the venue yet.

“Damn it. I forgot that I’m still outside!”

Su Ping patted his head.

Diqiong cast him a glance and said grumpily, “You’re not going anywhere without my permission. The Chief Elder also said that you were going to be tested in a separate venue. Try to keep calm!”

“Right...”

Su Ping remembered that the Chief Elder had indeed said something like that.

“You would have spent all the time dying if you were to join them!” Diqiong snorted. “The Chief Elder is trying to protect you, as a way to be fair and respectful toward the Heaven Master!”

Su Ping pulled himself together. “So, the trial has no time limit, right?”

“Of course. The first round is all about strength. It has nothing to do with time or speed. Of course, you can tell something from how fast the Golden Crows are entering. The strong ones are fast and the weak ones...” Diqiong left that last part unsaid.

Su Ping was relieved.

He saw that the Golden Crows were flying toward the boulders.

Some boulders were even several times larger than the Golden Crows.

Su Ping suddenly saw how a Golden Crow grabbed a boulder of its own size and began to fly away. But the task seemed to be strenuous.

Even so, the feathered onlookers seemed to be amazed.

“What is that about?” Su Ping asked Diqiong.

Diqiong explained with pride, “I told you that the first round has to do with strength. Of course, we’re going to see who is stronger. The one able to pick up the biggest boulder and fly to the other side will have the best score; if two carry boulders of the same size, we’ll choose depending on which one flies faster.”

Su Ping widened his eyes in disbelief.

Is that it?

That’s too primitive!

The ancient race should do better than this!

“Human!”

It was the Chief Elder. “To be fair, I’ll be opening a venue for you alone. You must have seen how the trial is done. You may go now.”

Another swirl gradually came into being next to the one that the Golden Crows were in. The venue inside the new swirl was much smaller.

The onlookers gazed at the Chief Elder in surprise and then cast their gazes on Su Ping who stayed behind Diqiong. The only foreign creature present was Su Ping.

“Thank you, Chief Elder,” Su Ping said. The Chief Elder claimed that it was being fair, but it was only doing so for the sake of the Heaven Master. Even so, Su Ping was grateful for the consideration.

“Go ahead,” Diqiong said. It looked away from Su Ping as if not caring at all.

Su Ping didn’t know what to say to that moody bird. A moment before, Diqiong was cautioning him, but then it was acting as if it didn’t want to talk to him. *What a complex creature.*

Whoosh!

Su Ping focused his mind and flew toward the swirl.

He took the trial so that he could get the Little Skeleton back. He could not afford to be distracted.

He had entered the venue.

“That is heavy!”

Su Ping felt he was pushed to the ground and almost fell. But he reacted fast; his body made the right choice before his mind kicked in.

Su Ping turned around. He only had a faint view of the outside from the entrance, much like looking from underwater, with everything being murky.

“I think the gravitational pull is much stronger here,” Su Ping said to himself. Besides, that was a place where no astral powers could be drawn. He would have no supplies to make up for the astral powers he would use.

Chapter 625: The Power of Rules

“So, I’m supposed to pick up one of the boulders and place it over there?”

Su Ping remembered what he had seen the Golden Crows doing. The many boulders placed in front of him varied in size. Suddenly, Su Ping realized he had forgotten to ask what the passing standard for the test was.

How big a boulder did he have to carry?

“Never mind, I’ll start from the biggest one. I will have to try my best!” Su Ping said to himself.

Whoosh!

He flew to a place above the venue and looked around. Soon, he found several of the larger ones.

The biggest boulder stood at the center of the venue and the boulder was almost as large as a mountain, or the gigantic Golden Crows he had seen!

He couldn’t even see the boulder in its entirety!

Was he supposed to move that boulder?

Su Ping was hesitating but that hesitation soon was replaced by determination!

He could not give up before he even tried!

...

“What is he doing?”

“Is he going directly toward the largest boulder?”

Many Golden Crows saw what Su Ping was doing. The Golden Crows shifted their attention from their kids' trials to Su Ping's trials.

They had seen enough trials for young Golden Crows and nothing would surprise them. But they were curious about a creature they had never seen before.

"That creature..."

Diqiong was also stunned to see that Su Ping was flying toward the largest boulder in the first try. Soon, contempt was reflected on Diqiong's eyes.

Outsiders might think that the boulders had been placed randomly. However, the fact was that they had been specifically designed and made by the elders. The largest boulder had been prepared on purpose; there was another one in the venue for the young Golden Crows!

However, it was almost impossible to move the largest boulder!

Not even Diqiong—who had emperor-level bloodline—was able to move the largest boulder when it participated in the trial!

The largest boulder was heavier than anyone could handle; it had just been placed there for decoration and symbolism purposes.

"Moving a half-eye boulder is already good enough for him."

Diqiong shook its head.

Half-eye was a measurement unit used by the Golden Crows, meaning the size of half the eye of an adult Golden Crow, or twice the size of a young Golden Crow!

Moving a half-eye boulder was the passing standard; Diqiong believed that would be the best Su Ping would be able to do. The largest boulder was as big as an adult Golden Crow, or a ten thousand-eye boulder!

...

At the venue.

Su Ping stepped to the largest boulder. The closer he was, the larger he found the boulder was and the more overwhelmed he was. He took a deep breath and summoned the Inferno Dragon, the Dark Dragon Hound and the Purple Python.

The Golden Crows outside began to chat in surprise when the swirls opened and the three battle pets came out.

The surprise was shared by the majority of the Golden Crows.

They could tell that Su Ping's rank was low and he shouldn't have been able to open a space. *But, how come he can summon those creatures from nowhere? Strange.*

Also, the trial was supposed to be done by oneself. Was Su Ping cheating?

"So, that is summoning."

The Golden Crow elder sitting on the right gazed at Su Ping.

The Chief Elder nodded. "That is an entirely different cultivation system. I wonder if that Heaven Master established that system which is different from ours. But I have to say, we can learn a thing or two from that system. A bunch of weak creatures can bond to produce a greater strength. That is something we should learn..."

The elder sitting on the left commented, "What a miraculous system. The creatures have become similar both in spirit and soul. They exist as individuals but they are one as well. Even the power of rules is regarding them as one entity. Besides, they can share their energy..."

At the venue.

Su Ping didn't hesitate after summoning his battle pets; he told them to share their energy with him. He felt his limbs were going to explode from the surges of energy. He wanted to shout; he was about to lose his mind.

The energy was burning him. He didn't waste a single second; he told his battle pets to share their astral powers with him as well.

That was a skill that titled battle pet warriors could use!

He was going to reach his prime state with the help of his battle pets!

The bad thing was that the Little Skeleton was not there. Otherwise, merging with his skeleton pet would have elevated his strength further!

Buzzing~!

Su Ping felt he was trembling. As more and more astral powers were poured into him, the vortices in Su Ping's cells became brighter and tighter than before, spinning at a fast speed. There was a tendency; the small vortices were trying to merge and form bigger vortices!

Once all the small vortexes merged into one big vortex, that would be when Su Ping reached the legendary rank!

Thanks to the astral powers from the three battle pets, there was hope that the big vortex would indeed come into being. He was gaining momentum.

"Strength augmentation!!!"

