

R. Paradise 821

Chapter 821: Ancient Ruins

Three materials were processed quickly, and Su Xiao began creating the Sun God, Apollo. With a flash of white light in Su Xiao's hand, a huge reaction occurred after the three materials merged.

Whoosh!

A wave of heat rushed forth. Between Su Xiao's hands emerged a fireball, resembling a miniature sun, with some sparkling crystal shards floating beside it. These were fragments of soul crystals, stabilizing the effect. Otherwise, the other two materials would explode upon contact.

The fireball floated between Su Xiao's hands, expanding and contracting intermittently. The compressed energy within was violent, causing Bu Bu Wang to cower behind Su Xiao in fear.

However, in the Reincarnation Paradise, creating Apollo wasn't perilous. Yet, in this world, if there were any mistakes, Su Xiao might even be killed by Apollo's explosion.

Apollo was undoubtedly powerful, but manufacturing it was too risky. If the energy inside the fireball were to erupt now, it could turn Su Xiao into gas within minutes.

Su Xiao concentrated intensely. In the darkness of the night, the fluctuating fireball in his hands illuminated half of the canyon. The Eye of the Apostle above closely monitored nearby movements.

About a dozen minutes later, a sphere the size of an apple appeared in Su Xiao's hand. The surface of the sphere glowed crimson, resembling a small sun. Putting away the completed Apollo, Su Xiao began making a second one.

Gurgle~

The meat soup bubbled and emitted a fragrant aroma. Su Xiao had finished making the second Apollo by the time the venison soup was stewed. If he found himself in dire straits during the subsequent melee of the Contracted Fighters, those around him would perish.

The power of Apollo was indeed formidable, but it had a fatal flaw—it required a full 30 seconds to detonate. Once activated, any contracted fighter with even moderate perception would immediately sense the horror and swiftly flee.

In specific terrains, Apollo would be able to display its power. It was highly probable that enemies within the explosion range would flee upon activation, leaving nothing but exploded air afterward.

However, there was a benefit. If Su Xiao found himself in a desperate situation, activating Apollo would instill terror in the enemies. They might disregard the heavily injured Su Xiao and flee the blast area, giving him a chance to catch his breath.

Moreover, Apollo could be stopped within the first 10 seconds of activation; beyond that, it would inevitably explode.

Stowing away Apollo, Su Xiao nicknamed it "Big Pineapple." Before enemies killed him, he'd make them "eat" a big pineapple.

This wasn't just about fighting to the death. Su Xiao intended to blow up everything, even the ships. In the valley, Su Xiao and Bu Bu Wang both held bowls of meat soup, savoring the warmth in this cold weather.

After satisfying their hunger, Su Xiao leaned against the stone wall, toying with a crystal bottle given to him by Anna, the Dark Elf Princess.

["Essence of the Moon"]

Origin: Dragon-Soaring Empire, Dark Elf Tribe

Quality: Pale Gold to Gold

Type: Restorative (Semi-Finished)

Effect 1: Upon consumption, it restores 100% of health and mana within 2 seconds, rapidly heals all injuries, increases neural reflex speed by 2%, and the effect lasts 5 minutes.

Rating: 310+

Introduction: An incompletely compounded potion, a replica of the 'Moon Essence.' It can be compounded a second time.

Reminder: Compounding a second time requires mastering skills such as 'Advanced Potion Making Lv. 20' or 'Alchemy Potionology Lv. 20.'

Reminder: Materials required for secondary compounding are Moonlight Concentrate, Starlight Grass, and Soul Crystal (Medium) x2.

Price: 86,000 Paradise Coins

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Previously, Su Xiao believed this crystal bottle contained a gold-quality potion. Now, it seemed to be between pale gold and gold quality. If he could complete the second compounding, its quality might likely elevate to gold. Of course, even its direct consumption had formidable effects.

Putting away the crystal bottle, Su Xiao could do a second compounding. As for materials, he could substitute with Paradise Coins upon returning to the Reincarnation Paradise.

However, this would depend on the intensity of the subsequent melee among the contracted fighters. Su Xiao would have no choice but to use it as a recovery item if things turned dire.

After resting against the stone wall for a moment, Su Xiao resumed his journey.