"Agility!!!"

Su Ping's eyes were glowing. He used all the strengthening skills on himself. Blue veins were popping out on his arms; he threw himself forward when his strength reached the peak.

He reached the boulder and lifted it!

"Ah!!!" Su Ping shouted. His eyes were turning red.

Come on!!

The boulder has to go up!!

He placed his hand at the bottom of the boulder and the released astral powers were forming an air blast behind him. The astral powers were blowing the dust away under his feet!

The Golden Crows were dumbstruck.

They had just witnessed how Su Ping's strength increased by several times!

This weak and pathetic creature became as powerful as the young Golden Crows!

What is the cause of that change?!

Diqiong was also gazing at Su Ping in astonishment. The way that Su Ping shouted had stunned the noble crow.

One could hardly image how shocking it was to see a tiny creature trying to lift a boulder that was unbelievably larger!!

Su Ping's shout echoed even outside the venue. For the first time, Diqiong realized it had developed a positive view of that human.

"Unfortunately he is still too weak."

The elder sitting on the right still kept its indifferent look. The elder was surprised by Su Ping, but that was it. Even though Su Ping had increased his strength, there was nothing he could do to tackle that ten thousand-eye boulder. Not even the Golden Crows with emperor-level bloodline could have lifted that boulder.

His strength was insignificant!

The elders were able to see through Su Ping completely. They admitted that the summoning system was strange and unexpected, but it wouldn't be of much help to him.

What he was doing was like trying to fill an entire ocean with a drop of water!

It was impossible!

...

Roar!!

The Inferno Dragon stood next to Su Ping, bellowing to cheer him up.

The Dark Dragon Hound kept its gaze on Su Ping. It understood what he was doing and how important it was for all of them!

They wanted to help, and the only thing they could do was to pour all of their strength on him!

Come on!! Su Ping shouted inside. He felt his arms were going to break and all his bones were cracking; still, the boulder was not moving at all!

It was as if the boulder were gazing at him coldly.

'You cannot move me!'

“Ah!!!”

Su Ping was unwilling to give up and he wasn't going to. He shouted and mobilized all the strength in him!

Crack. His arms broke. Blood gushed out from his arms but then vaporized!

Still, the boulder did not move.

Su Ping's prime state began to dwindle. Clarity returned to his eyes. He was sad; he knew he would never be able to move that boulder.

He could not even nudge it one bit, let alone lift the boulder and carry it over the bridge!

He failed!

Su Ping was forced to admit that fact. Strength was ebbing away from him and pain began to spread all across his body. His arms were bleeding and so were his belly and neck. He was going to collapse.

“He failed. Why am I not surprised...”

“I told you that the human could not do it, no matter how loudly he can shout.”

“That is a ten thousand-eye boulder. Not even the direct descendant of our first ancestor can lift that boulder.”

“Touché!”

The Golden Crows were not surprised by Su Ping's failure in the slightest. That boulder was the largest boulder, even for the Golden Crows!

Not even the Golden Crows with emperor-level bloodline can move it, let alone this puny creature!

“He failed...”

Diqiong gazed at Su Ping. And yet, there was neither contempt nor mockery in Diqiong's eyes this time. Rather, Diqiong felt worried.

“Hmm!”

The elder sitting on the right snorted but said nothing.

In the meantime, back at the venue, Su Ping had turned ghastly pale after that failed attempt. He had overexerted himself. He looked at the Inferno Dragon and the other battle pets. He lifted his arm without saying a word. Pff. He poked his throat with his fingers.

He killed himself!

The Golden Crows could not believe it.

They could tell the move was fatal.

The three elders were just as dumbstruck as the rest of the Golden Crows!

Revival on the spot!

Su Ping disappeared, then returned within one second.

“That...”

“No!!!”

The ever-calm elders were reacting violently.

Revival?!

Traveling back in time!

The three elders looked at each other.

The Golden Crow sitting on the left said with a solemn tone, “That is not because of rules, or time alone. It’s not a dummy or a projection, either!”

The Chief Elder narrowed its eyes as it gazed at Su Ping who had just returned to life. The Chief Elder was not just stunned, but scared!

The elders were reacting even more violently than the other Golden Crows because they could not understand how Su Ping had been revived!

His revival could not be explained by any of the theories they knew!

Nothing happened, and then he came back to life!

The flow of time and the rules didn’t change. Su Ping couldn’t have been revived!

And yet, there he was!

“That human... is not a common one...” the Chief Elder kept its voice low, as if fearing that something would hear it, or it was merely whispering to itself.

It meant something else by saying ‘not common’.

The other two elders heard that implied meaning.

Is a Heaven Master controlling this human?

If so, that Heaven Master might be looking at them, the Golden Crows, via some special means!

The elders were frightened. The formation they had used to close their star had been set up by their first ancestors. Not even a Heaven Master could break in!

The first ancestor is sleeping. Has something gone wrong with the formation?

Or, is there someone even more intimidating than the Heaven Master?!

The elders found it scary to even think about it. Their confusion deepened.

Why would a human man supported by a Heaven Master travel such a long distance to our star? Just to look for materials needed for the second level of the Solar Bulwark?

The Heaven Master could have provided those materials easily!

Did this human have to come here?

The elders could not find the reason and their looks became grave.

...

At the venue.

After Su Ping's revival, he once again returned to his prime state, full of strength. There was no supply of astral powers in that place but he could revive. That was why he was confident to try and move the boulders.

"I need... your help!" Su Ping said to the Inferno Dragon and his other battle pets.

The Inferno Dragon, the Dark Dragon Hound and the Purple Python understood what he was asking of them.

They saw Su Ping's determination.

The Inferno Dragon clenched its teeth. It turned around and flames burst out from its body!

The Inferno Dragon had shared its energy with Su Ping but he needed more!

I'll give you everything that you need!!

Roar!!

The Inferno Dragon opened its mouth. That roar seemed to have shocked the world. The flames were rising to the sky and the fuel was the Inferno Dragon itself!

Its bones were the wood and its blood oil!

Behind the Inferno Dragon jumped out a virtual image of a purple-blood dragon. The dragon was crying!

The Inferno Dragon was burning itself so that it could squeeze out the last bit of its energy. The dragon's roar was astounding!

The bond of the contract passed all the energy to Su Ping. The vortices inside him began to spin, faster and faster.

The vortices lit up and merged into bigger ones!

Strength was coming back to him. Su Ping looked into the Inferno Dragon's eyes through the flames. He knew he could bring its pet back to life since it was a cultivation site, but he was still moved by its sacrifice.

Boom!

Su Ping ran to another boulder.

That boulder was just a little bit smaller than the first one. Su Ping placed his hands under the boulder and unleashed all of his strength!

"Come on!!" Su Ping shouted.

His voice echoed across the venue.

Chapter 626: Up!!

Crack!

Su Ping's arms were trembling. The raging strength was too much for him to handle. He was unable to take that sudden outburst of strength, even while having the first level of the Solar Bulwark!

Bang!

His arms broke; his head bumped into the boulder due to the inertia, leaving it cracked and bleeding!

And yet, the boulder had remained completely unmoving!

It didn't even move an inch!!

The boulder would not give in, no matter how loudly Su Ping shouted or how much strength he exerted. The boulder was like an eye of coldness looking down on that pathetic creature!

"He is too weak..."

The Golden Crow elder on the right blinked. It could tell that Su Ping was still too weak to move the boulder, even after using all those secret skills and the astral powers from his battle pets!

Diqiong stared at Su Ping silently.

He failed again...

That was not unexpected but somehow, Diqiong didn't feel delighted.

That creature was an ugly thing that it never thought highly of...

"Huh, he's biting off more than he can chew!"

"I cannot believe he's trying to move the eight thousand-eye boulder. Stupid thing!"

"Anyone of us able to lift a hundred-eye boulder is considered stunning. I cannot believe that creature is going for the thousand-eye boulders!"

Many gigantic Golden Crows laughed out loud while observing from the nearby twigs and leaves. They didn't even try to conceal their contempt.

...

Bang!

Having failed a second time, Su Ping smashed his head against the boulder once more. Blood gushed out.

His head was completely cracked and he died on the spot.

The next second, he re-appeared on that very spot, which had left the three Golden Crow elders in a grave mood. The other Golden Crows that were laughing at Su Ping stopped their mocking, while being surprised and confused.

The first revival had already taken them aback. They could not comprehend something like that. *Again?*

Having returned to life again, Su Ping looked away from that boulder and ran toward the next boulder he saw.

He forgot to ask about the passing standard, so he had to try the boulders one by one.

From the largest to the smallest one!

Each time, he would try his best. If he had picked a small boulder in the first try and carried it over the bridge—but was considered to have failed the test because the boulder was not large enough—he would regret his choice for the rest of his life!

Roar!

The Golden Crows heard the sonorous roar again. Amid the stares, the young human burned his energy and began his third try.

Failure!

Revival!

The fourth boulder!

Failure once more!

Revival again!

The fifth boulder!!

He died again and again, and then revived again and again. He shouted and shouted. He would call forth all his energy with every effort. His determination and perseverance had made the Golden Crows ignore his weird revivals; they were touched by Su Ping's tough spirit.

That creature, which was as small as a bug, had thoroughly shocked them!

“That creature...”

The three Golden Crow elders looked in speechless astonishment.

They had failed to see how Su Ping had revived the first time. They then failed to see it for the second time and then... the third, the fourth and the fifth time!

They simply couldn't understand what the theory supporting Su Ping's revivals was!

Those revivals weren't supported by any method or strength known to them!

It was beyond reason or logic!

The only explanation the Golden Crow elders could come up with was that the manipulator was a Heaven Master... or an even superior being!

The Golden Crow elders shuddered in fear just at the thought of the possibility. Someone superior to a Heaven Master was strong enough to harm the entire Golden Crow race!

Not even their first ancestor could stop such a threat!

The Golden Crow elders found it even harder to understand why Su Ping had gone there in the first place.

...

Outside on the twigs, some Golden Crows noticed what was happening in the other trial venue and exclaimed in surprise.

“Look, the one from the He family is challenging the five hundred-eye boulder!”

“Oh my god, it chose to pick that boulder!”

“That is almost frightening!”

Soon, more and more Golden Crows shifted their attention away from Su Ping to the larger venue.

There was a Golden Crow that was releasing wisps of golden energy which travelled to its three claws. The wisps of golden energy were wrapped around the boulder that was five times larger than the Golden Crow itself and the boulder was picked up!

The Golden Crow flapped its wings and the boulder gradually left the ground, as it was lifted into the air!

The Golden Crow had successfully moved the five hundred eye boulder!

The Golden Crows on the twigs cheered with excitement. Not all of them belonged to the He family, but at the end of the day, that young Golden Crow was a child of the entire Golden Crow race. It was a good thing for the entire race to have a child so talented!

“Well done...”

Diqiong also saw that. Diqiong then witnessed how the Golden Crow from the He family was flying toward the cloud bridge, about to arrive at the bottomless pit by the edge.

Diqiong looked away after two seconds to look at what was happening in the small venue. There, a human was still trying to battle against the boulders.

The first boulder he had tried to lift was a ten thousand-eye boulder; he currently was having a go at a one thousand-eye boulder.

Still, it was too heavy for him!

Diqiong knew it was impossible for Su Ping to succeed!

Even Diqiong, if it didn't have the emperor-level bloodline and great talent, it wouldn't have moved the thousand-eye boulder at all!

Not to mention that Su Ping was just a human!

Soon, Su Ping failed that attempt.

He had lost count of how many times he had failed.

But he never stopped. He would only kill himself quickly so that he could move on to the next boulder of a smaller size.

That time, it was an eight hundred-eye boulder!

Boom!

Su Ping went all out with the help of his three battle pets, and the boulder began to show signs of giving in!

This time, the boulder moved!

The moment the boulder moved, Diqiong—who had been focusing its entire attention on Su Ping—widened its eyes in disbelief.

Did Su Ping just move an eight hundred-eye boulder?!

It's not possible!

Some of the other Golden Crows had noticed Su Ping's move as well; they cried out in alarm. They had thought that the human would eventually lift a dozen-eye boulder at most. It was surprising that the eight hundred-eye boulder was moving!

...

"Yes!"

At the venue, Su Ping noticed that the boulder began to sway a little bit. He was ravished by joy.

He had never seen that with the previous boulders. That was the first boulder he had been able to move!

And yet, that was it. It only moved a little bit.

Su Ping understood that he couldn't have possibly lifted the boulder.

However, he finally had an idea of what kind of boulder would be suitable for him!

He gave up on that boulder. Su Ping looked around and found a boulder that was two thirds of that one!

"Give me strength..." he said to his three battle pets.

He didn't know how many times he had said those words to them.

Unsurprisingly, raging strength was poured into him. Su Ping stared at the Inferno Dragon who had once again burnt itself to give Su Ping more strength.

He had seen that many times; he wanted to cry his eyes out every time it happened.

His friend trusted him completely and was loyal to him!

He would never let the Inferno Dragon down!

“Come on!!!” Su Ping bellowed. His clothes burst, turning into rags and the wind blew his dark hair back. Even the Ashura energy was pouring into his arms.

Boom. The boulder was nudged!

The boulder was lifted off the ground!

He picked it up!!

“Ah!!”

Su Ping’s shout grew even more sonorous, echoing across the entire venue.

He lifted the boulder off the ground. Faster and faster, he flew to the sky!!

The boulder was as large as a thousand aircraft carriers; Su Ping was almost as invisible as a speck of dust while being under the boulder.

Still, that speck of dust was carrying that boulder above its head!

“Six hundred-eye boulder!!”

“I can’t believe it!!”

Outside, the Golden Crows cried out in disbelief. More and more Golden Crows were alerted and they turned their gazes toward the small venue.

Su Ping was carrying the six hundred-eye boulder as he flew toward the cloud bridge. The Golden Crows widened their eyes in complete silence.

Chapter 627: No. 2

A six hundred-eye boulder!

That boulder is heavier than the one the Golden Crow from the He family was carrying!!

How could that human... lift that boulder?

Diqiong stared blankly at Su Ping. Looking from a distance, the crow was only able to see that boulder; the human under the boulder was so tiny he could barely be seen.