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The next morning, while enjoying the scenery along the way, Su Xiao noticed ruins ahead—a remnant of the 'Outlank' ancient ruins. Having encountered no enemies along the way, it was no wonder this mission lacked rewards.

Approaching the ruins, Su Xiao entered the ancient 'Outlank' ruins and discovered an enormously vast site. The ruins had existed for at least thousands of years. Some upright slabs had begun to weather; a gentle touch would cause them to crumble like tofu.

Overgrown with weeds, the ruins had become the territory of monkeys swinging through the vines.

[Hint: Hunters have entered the Outlank ancient ruins.]. You have 2 hours to venture deep into the ruins and enter the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty.]

A virtual map appeared before Su Xiao, encompassing all the ancient ruins. The area covered by the ruins was vast, spanning 30 kilometers horizontally and 28 kilometers vertically, forming an approximate square.

Through the virtual map, Su Xiao identified a disk at the center of the ruins, labeled as the 'Palace of the Dusk Dynasty.' That was his target. Su Xiao charted the shortest route and continued deeper into the ruins.

As he delved further, Su Xiao realized this place was once the site of a kingdom, the ancient capital of a bygone empire. Most residential structures had disappeared, leaving only weathered rubble. A few well-preserved relics, such as large stone sculptures or stone palaces, remained.

The desolation pervaded the ancient ruins, where remnants of former glory were reduced to mere stones. The ruins were divided into four zones. The outermost area was the grassland—where Su Xiao currently stands—known as the fourth zone.

Moving forward led to the wooded area, abundant with trees forming a circular forest, enclosing the two central zones of the ruins. This was the third zone. A vast expanse of crumbling walls and semi-weathered stone pillars emerged through the wooded area.

The intricate terrain made it challenging for anyone hiding among these ruins to be found. This was the second zone. Su Xiao held a notebook, jotting down and sketching the general scenes along the way.

Upon passing through the second zone, Su Xiao halted. Ahead lay a stone plaza and, at its center, a seemingly bottomless circular pit with a diameter of at least two kilometers. It was pitch black inside, emitting an ominous aura and a chilling sensation as if something lethal lurked within.

At the center of this two-kilometer-wide pit stood an extremely intact palace—the 'Palace of the Dusk Dynasty,' supported atop the circular pit.

Chapter 822: The Eve of the Battle for the World

"The Palace of the Dusk Dynasty was built on a circular stone platform. This platform was like an enlarged millstone, connected below by hundreds of stone pillars. These several hundred stone pillars, penetrating the circular pit, precisely supported the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty from above.

No one knew how this palace was constructed. Not to mention the backward architectural level of this world; even in modern times, building something like this would be impossible due to the depth of the circular pit below.

There were three five-meter-wide stone bridges at the three diagonals under the palace of the Dusk Dynasty's stone platform. Through any of these stone bridges, one could approach the palace.

These three stone bridges were extremely absurdly built. No guardrails were at the edges; they were just bare stone bridges. If a battle took place on these bridges, a slight misstep could lead to falling off the bridge into the malicious circular pit below.

Some fragmented stones slowly rotated above the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty, defying gravity. Su Xiao approached one of the stone bridges. Unsullied Dragon flash appeared in his hand, and he aimed a strike at the edge of the bridge.

Ping!

Small fragments of stone were splattered. Surprisingly, this stone bridge was unexpectedly sturdy. Mind you, even steel could be cut through by Su Xiao with one strike. Su Xiao's hand pressed against the bridge surface.

He sensed a thick energy surging within the stone bridge. It wasn't the bridge's inherent sturdiness but the internal energy protecting it. Trying to destroy the bridge was even more complex due to this inner energy.

Even with two Apollos, the bridge would, at most, melt partially. Destruction was impossible. Realizing the extraordinary sturdiness of the stone bridge, Su Xiao stepped onto it and proceeded towards the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty. It was an imposing palace.

Standing in front of it, anyone would feel their insignificance. Remaining vigilant, Su Xiao reached the palace. Two ten-meter-tall metal doors stood in the way, carved with a man wearing a crown and holding a scepter.

The man was kneeling with one knee, his arm extended, trying to touch a pile of flames about to be extinguished. A twisted sword was embedded in the fire, and a fully eclipsed sun was above the man.

Although it was just a sculpture, Su Xiao seemed to feel the scene inside. The Moonwolf had swallowed the sun, the flames were about to die out, and the world was quickly plunging into 'darkness,' sinking into the endless 'darkness.'

Only the king at the world's center was striving for the last ray of light to save his subjects and defeat the evil dragon. The king's subjects were humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, centaurs, goblins, giants, and trolls. The eight races had their territories. Although not entirely peaceful among themselves, they didn't invade one another.

The hot-tempered dwarves and proud elves forged weapons together while arguing. Giants and trolls attempted alliances. Centaurs roamed the grasslands, hunting. Goblins discover peculiar things every day. Humans facilitated trade among all races.

However, all this changed because of an evil dragon. Although the king defeated the evil dragon, he was about to die. Humans, elves, and giants drank the blood of the evil dragon, forming a legion named Dragon Soar. Orcs, dwarves, goblins, and trolls consumed the flesh of the evil dragon.

A hundred years later, the war between the Dragon Soar Empire and the Tribal Alliance began on the shattered continent, affecting both the king's subjects and the influence of the evil dragon's greed.

[Hint: The Hunter, across time, witnessed the rise and fall of the Dusk Dynasty. The Hunter's spirit resonates permanently (+2 to willpower.) The hint from the Reincarnation Paradise dispersed the scene before Su Xiao's eyes. After a few seconds of daze, the metal wood before him began to decay.

With a clatter, the ten-meter-tall metal door turned into a pile of dust, and the metal doors at the other two corners of the palace disappeared simultaneously.

"It seems the mission isn't without rewards." Su Xiao walked into the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty. Upon entering, he found the terrain inside the palace extremely complex. The entire Palace of the Dusk Dynasty had seven levels. In the center, a spiraling stone staircase ran through the palace.

Of the seven levels, the lower six contained numerous rooms and passageways. Without a map, Su Xiao would likely have gotten lost here. Yes, he was lost. Despite Su Xiao's perception, getting lost seemed absurd.

But after entering the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty, he found an energy pervading the palace. This energy didn't erode the human body but suppressed his perception, reducing his sensing radius to about four meters.

This energy felt somewhat familiar to Su Xiao, similar to the point inside the stone bridge.

Ascending the stone stairs, Su Xiao reached the seventh level, the highest level of the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty.

The seventh level was empty. At its deepest point was a throne made of gold, and a skeleton sat on the throne, wearing a crown and holding a scepter. Su Xiao approached and examined the skeleton on the throne. He found that the energy permeating the palace emanated from the scepter held by the skeletal figure.

Su Xiao's hand grabbed the wand.

Click, click, click...

The skeleton turned its head, its pitch-black eye sockets staring at Su Xiao. He quickly let go of the wand. At that moment, Su Xiao felt a malicious intent from below the palace. It was beyond horrifying.

Bu Bu Wang, curious, walked forward and was about to touch the skeleton. Su Xiao kicked it on the backside and made a gesture with his mouth. Silently, he said, "Don't touch." This skeleton was the king of the Dusk Dynasty, the one who defeated the evil dragon. He was suppressing something beneath the palace.

Su Xiao had already arrived at the Palace of the Dusk Dynasty, but the Reincarnation Paradise didn't provide any further hints. As Su Xiao was in doubt, the World Origin in his arms suddenly floated towards the skeleton.

"Contract, completed." The skeleton suddenly spoke, its voice seemingly from the depths of the underworld. Su Xiao tensed his body, Unsullied Dragonflash horizontally in front of him, and Bu Bu Wang tucked its tail, transforming into an 'Erha' sculpture, an exceptionally tacit cooperation between man and dog.

The palace fell silent. The World Core floated to the top of the skull and eventually embedded itself in the skeleton's forehead.

Boom!

A shockwave spread out, passing through Su Xiao. His vision blurred momentarily due to a highly aggressive spatial force. After a moment, Su Xiao shook his head and stood up. There was nothing unusual around him.