Still, that tiny creature was lifting a boulder much larger in size, not to mention that the environment at the venue was especially harsh!

For the Golden Crows outside, lifting a boulder of that size might not be a great deal, but still, they would be impressed.

Whoosh!

At the venue, amid all the gazes, the tiny human who had lifted the boulder was flying across the cloud bridge; he reached the edge and then threw the boulder.

The boulder fell into the bottomless pit; the tiny human was panting heavily as he continued hovering.

He was like a speck of dust floating in the air.

But no Golden Crow would forget about that speck of dust.

“He has roughly mastered three types of Nature’s rules when his rank is so low...”

The three Golden Crow elders commented. Compared with the other Golden Crows, the three elders were calmer; they had already concluded which boulder Su Ping would lift according to his first attempt at borrowing his battle pets’ strength. The fact that Su Ping had managed to move the six hundred-eye boulder was within their expectations.

The only thing which perplexed those elders was Su Ping’s revivals.

They could not understand that, at all!

“In the List of Saviors of Earth and Heaven, this descendant of the Heaven Master can earn a place on the Earth List!” the Chief Elder said. No one could tell whether the Chief Elder was happy or not.

The elder on the right nodded in agreement. “You’re right. But just barely making the cut. Having a place among the first million is good enough for him.”

“It’s so sad that only one can make that list, of all the young Golden Crows of this generation...” The elder on the left heaved a sigh of disappointment. The young Golden Crows’ performances were subpar in its eyes.

“The He family kids are doing well. They can become our imperial guards,” the elder on the right said.

“It’s not even close to its big sister.”

...

While the three elders chatted, Su Ping was gazing at the boulder as it fell into the pit. He breathed in relief. He turned around and shouted into the air, “Have I passed this round?”

“Yes!”

The voice could be heard all around him. It was the Chief Elder.

Su Ping was glad. *Good. I passed it.*

He didn’t want much. He only aspired to get through the test and get the materials for the Solar Bulwark’s second level.

Whoosh!

Su Ping suddenly felt how a wisp of energy enveloped him. Following that, his view changed; he was outside the trial venue.

The Inferno Dragon and the other two battle pets were standing next to him; he felt them before he saw them.

“Thank you so much,” Su Ping said. The three battle pets were exhausted. Su Ping felt a surge of complicated feelings.

The Dark Dragon Hound barked as if to say “don’t mention it.”

The Inferno Dragon snorted casually as if it had forgotten about the pain of burning its soul countless times.

The Purple Python wiggled its tail to show that it was relaxed.

Su Ping took a deep breath and placed them back in the contract space so they could rest for a bit.

Su Ping turned around and looked into the larger venue. Many young Golden Crows in there were still moving the boulders to pass their trials.

“Come here.” It was Diqiong’s crisp voice.

Su Ping felt a swift move, and the next thing he saw was Diqiong standing right in front of him!

Diqiong said nothing to Su Ping. It was gazing at the other young Golden Crows.

Su Ping said nothing, either. He waited for the young Golden Crows to finish their trials.

Su Ping noticed that many of the participants were moving boulders that were much smaller than the one he had carried. Some of the boulders were just one hundredth of the boulder he picked!

“They’re choosing such small boulders. Can they pass the trial?” Su Ping was compelled to ask.

Diqiong lowered its head. “Of course. I’ll have you know, those boulders are not small. They can pass the test as long as the boulder is above ten eyes in size. Of course, that is the lowest standard.”

Su Ping was dumbstruck.

A ten-eye boulder was much, much smaller than the one he had chosen.

So, I wasted all that strength for nothing?

Su Ping was speechless. He decided to ask and make sure about the testing standards from then onwards.

...

Soon enough, the young Golden Crows finished their trials.

There were several Golden Crows able to carry four or five hundred-eye boulders and they caused a storm of cheering.

The results were posted at the end of the trial. Ranking No. 1 was the Golden Crow from the Jue family, which was considered to be one of the powerful branches of the Golden Crow race. The young Golden Crow, surprisingly, had outperformed the young Golden Crows from the He family and the Qiong family; it had successfully carried an eight hundred-eye boulder!

Ranking No. 2 was Su Ping!

A six hundred-eye boulder!

In third place was the young Golden Crow from the He family and the one from the Qiong family. Both carried five hundred-eye boulders!

The other Golden Crows carried four or three hundred-eye boulders, and smaller ones in some cases.

The young crows participating in the trial were stunned speechless. Ranking No. 2 was a foreign creature that they couldn't even recognize!

Such an unknown creature was supposed to be awfully weak!

And he had carried a six hundred-eye boulder!

The young Golden Crows found it hard to believe, so they didn't trust the results. Still, they were afraid to protest during such a grand occasion, where their parents and elders were present.

The first round ended. The second round came right after.

The second round would gauge the spirit and soul!

This time, the Chief Elder didn't create an individual venue for Su Ping; the Chief Elder would act as personal examiner. As the second round kicked off, a dark black dragon tore through the void and appeared above the branches.

That dark dragon was larger than anyone could see and the scales were cast with iron. Each scale was as large as ten aircraft carriers. The dragon was hovering in the sky and that roar seemed to originate from ancient times. It was more shocking than any other dragon's roar Su Ping had ever heard.

"A dragon?"

Su Ping stared at the dark dragon blankly.

Roar!!

The dark dragon roamed about in the sky and gradually curled up together. That pair of gigantic dragon eyes were fixed on all the young Golden Crows and Su Ping. The dragon's mouth could eat up over a thousand young Golden Crows in a single bite!

When the dark dragon's look reached him, Su Ping felt his brain receive a shock, and then his soul left his body.

He couldn't even begin to describe that terror!

"Woo!"

"Squeak!"

Many Golden Crows began to cry in fear behind Su Ping, trying yet failing to brave the dark dragon's stares. Some Golden Crows covered their heads with their wings, shaking in fright!

The young Golden Crows were terrified!

“That’s the Dark Star Dragon that is born in chaos and feeds on stars!” Diqiong explained with a grave mind.

The explanation was for Su Ping.

Su Ping looked at Diqiong.

“The second round is about to begin. I hope you won’t wet yourself.” Diqiong sounded indifferent.

Su Ping focused his mind. *A creature born in chaos? So, an ancient creature that was just like the Golden Crows.*

“Squeak... you bald bird, you’re making me scare your kids again. Aren’t you afraid one day I’ll get impatient and eat them up?”

The Dark Star Dragon grinned a cold grin at the young Golden Crows.

Since the beginning of chaos, the Dark Star Dragons and the Golden Crows had been fighting against each other.

The three Golden Crow elders glared at the Dark Star Dragon in silence.

But because of that threat, the young Golden Crows began to feel even more horrified.

The Dark Star Dragons and the Golden Crows were sworn enemies; the weak ones would become the food of another.

It was evident that the Dark Star Dragon was over a thousand times stronger than the young Golden Crows and the deep-rooted fear against Dark Star Dragons made some of the young Golden Crows want to drop out from the trial.

Chapter 628: A Trace of Heaven Master

“For this round, you will go into the Dark Star Dragon and catch the Dark Blood Worms!”

The Chief Elder’s voice echoed.