The skeleton remained seated on the throne, with the World Core embedded in its forehead. The Bu Bu Wang statue lay flat on the ground, which was quite convincing. "Silly dog, no danger." Su Xiao sheathed Unsullied Dragonflash and inserted the scabbard into his waist.

Bu Bu Wang trotted forward, hiding behind Su Xiao, showing its teeth to the skeleton as if saying, "This bone scares this dog. Master, I'll assist you in cutting it down." Of course, Su Xiao wouldn't attack the skeleton. This thing was tricky to provoke—rash actions lead to death!

Opening the War Channel, Su Xiao requested two permissions from the Reincarnation Paradise: one to modify the names in the War Channel and the other to send images. The Reincarnation Paradise granted his request.

Su Xiao sent all the edited maps and detailed information about the ancient ruins to the War Channel. As this information was revealed, the contractees were bewildered. Many started asking questions like, 'Can images be sent in the War Channel?' or 'Has this guy activated membership?'

After Su Xiao's final sentence, the messages flooded the War Channel. Traveler (Loner): "The above is the final detailed information about the war location."

'Traveler (Loner)' was, of course, Su Xiao. Just after he sent the information, a prompt appeared from the reincarnation paradise.

[Reincarnation Paradise Announcement: All contractees must arrive at the Outland Ancient Ruins within 24 hours. [The World Conquest War will officially commence in 26 hours!]

[Announcement: If any Contractee fails to arrive at the Outland Ancient Ruins within 24 hours, they will face compulsory execution penalties.]

[Announcement: Duration of the World Conquest War: 10 natural days.]. Reading books]

[Announcement: All Contractees must successfully protect the 'World Core' to form a 'Large-Scale Spatial Fixed Coordinate.' Victory in the World Conquest War relies on creating large-scale, fixed spatial coordinates.

The time to start the Large-Scale Spatial Fixed Coordinate is ten natural days. During this period, it is essential to prevent the Contractees from the Tianqi Paradise from seizing the World Core.]

[Announcement: If the World Conquest War fails, all Contractees will face compulsory execution penalties!]

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Su Xiao sat cross-legged on the palace roof, looking down below. It would soon be bustling here. In 26 hours, the entire Outland Ancient Ruins would become a battlefield. The war among the contractees was different from that among the natives.

Contractees had various abilities: mages surrounded by elements, heavily armored main tanks, psychic ability users, ghouls, Devil Fruit ability users, and more. There were countless unimaginable abilities, but none that wouldn't appear.

It would be a fantastic scene with over a thousand contractors battling together. Su Xiao placed his hand on the sword hilt. He now had two objectives: to kill enemies and survive."

Chapter 823: Layout

"The 'Twilight Dynasty Palace' has seven floors. Seated on a throne crafted from gold, the former king sat, now turned into a skeleton, yet still exuding dignity. Bubu Wang circled the throne several times, finding no anomalies. This made him a bit more courageous.

Looking at the throne made of pure gold, Bubu Wang wagged his tail, seemingly contemplating some mischievous idea. He walked to the side of the throne, lifting one hind leg.

Psst... A liquid trickled onto the throne. Yes, this goofball, Bubu Wang, was retaliating against those dried bones. Just as Bubu Wang was having fun, a surge of electricity suddenly gushed from beneath the throne.

Crackling... Bubu Wang convulsed. "Ow!" Bubu Wang howled, tucked his tail, and limped down to the lower floor, both hind legs clamped tightly, moving in a strange gait. Su Xiao leaped above the palace, jumping onto the seventh floor through a window.

"Bubu?" Due to an unknown energy suppression, Su Xiao was unsure of Bubu Wang's location. Bubu Wang peeked around the staircase, still trembling on its hind legs.

"What just happened?" Upon hearing Su Xiao's question, Bubu Wang looked skyward with an expression that said, "Nothing much."

"What's that strange smell?" Su Xiao's nose twitched, and a faint scent pervaded the seventh floor. Bubu Wang at the staircase looked outside as if saying, "Today's weather is nice." Su Xiao surveyed the surroundings but found no anomalies.

Currently, 'Twilight Palace' houses only him. The contract holders of the Reincarnation Park would arrive within 10 to 20 hours, whereas the ones from the Apocalypse Park would be slower.