The Chief Elder didn’t have to go into the details, since that was the same for every year’s trial; the young Golden Crows knew what to do. They were nonetheless frightened the moment they saw the Dark Star Dragon.

It was just like an ordinary person being fine with seeing a snake, but it was an entirely different thing to find an item in a pit full of snakes.

“Dark Blood Worms?”

Su Ping didn’t understand.

Diqiong helped him. “The Dark Blood Worms live inside the Dark Star Dragon and can make very disturbing sounds. Those with a weak spirit can lose their bearing because of fear. Try to be careful.”

Su Ping asked a critical question. "How many Dark Blood Worms am I supposed to catch to pass this round?"

"How many?"

Diqiong glared at him from the corner of its eye. "Catching one will be good enough."

Su Ping finally set his mind at ease.

If he hadn't found out, he would have tried catching as many as possible till the end of the round, or else he would always be worried.

"Come on in, kids!" the Dark Star Dragon said. It opened its bloody mouth to reveal its fangs. The dark swirl inside the mouth carried a sense of destruction.

The first step for that second round was to get inside the Dark Star Dragon.

Many young Golden Crows felt their blood freeze as they stared into the dragon's mouth.

Su Ping, too, felt stressed. The Dark Star Dragon's rank was lower than that of the three Golden Crow elders, but the three had restrained their energy while the Dark Star Dragon was unleashing all the violence it had. It made the young Golden Crows feel that they were drenched in an ocean of blood.

But... I've seen things like this before.

Su Ping managed to calm himself down quickly.

He had seen other creatures like that and they, too, didn't hide any strength.

Su Ping had been convinced by the system's ability of revivals in the previous round. Since he had proven he wouldn't die for real, he took the lead and dashed toward the Dark Star Dragon.

"Look."

"That human!"

"How bold. He went first!"

"Hmm. Let's see if he manages to at least remain standing in a bit."

The Golden Crows were surprised and some were even angry.

It made them feel ashamed that Su Ping had dared to go into the Dark Star Dragon first, when the other young Golden Crows were still there, making up their minds. He stole their thunder!

"That human..."

Diqiong was also taken aback; the Dark Star Dragon was intimidating, even for her. The fact that Su Ping could resort to action so fast was proof of his strong will.

Back at the nest, Diqiong had already been surprised that Su Ping could focus on cultivation in that harsh environment. Diqiong had partly gauged Su Ping's spirit, but it turned out that his will was stronger than expected.

“Hmm!”

A young Golden Crow that was large as an aircraft carrier snorted. With an outburst of golden light, it flapped its wings and flew toward the Dark Star Dragon, catching up to Su Ping soon after.

“From the He family!”

“Well done!”

Many Golden Crows cheered. Many had been astounded when they saw that Su Ping had snatched No. 2 in the first round, the Golden Crows were astounded. Most of them were angered and startled when Su Ping jumped toward the Dark Star Dragon first. He had stolen the young Golden Crow’s thunder at their trial!

That foreign creature should have behaved instead of being a show-off!

The Golden Crows had been born in chaos since the ancient times and their first ancestor was also a Heaven Master. Of all the ancient creatures, the Golden Crows were considered to be among the best!

Whoosh!

More young Golden Crows flew toward the Dark Star Dragon.

The onlookers were overjoyed.

Su Ping heard their cries of delight, which he found strange. He noticed they were a bit too hostile to him. He was just a visitor, not an enemy who went to challenge them.

Never mind.

Su Ping shook his head; he wasn’t in the mood to bother about that. He only went there to find the materials... It would be the best for him if he could pass the trial and the Golden Crows kept their promises. Still, if the trial itself could inspire his potential, the trip would be more than rewarding!

“Huh? I see a vermin here!”

The Dark Star Dragon noticed Su Ping.

Its big eyes deemed Su Ping a creature as small as a grain of sand.

“He’s a participant,” the Chief Elder said to the Dark Star Dragon, “Treat him like one!”

The Dark Star Dragon found it interesting. *Since when could a foreign creature get involved in the Golden Crows’ trial?* The dragon sneered but didn’t ask other questions. “Are you not afraid of death?” the dragon questioned the tiny human that had arrived first.

Su Ping stopped and looked up.

Since he was very close, it was impossible to see the dragon’s complete body. He couldn’t even see the dragon’s head in its entirety.

“Shall we begin?” Su Ping asked.

The Dark Star Dragon was enraged. Su Ping had ignored its question!

So, killing intent alone doesn't scare this vermin.

"Huh... yes, we shall begin!"

Cruel killing intent emerged in the dragon's eyes; wisps of dark energy roamed in the surroundings.

While the Dark Star Dragon was unleashing the wisps of dark energy, Su Ping heard a cold voice coming from behind him, "Hmm, I heard that you're a human, right? I do not care what your race is, but this is the trial for Golden Crows. Get out of the way!" He felt an intrusion in his mind; it was a presence as tough as a glistening sword.

"Well, baby bird, you don't have the right to ask me that!"

Su Ping sneered. It was a Golden Crow, but it was just a young bird after all. He would argue when Diqiong treated him impolitely, not to mention that the fledgling didn't enjoy Diqiong's high status.

"You!"

The Golden Crow flew into a rage and its eyes were breathing the fires of anger.

Right then, space trembled. Before they knew it, darkness prevailed in the world. They felt a strong killing intent in the dark.

The Golden Crow that was about to teach Su Ping a lesson was startled by the sudden change; it saw that the sky had become pitch dark. In the meantime, the Dark Star Dragon had revealed its true nature. Its mouth was smelly and its throat was as loud as thundering. Some dragon images sprang up in the air.

Those images were as large as the Golden Crows, but the dragon images looked corroded and decayed. The Golden Crows were the target of the dragon images.

"Damn it!"

The Golden Crow from the He family was not in the mood to discipline Su Ping; it unleashed a golden light with a grave look, attempting to keep the dark images at bay.

While the Golden Crow was trying its best to withstand the strike, some dragon images were also heading toward Su Ping. Those dragon images were making gestures that were indeed threatening.

Su Ping took a step forward.

Boom!

A dragon image roared and smashed its way toward Su Ping, but the dragon image was dispersed upon making contact, as if Su Ping were a piece of rock!

Su Ping was an unsheathed sword. He cut away all the dragon images that were striking him!

"His spirit and soul are so strong!"

"The Dark Star Dragon's evil energy cannot affect him at all!"

"I cannot believe a human can do this!"

The Golden Crows were dumbfounded.

The onlookers were unable to see what the participants were seeing, such as the dragon images. All of them had felt that the Dark Star Dragon seemed to be more intimidating than before, but that was it. They saw that the Golden Crows were fighting something invisible in the air and only Su Ping was moving toward that bloody mouth with a steady pace.

Even an adult Golden Crow would shudder in fear when looking into that bloody mouth, but Su Ping didn't seem to be affected at all!

That vermin!

The Dark Star Dragon noticed that as well. It, too, was both angered and surprised. This beast was an immemorial savior born in chaos. The Golden Crows had captured it and used it to test the young Golden Crows, but the dragon thought it wasn't too bad. What it could not accept was for such a puny foreign creature to belittle it!

Roar!!

The Dark Star Dragon snarled and bared its teeth at Su Ping.

Su Ping's eyes were turning redder. The Force Field began to appear behind him, bit by bit.

The Force Field grew larger and larger.

There were demons dancing around. The Force Field was like a portal to an unspeakable world. They were able to catch glimpses of massive creatures inside.

"That is the... Soul Mirror!"

The Golden Crows were taken aback.

What surprised them was not the fact that Su Ping had been able to manifest the Soul Mirror, but the fact that the things inside the Soul Mirror!

The three elders wore solemn expressions. A gigantic creature was running around in the Force Field. The three elders became frightened; they perceived something with a power on par with them!

No one could fabricate the creatures in the Soul Mirror. Only the things witnessed with one's eyes could be reflected in the Soul Mirror!

That was to say, Su Ping had seen those horrifying things himself!

That human is... strange!

Once again, the three elders were shocked by Su Ping's mysterious traits. His rank was low but the Soul Mirror was threatening; the creatures inside were bloodthirsty and cruel. If Su Ping had seen them, they must have seen him as well!

Su Ping would have most certainly died if he ever met those creatures, unless those creatures hadn't bothered about that puny human!

"Wait, is that...?"

All of a sudden, the Chief Elder narrowed its eyes. In the spinning Force Field, a skeleton sitting on a throne flashed past its sight.

Around the skeleton's feet were piles of white bones. The majestic skeleton was resting its eyes on the throne but no one could ignore it.

Inside Su Ping's Force Field, the skeleton was slowly looking up!

It seemed that the skeleton was able to look through time and space, straight into the Chief Elder's eyes. The elder crow's heart skipped a beat; it immediately prepared itself for defense.

But the skeleton disappeared.

"That was... a Heaven Master..." the elder on the right said with a trembling voice.

Heaven Master!

That was a name that had a bewitching magic that silenced the three elders.

"Is that the human's Heaven Master?" the elder on the left asked after the silence.

The Chief Elder replied, "No. That Heaven Master carried a strong undead energy, not like the human Heaven Master I met..."

Both elders fell into silence again.

That was another Heaven Master!

The descendant of the human Heaven Master had met other Heaven Masters!

The elders were even more confused about Su Ping's intentions.

...

Roar... what?

The Dark Star Dragon was about to snarl at Su Ping when it saw the Force Field; the snarl never left the dragons' throat.

The dragon's scales were trembling. *What was that?*

It was a passing glimpse of something, but the dragon was convinced of what it had seen.

This vermin's Soul Mirror had a Heaven Master!

No way!

The Dark Star Dragon looked at Su Ping in confusion. All of a sudden, the dragon asked itself a question... *How come a foreign creature was participating in the Golden Crow's trial?*

The dragon found an answer of its own. It turned around and glared at the three elders, for the dragon believed that three old birds had almost gotten it in a fatal danger!

A Heaven Master must have sent Su Ping over there to practice!

And by trying to teach Su Ping a lesson, it had offended that Heaven Master!

Damn the old birds!

You three old birds!

The Dark Star Dragon was furious. Although seething in anger, it lessened the pressure on Su Ping. Since he was related to a Heaven Master, the dragon decided that it had to make it easy for him!

Of course, even without that favor, the dragon knew that the human could pass the trial.

“It is a good thing that I’m a smart dragon. I almost fell for their plot!” The Dark Star Dragon said to itself.

The more powerful the creature was, the more perceptive they would be. The young Golden Crows were able to see that skeleton king in Su Ping’s Force Field, but they would not recognize it as a Heaven Master.

Powerful was a relative term. The Dark Star Dragon was powerful enough in the young crow’s eyes.

“What?”

Su Ping felt the burden had been lifted from him. He noticed that the Dark Star Dragon stopped releasing that violent energy at him; the beast only had a threatening look but no more cruel energy was emitted.

It was as if the dragon was a living, vicious thing a moment before, and then, while its size was still the same, the dragon had turned into a statue unable to scare him in the slightest.

Chapter 629: Tablets of Principles

Whoosh!

Since the stress had disappeared, Su Ping moved forward and entered the mouth of the Dark Star Dragon.

“He’s going in!”

“Has he regained his consciousness? That was fast!”

“I think I saw something horrifying in that human’s Soul Mirror...”

Many Golden Crows were astounded when they saw that Su Ping was the first one to go into the Dark Star Dragon; some had noticed the horrifying presence in Su Ping’s Force Field.

“...”

Diqiong remained silent. Once again, Su Ping had surprised her.

...

Are those Dark Blood Worms?

As soon as he went into the dragon's maw, Su Ping saw clusters of dark worms flying toward him. Those worms were more like snakes; they were creatures of the undead.

Su Ping was not a stranger to the undead kind. He fearlessly ran to them.

Boom!

He wielded his Fist of Exorcist. A Dark Blood Worm received the attack and was dispersed like mist. The creature was reborn from the mist, although having become weaker; it immediately started to run away from Su Ping.

Su Ping would not let that happen. He went after the worm and punched it repeatedly. The worm was only half its original size in the end.

"Let's go!"

Su Ping grabbed the worm's tail and yanked it out of the Dark Star Dragon's mouth.

Seeing him reemerge from the beast shocked the Golden Crows yet again.

It had been a matter of minutes ever since Su Ping went in. How could he have subdued and captured a Dark Blood Worm that quickly?

The young Golden Crows were still countering the dragon's evil energy when Su Ping came out. He cast them a look and then flew toward Diqiong without delay.

Halfway through, he was shocked to find that a load had been lifted off from his hand. The Dark Blood Worm was gone.

Su Ping stopped at once.

"You've passed the second round."

The Chief Elder's voice resounded in his mind.

Su Ping was able to breathe. So, he passed the second round. That was to say, the Dark Blood Worm he had just captured must have been taken back by the dragon.

What a stingy dragon!

It wasn't like he was going to take the worm away with him or anything.

Anyway, Su Ping went back to the place where Diqiong was and waited for the third round.

As Su Ping flew back, two young Golden Crows managed to break free; one of them was the one that had threatened Su Ping just then.

The two Golden Crows were flying toward the mouth of the Dark Star Dragon.

"You got lucky," said Diqiong, keeping its gaze on Su Ping for a while and eventually looking away; all to pretend that his performance was undeserving of praise.

Su Ping rolled his eyes. "Lucky? I passed because I'm good!"

“Bah.”

Diqiong sneered. “You wouldn’t have found one so easily if that Dark Star Dragon hadn’t cut you some slack and straight off given you a Dark Blood Worm.”

“What?” Su Ping did not understand. *The Dark Blood Dragon was making things easy for me?*

Su Ping noticed the two young Golden Crows fly into the mouth and disappear into its depths.

On the other hand, just then, he had found a Dark Blood Worm as soon as he entered the mouth. Being the case, Su Ping trusted that Diqiong was not lying to him. But he couldn’t understand. “Why would the dragon do that?”

Diqiong was tongue-tied.

You’re asking why the Dark Star Dragon did that?

Diqiong had also noticed that presence in Su Ping’s Soul Mirror. Being a Golden Crow with an emperor-level bloodline, Diqiong was more sensitive to such terrifying presences since birth.