Even if they reached the 'Autrunk' ancient ruins early, they couldn't enter the ruins. That was the consequence of not seizing the World Core. Su Xiao started to roam the 'Twilight Palace,' intending to memorize its layout entirely.

If the two sides were to engage in battle within the ruins, the main battlefield would be the 'Twilight Palace' and the surrounding second area. The 'Twilight Palace' internal structure was complex, accommodating several hundred contract holders for battles without issues.

As for the second area, its terrain was even more complicated. Numerous ruins and collapsed stone structures would form a natural maze. The Reincarnation Parkside was the defending force responsible for guarding the World Core, while the Apocalypse Parkside was the attacking force aiming to seize the World Source.

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Three hours later, Su Xiao simulated the 'Twilight Palace' internal structure into a rough sketch. The first to third floors of the 'Twilight Palace' contained numerous rooms interconnected by doors. Entering these rooms recklessly posed a big question about getting out.

The fourth to sixth floors were scattered with numerous corridors and passages, much more complicated than the first three. If the contract holders from Apocalypse Park invaded the 'Twilight Palace,' blocking their access to the seventh floor was a possible strategy.

The 'Twilight Palace' had two channels to reach the seventh floor: a winding stone staircase at the center and a staircase on each floor leading upwards. In the current situation, it was simple for Apocalypse Park's contract holders to reach the seventh floor through the central staircase or climb the outer wall.

However, using the staircases between feet was the most challenging method because each floor's staircase was in a different location. Su Xiao enlarged the 'Twilight Palace' in the simulation map of the ruins.

"The Supreme Hall, the Hidden Chamber, the Control Mechanism Room?" Su Xiao noticed an inconspicuous room on the sixth floor, the Control Mechanism Room. Following the map, he hurried towards that room.

After a while, Su Xiao, feeling slightly dizzy, reached the Control Mechanism Room. Upon entering the room about ten square meters in size, he saw an old-style control panel with dozens of metal rods. Each metal rod had ancient inscriptions below it.

With his temporary skill of Universal Language Lv.40, Su Xiao understood these inscriptions, each representing functions such as mechanism defense, temple sinking, passage sealing, bridge elevation, and many more.

Su Xiao rubbed his chin and attempted to pull down the metal rod representing 'mechanism defense.'

Click. He pulled it down, but nothing happened. The palace was too ancient; the highly destructive mechanism had long been eroded by time. Avoiding the 'temple sinking' metal rod, Su Xiao tried activating the defensive mechanism. After pulling down the metal rod representing 'passage sealing,' the palace shook.

Rumble, rumble. The stone floor began to tremble. Su Xiao rushed out of the Control Mechanism Room. A stone wall appeared just as he was about to check the situation on the seventh floor. He was confident that this wall hadn't existed before.

Su Xiao began to explore the changes in the 'Twilight Palace.' After observing for about an hour, Su Xiao's face revealed a pleased expression. Activating the 'passage sealing' mechanism, all windows of the 'Twilight Palace' and the winding stone staircase at the center were sealed layer by layer with slabs.

Now, the only way to reach the seventh floor from the first was through the passages between each floor. Now, if the contract holders from Apocalypse Park wished to reach the seventh floor, they could only climb bed by foot, without any other shortcuts, unless someone could penetrate the walls.

As for forceful dismantling, it was out of the question. Even using Apollo couldn't guarantee it. Even detonating a nuclear bomb inside the 'Twilight Palace' would only blast through a few walls at most; forcefully breaking through was almost impossible.

Su Xiao returned to the Control Mechanism Room and attempted to destroy the control panel. However, the control panel was rigid and susceptible to damage. Even with a full-force strike, the most he achieved was scattering some rocks. Under the protection of that unknown energy, it was challenging to cause destruction here.

Su Xiao was partially without means. If he activated the 'Azure Steel Shadow' during the strike, it wouldn't take long for the unknown energy in the palace to be significantly eroded, as the Azure Steel Shadow was an energy killer.

However, doing so did more harm than good. The Reincarnation Park was the defending side, meaning the more robust the 'Twilight Palace,' the more advantageous it was for the Reincarnation Park. If Su Xiao eroded too much of that unknown energy, the overall robustness of the palace would decrease.

Although he couldn't destroy the console, Su Xiao had other ways. First, he collected a large amount of fine sand from outside the palace and mixed it in several alchemical reagents. He poured this mixture into the seams around the metal rods.

He poured about half a ton of sand into the control console. Su Xiao patiently waited half an hour, and the alchemical reagents mixed in the sand gradually reacted. After half an hour, the loose sand had consolidated. Su Xiao attempted to push those metal rods.

Click, click... The sound of brutal friction echoed. Su Xiao's veins bulged in his hands, but those metal rods remained motionless, seemingly welded in place. After completing all this, Su Xiao didn't remain idle. He removed several steel wires, a few pounds of iron beads, and three alchemical bombs.

Twenty minutes later, Su Xiao slowly exited the Control Mechanism Room. The room seemed normal, but it was filled with deadly traps. If someone dared to intrude, they might not leave their life intact.

After completing everything, Su Xiao found a random room and waited quietly. Bubu Wang, on the other hand, had become much calmer. Previously wandering inside the ruins, it was now sleeping on one side. What puzzled Su Xiao was that Bubu Wang, this goofball, occasionally made whimpering sounds, its hind legs clamped together, seemingly having a nightmare in its throat."

Chapter 824: Analyze Ingredients

"After more than ten hours, on the outskirts of the ancient ruins, over a hundred contract holders entered the old site, dressed in various styles, some in suits and others in leather armor. A mage walked at the forefront of the group of contract holders; he was the fire-type mage competing with Su Xiao for the 'Holy Oak Branch.'"

The fire-type mage's name was Yanchen, his real name rather than a nickname or pseudonym. For Yanchen, using a pseudonym was unnecessary; most contract holders used pseudonyms to avoid being recognized in the real world and putting their families or friends at risk.

Yanchen was different; he had no family left, most of whom died at his hands, except for his younger sister. When Yanchen killed his own family, he felt nothing but pleasure. To him, they were strangers, or rather, enemies.

Yanchen grew up in an orphanage and had no emotional connection with those people. Moreover, they did terrifying things for the wealth he inherited, including hiring people to kidnap him and subjecting him to torture.

Yanchen's only remaining family member was his sister, a contract holder. What surprised many was that she was not only his confidant but also his lover. Yes, Yanchen had a particular penchant for 'German Orthopedics,' a form of attraction to one's younger sister.

Perhaps due to a lack of experience of family affection or other reasons, Yanchen was a siscon. When he found out about having a sister, his first thought was being with her.

Yanchen succeeded.

Moreover, he thrived in the Reincarnation Park, establishing a large adventure group called the 'Mingmen Adventure Group.' This was the only large-scale adventure group on Reincarnation Park's side in this world conflict. Second-tier, large adventure groups were rare.

"It's finally starting. Hina has been very active lately." Yanchen held a gold-quality magic staff and wore three dark purple-quality suits. His intelligence attribute reached 80 points, while his stamina attribute was 71. Yanchen was not only a mage but also a rare type, a mage-tank.

"Bro, can I kill people?" A girl with twin tails spoke; she was Yanchen's younger sister. Upon hearing his sister's words, Yanchen frowned, causing nearby contract holders to change their expressions.

"You can."

"Great!" The girl with twin tails raised her arms, and a blood-red scythe appeared in her hand. One female contract holder, dressed in office attire, leaned close to Yanchen's ear.

"Boss, is this... okay? If Qianqian kills indiscriminately, she might attack us."

The office-dressed beauty looked worriedly at Qianqian, the girl with twin tails, who almost died at the hands of another in a derivative world. "No problem." Yanchen turned to look at Qianqian and continued, "Qianqian, don't kill our people."

"Okay, I'll try my best." Qianqian spun the scythe in her hand and cheerfully ran into the ancient ruins. "Chopping one, chopping two, la la la~." Watching Qianqian gradually run away, a smile appeared on Yanchen's face.

The office-dressed beauty beside him sighed helplessly. She was a charisma-based contract holder, relatively safer within the team. Therefore, mentally normal and with proper values, the office-dressed beauty felt despair as a psychologically average and morally neutral person.