Diqiong had a general idea why the Dark Star Dragon was making it easy for Su Ping: it was merely afraid of dying.

“Humph!”

Diqiong didn’t share its discovery with Su Ping.

It wasn’t like Diqiong could have told him that he had scared the Dark Star Dragon. That would only make his smug attitude to worsen.

Su Ping was speechless. *What’s wrong with this bird? It didn’t finish the sentence!*

While Su Ping and Diqiong were talking, the Dark Star Dragon was hovering in the sky and its roars were intimidating. Even some of the adult Golden Crows were shuddering in fear. Many of them had taken a few steps back.

Half an hour later.

The two young Golden Crows that had gone ahead of the others and into the dragon’s mouth were coming back. Su Ping saw them but couldn’t recognize them; he didn’t care who the Golden Crows were as long as he had passed the trial.

As for the ranking, he couldn’t care less about it. He found no fun in boasting to a flock of birds. It wasn’t like he was talking to some pretty girls.

The other young Golden Crows broke free from the evil energy’s influence, then flew into the dragon’s mouth one after the other. The onlookers cheered as the first two young Golden Crows returned.

Feeling bored as they waited, Su Ping sat on the twig and closed his eyes to cultivate.

“Stu... system, didn’t you say that the hope for me passing the Golden Crow’s trial was slim?” Su Ping asked.

He didn't care about the ranking, but he could tell that he had been doing pretty well up to that point.

He was ranked No. 2 in the first round, and he delivered way above the passing standard!

For the second round, he was the first to go in and the first to return. That was well done.

This was not something the system expected. Su Ping began to wonder if the system was at all reliable.

"What are you getting at?"

The system didn't sound happy because the first syllable Su Ping had uttered was just to provoke it.

"You wouldn't have passed the first round if it were 10 days ago! But, you cultivated in the last 10 days. Do you have no f*cking idea that you gained strength in your cultivation to prepare for the trial?"

"Being such an intelligent system, how come you can't avoid that word? I cannot believe you just said that word," Su Ping replied.

"That's beside the point!"

"If you say so..."

Su Ping recalled how he had tried to pass the first round. He was trying to mobilize all the strength he had when he lifted that boulder, including the most updated swordplay version.

But he didn't wield any sword, per se. He just used the swordplay theory in himself.

He used the essence.

The essence was not limited by the shapes of the weapons. He could also become a weapon!

"I think I've definitely progressed fast in the last ten days..." Su Ping said to himself.

The system snorted. "Of course! Apart from what you learned during cultivation, your constitution is different from ten days ago. Will you just look at this world? It belongs to the ancient times. What you sense is not astral power in the air, but the chaotic anima born from chaos!

"While being on this Celestial Star, your body has been refined hundreds of times in the past ten days!

"Your bodily strength has reached the peak of the Void State, and when you use other strength augmentation skills, your physical strength can even be compared to that of the Fate State!"

Su Ping was surprised.

My body was refined?

My physical strength could be compared to that of the Fate State?

He lowered his head. He saw that his pores were glistening. The Divine Energy inside him was richer than before.

When visiting the Demigod Burial, he would often bathe in Joanna's spring, and he had gathered a fair amount of Divine Energy. At the moment, he noticed that most of his blood vessels had become golden; the Divine Energy inside him was twice as much as before!

I've stayed here for ten days and this happened?!

"This is a top-level cultivation site. The mere fact of surviving in this place is going to benefit you!" the system continued, "You've also been using the Chaotic Star Chart in the past ten days, thus being able to absorb chaotic anima. The result is stunning.

"Besides, you were staying in the nest of that Golden Crow with emperor-level bloodline. The chaotic anima in that nest is over a hundred times richer than in the outside!"

Su Ping blinked.

That nest?

He looked at Diqiong who was looking at the sky.

So, I profited because of that condescending bird?

Su Ping was not all happy about it, because he found that bird was indeed kind of petty.

"What you've gained in the past ten days can even be compared to reaching the Solar Bulwark's second level," the system concluded.

Su Ping nodded.

He did feel much stronger than before. He just wondered... After collecting the materials he needed and reached the second level, how strong would he become?

...

The second round lasted three days.

Of course, that was calculated based on Su Ping's time. It was less than half a day according to the time flow on the Celestial Star.

Su Ping cultivated during those three days; he had to remind the system to keep deducting the energy points.

The daily admission fee was 9000 energy points and the renewal was automatic unless he asked to be sent back.

After the second round ended, the Chief Elder announced the result. Su Ping was No. 1!

That was within their expectations, but the Golden Crows were still stunned when they heard it from their Chief Elder.

A foreign creature was able to get first place in a trial for Golden Crows!

This foreign creature is extraordinary!

Those Golden Crows had been born in chaos, and each of them carried an outstanding combat strength. Once they reached adulthood, Golden Crows could reverse time and travel throughout the universe. And yet, they lost to a foreign creature!

"That human..."

A young Golden Crow that was being surrounded by a crowd glared at Su Ping coldly. The bird was from the He family. It didn't get neither first nor second place in the initial round, then lost its chance at first place again!

I should be the most glamorous one, the star!

Damn it!

"Let's see what happens in the comprehensive trial."

"I wonder... What gave him the courage to steal our thunder? He's underestimating us."

"We are ancient creatures. That vermin is despicable!"

The other Golden Crows didn't like Su Ping, either. They could not accept the fact that a foreign creature was swaggering around in front of them!

"Your time out has ended," the Chief Elder said. Above the head of the Dark Star Dragon appeared a crack leading to nothingness. That was the Dark Star Dragon's prison.

"You bald bird, you're kicking me down the ladder, you know?"

The Dark Star Dragon interspersed its message with curses, but it did fly into that nothingness. The dragon's actions belied the fact that it was a well-behaved creature.

The crack towards nothingness was closed after the Dark Star Dragon left. The Chief Elder looked at the young Golden Crows and announced, "The topic for the third round will be related to skills.

"Here we have a Tablet of Principles. The one able to stimulate the most principles will win!

"The minimum standard is three!"

A wind sprang up as the Chief Elder's voice faded away. A great amount of massive tablets gradually descended from the sky and landed on the twigs.

The young Golden Crows were like ants when standing in front of the tables; Su Ping was like a grain of sand.

Chapter 630: Ultimate Testbook

Tablet of Principles?

Su Ping raised his head and stared at the tablet that was too tall for him, as he couldn't see the top. The tablet was primitive; he felt he was gazing into the universe!

Vast, empty, lonely!

The tablet seemed to be shrouded in a fog; there seemed to be nothing on the tablet, but at the same time, it gave the impression of being filled with stars!

That was a strange feeling that could hardly be put into words. Su Ping felt he was about to understand something but that feeling immediately vanished.

"Stu... system, what is a Tablet of Principles?" Su Ping asked.

“Don’t try me!” the system warned Su Ping.

Su Ping pretended to be confused. “What are you talking about?”

“Hmm, you know what I’m talking about!” The system stopped this badgering and began to explain to Su Ping, “Just like ancient creatures, the Tablets of Principles were born from chaos, except that the Tablets of Principles are not living creatures. Still, they carry with them principles of everything found in the universe!

“Once you understand the Tablets of Principles, you understand the principles of the universe.