Her boss, Yanchen, was not quite normal, and as for the other's sister, she was a monster disguised in beautiful skin. Gradually, members of the Mingmen Adventure Group delved deeper into the ancient ruins. Meanwhile, a ghost-like figure emerged from underground. "A total of 186 people. These should be 'Magician No.1's' subordinates."

The ghostly figure was Lüli, using special abilities to enter the ancient ruins. "Another group? This time... two individuals." Lüli disappeared amidst the rubble while two female contract holders entered the ruins.

"I said it's salty, but you insist on sweetening it. You're unbelievable." A female contract holder wearing tight combat gear, adorned with black gloves, walked over. She toyed with a gold coin in her hand.

"I like sweet things; what can I do?" A drowsy-looking girl wearing a one-piece pajama suit and a hood approached. At the edge of her hood, a slender tentacle peeked out.

"Hmm? Someone's watching us." The tired girl halted; several insect legs emerged from the ground nearby. "It's okay, I noticed it early." The two women walked deeper into the ruins. They were Ada and Bug Sis, the counterfeit Lucky Goddess and Insect Sister who had clashed with Su Xiao before.

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One after another, contract holders from the Reincarnation Park entered the ancient ruins. Their destination was the same: the central Twilight Palace. The map previously posted by Su Xiao in the war channel made their target clear.

Under the threat of forced execution, it didn't take 24 hours, merely 20 hours, for all the contract holders from the Reincarnation Park to gather inside the ancient ruins. Over seven hundred contract holders gathered near the Twilight Palace.

Among these seven hundred people were nine adventure groups—eight medium-sized and one large-sized. As for small-sized groups, none had been spotted yet, but there were quite a few self-organized teams among the individual players.

In such a large-scale battle, the command was naturally in the hands of the various adventure group leaders. Some influential individual players also had a say. On the seventh floor of the Twilight Palace, several dozen people gathered. Among them were nine group leaders, three individual players, and the close aides of those leaders.

These dozens of people either stood or sat on the seventh floor. Some were playing cards, while others were disassembling firearms.

"What's that strange smell?" A contract holder spoke, his brows tightly furrowed, his face twisted in disgust, likely suffering from germaphobia.

"Yes, I smelled something strange when we entered."

"It seems to be coming from the direction of the throne."

"Should we check it out?"

"I'm not sure about that." The contract holders discussed amongst themselves, and a lone individual stepped out from the crowd, unconcerned about the commands of those leaders.

"Grizzly, who allowed you near the throne?" A golden-haired, mature woman spoke; her name was Nasa, the Fantasy Realm Adventure Group leader. She had previously fought with Su Xiao over the 'Holy Oak Branch,' her younger brother was the boy who was duped by Su Xiao, Iron Pillar.

"Tch." The lone ranger, Grizzly, glanced at Nasa and disregarded her. He approached the throne but didn't get close to the dried bones; instead, he searched around the throne and soon found a suspicious puddle on the side of the throne.

"What's this?" Grizzly crouched down, examining the suspicious liquid on the ground. This fellow was quite courageous; most contract holders were cautious about unknown things, but Grizzly was different. He had ventured through solely on his courage.

"Could this be something leaking from the throne?" A contract holder behind Grizzly showed a glint of curiosity. They had observed the dried bones on the throne and speculated that it was not to be trifled with.

Grizzly's finger pointed at the liquid on the ground. With a serious tone, he said, "Non-corrosive and non-toxic." After making this preliminary judgment, Grizzly put the finger, soaked in the 'unknown liquid,' into his mouth. His oral cavity had been strengthened to analyze over a thousand elemental compositions.

"What does it taste like? Any bonuses or attributes added?" Iron Pillar approached his conspicuous minotaur lord armguard on his hand.

"Salty. Let me analyze it carefully." Grizzly closed his eyes, sensing the components of the unknown liquid. His face gradually turned bluish as he perceived it, veins bulging on his forehead. Urea + uric acid + creatinine + creatine + amino acids + ammonia + β -hydroxybutyric acid + inorganic salts + water + trace elements = urine!

"Damn it!" A roar echoed on the seventh floor of the Twilight Palace, followed by a burst of laughter."