“But it’s almost impossible to understand the Tablets of Principles. Not even the three Golden Crow elders can do that.”

Su Ping was surprised.

That tablet he was staring at... contained the principles of the universe?

That was to say, the Tablet of Principles was the ultimate textbook!

“You can say that,” the system replied.

“...”

This stupid, peeping maniac.

“But, to even start to learn the Tablet of Principles, you must be at the Star Rank or above. You can’t understand the principles if you’re not, and even if you can, the learning would make your head explode!” the system added.

Su Ping decided not to hold the system accountable for all the peeping since it did offer an explanation. He had become used to the snooping system anyway...

“You said that the three elders haven’t yet fully understood the Tablets of Principles. Are you saying that anyone who can understand the tablets would be more powerful than the three elders?” Su Ping asked.

“Of course.”

Su Ping gasped.

The three Golden Crow elders were terrifying creatures, able to destroy the Blue Planet within an instant. The Deep Caves’ crisis for the Blue Planet was nothing for those Golden Crows!

That Tablet of Principles was an artifact that could help anyone accomplish such a feat in one go!

But, one had to understand the principles for that to happen!

“Also, if you don’t have enough brainpower, you can analyze the Tablet of Principles for ten thousand years and still be unable to understand it,” the system continued.

“...”

The system: “Yep.”

...

“What are you thinking of?” Diqiong asked Su Ping. It found Su Ping was in a strange state.

Su Ping was in a trance; Diqiong was curious about what was going on in that human’s mind.

The royal crow had belittled the human at the very beginning. But then, Diqiong became interested in him as time passed and wanted to know more.

Su Ping came back to his senses and made up an answer, “I don’t know what I should have for dinner.”

Diqiong rolled its eyes.

This human is still despicable!

“You’ll be working in groups of ten. The third round has now begun,” the Chief Elder announced. Its voice echoed under the tree crown.

The young Golden Crows looked at each other.

Soon after, some of them took the lead and flew to the Tablet of Principles.

The other Golden Crows followed suit.

As ten Golden Crows had arrived in front of the Tablets of Principles, the other participants would have to stop as required by the rules.

The ten Golden Crows flew to the Tablets of Principles and unleashed the rules of an element they knew. The first one that all the Golden Crows used was the rule of flames!

The Golden Crows released their rules of flames which then were imbued in the tablet. Following that, glowing grains were manifested in a golden ray of light. That was the first principle lighting up!

Golden Crows had been born to understand the rules of flames, just like humans were born to understand how to eat and drink. Only some “problematic Golden Crows” would not understand the rule of flames.

The young Golden Crows began to resort to other rules they knew.

Some of the skills contained a destructive force; some Golden Crows were covered in lightning bolts, while others were able to create mountains out of thin air.

More and more grains began to light upon the Tablet of Principles.

Su Ping observed. He didn’t rush in to take his turn; he had to see what the Golden Crows were doing.

Those are all skills at the peak of the legendary rank! Su Ping thought. Those young Golden Crows were stunning; all their skills were quite destructive, and they had mastered skills of different sorts.

One of the Golden Crows used five different skills and had lit up five grains!

Those things are indeed powerful. They would be second to none on the Blue Planet; crushing the Otherworld Heavenly King would be a breeze. But those Golden Crows were still... merely baby birds! Su Ping said to himself. Those Golden Crows were terrifying!

Soon, the first group of Golden Crows finished their test.

Some returned in disappointment and some were proud.

Of the ten Golden Crows, nine passed and one failed.

Those that joined the first group were pretty confident about themselves. The Golden Crow that failed to pass didn't have enough strength when it was trying to light up the third grain. The Golden Crow tried and tried but still ended up failing.

"Are you going?" Diqiong asked Su Ping. It seemed that Diqiong was having high hopes.

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. "I'll observe first."

He was not in a hurry; all he needed to do was to pass the third round. He didn't care how good his scores would be in the end.

He had learned some things from the Golden Crows; he was inspired whenever the Golden Crows unleashed their skills.

The skills were a manifestation of rules and principles. It was usually hard to understand the underlying principles of skills, but maybe it was because he was standing close to the Tablet of Principles, Su Ping noticed that his brain was active; he was able to see the underlying principles. It was an amazing feeling.

It's a good thing that I can steal some knowledge, Su Ping said to himself that the trip had been rewarding, even if he couldn't get the materials for the second level of Solar Bulwark.

As the first group returned, the second group flew away. They were eager to show their strength, unlike the first group of Golden Crows who were quite shy and hesitant.

Soon after, ten Golden Crows flew out and several more did fly away from the twig as well, but they weren't fast enough. By the time ten had already gathered at the tablet, the slower ones would have to go back.

The second group's performance was also marvelous, even more inspiring than the first group. All of them passed.

Three of the Golden Crows had lit up four grains!

One had lit up five of them!

Those Golden Crows have mastered different rules and their knowledge is profound. I wonder what the adult Golden Crows can do...

The more Su Ping observed, the more excited he was. Those Golden Crows didn't just understand the rule of flames, but other rules as well.

When they demonstrated those rules by unleashing skills, their power rose to that of the Fate State!

As he watched, he thought of his Dark Dragon Hound, which had mastered the skills of almost all the kids he knew.

It was unfortunate that the skills the Dark Dragon Hound had mastered were at the Ocean State. He wondered if it could also learn the principles when its skills reached the Fate State.

I see that I have to train it harder! Su Ping said to himself.

Inside the contract space, the resting Dark Dragon Hound was resting when it felt an urge to tremble. It was not a good sign.

As time passed, more and more Golden Crows finished their third round.

The Golden Crow of the He family—the one that acted hostile toward Su Ping—had also finished its turn. It had lit up six grains, the best result thus far!

But, soon after, another young Golden Crow bested the He family Golden Crow by lighting up eight grains!

A huge sensation was swept across the crowd.

Su Ping could hear squeaks in his ears; he managed to understand some of the things the Golden Crows were speaking of in his mind. He learned that the Golden Crow that had lit up eight grains hadn't done that well in the first two rounds. It was seen as a dark horse for that round.

"Its strength is not balanced..." Su Ping said to himself.

That young Golden Crow nearly knew rules of all kinds!

But Su Ping found strange that apart from the usual rules of thunder, water, flames, light, and darkness, there was something he couldn't identify.

"Principles are varied. Those that aren't marked as basic principles can also be used here," the system explained, "The basic and most prominent principles contain countless smaller principles. You can also achieve great results if you can become an expert in one of the smaller principles! The rules of thunder and agility are seen as part of the principles! They work because the principles are supporting them!"

"..."

Su Ping had become used to the fact that the system would interfere with his train of thought, and the answer was much to his liking. "So, I have two already... I can pass if I can find the third one?!"

"Find..."

The system snorted. "You can try; you do have enough in you to pass this third round. The hard thing for you should be the first round, but your cultivation during the past ten days has helped you. You can wait for the end of the trial and have your potential inspired by the Golden Crows."

Since the system sounded that confident, Su Ping knew he could set his mind at ease. "I wonder if the Golden Crows would want to help me, a foreign creature, by then."

He shook his head. The third round was about to end. Not wasting more time, he flew toward the tablet.