Chapter 825: War Begins

Several group leaders began discussing defensive strategies after the commotion caused by the 'unknown liquid,' led by Yanchen. Footsteps echoed as a man in a black windbreaker ascended to the seventh floor. He seemed freshly awakened, yawning occasionally, followed by a 'Husky'?

"Who's this?"

"Not one of us."

"No idea." Several close aides of the group leaders denied recognition. "Friend, wait downstairs first. Once we discuss our defense strategy, we'll notify you." A well-dressed man with gold-rimmed glasses politely intercepted Su Xiao.

"Hmm?" Somewhat groggy, Su Xiao held a cigarette. He had napped during his free time, unaware of potential rest opportunities in the next ten days.

"Friend, I say—"

"Let him in." Yanchen's voice resounded.

"Please." The well-dressed man gestured invitingly; Yanchen was his group leader.

Su Xiao entered the seventh floor. Unlike the previous silence, it was now lively, mixed with the scent of smoke, cigars, and red wine.

Contract holders with different expressions stood or sat around the seventh floor. Some were silent, while others were loud; the only commonality was a hint of bloodlust evident in them all—a readiness to fight at any moment.

"Meeting again." Yanchen, with a sister complex, greeted Su Xiao before continuing discussions with the group leaders. Approaching, Su Xiao handed Yanchen a detailed map of the ancient ruins. "I arrived early and got bored, so I drew this."

Glancing at Su Xiao's dog behind him, Yanchen guessed how Su Xiao had arrived. "You've been a great help. You have professional mapping skills. Yanchen understood the map's value.

"With your abilities, why not join us in discussing?" Yanchen extended an invitation, but Su Xiao waved it off. Su Xiao didn't participate in the discussions among the group leaders. He acknowledged his need for leadership in managing an adventure group. He needed to be more knowledgeable when setting up defenses or similar matters.

For unfamiliar territories, Su Xiao refrained from interfering or making decisive decisions. Compared to him, those group leaders were the experts in these matters. Asserting dominance in unfamiliar areas and giving orders—such people annoyed Su Xiao the most.

His typical approach to dealing with such individuals was to eliminate them first. Seeing Su Xiao's disinterest in the discussions, Yanchen nodded silently. The Lone Rangers might be mighty, but most were uncontrollable.

However, in this war, there were no unruly Lone Rangers. Only four were eligible to reach the seventh floor—two men and two women. Among them, the two women were acquainted. Oddly enough, they still needed to form an adventure group. They were Ada and Bug Sis. Upon seeing Su Xiao, both women quickly turned away.

"Why's this monster here?" Ada glanced secretly at Su Xiao. "I don't know. Should we pretend not to recognize him?" Bug Sis was equally wary. In the trial world of the insect nest, Su Xiao left a deep impression on them. In their eyes, Su Xiao was an extremely dangerous old pervert and monster.

As for the other two, one was the Grizzly, who had tasted the 'unknown liquid.' This guy was smoking a cigar and seemed particularly gloomy. The last person was Su Xiao, lounging on a stone pillar, holding a tablet computer, seemingly engrossed in a game.

Observing this scene, Yanchen raised an eyebrow. He couldn't imagine someone like Su Xiao emitting such a chilling vibe or having a hobby like gaming. After about an hour, the group leaders finalized their defense strategy.

The Oterlan Ancient Ruins were too vast. With over 700 contract holders, fully defending them was an impossible dream. Unable to defend entirely, the group leaders decided to contract the defense, concentrating the workforce to support the 'Twilight Palace' and the nearby second zone.

Three stone bridges were situated at the three corners of the Twilight Palace. These bridges were the best defensive locations, allowing a solid defense and a retreat into the palace.

However, the Reincarnation Park side wouldn't initially choose to defend these bridges.

After discussion among the group leaders, they planned to support the outer second zone first. They would retreat to the bridges if they couldn't hold the dual zone. If the bridges were lost, they would continue to fall back.

The End of Days Park contract holders aimed to seize the World Core. They needed to break through the second zone first, followed by the three stone bridges. But breaking the bridges wasn't enough; they were also required to enter the Twilight Palace, fighting their way up to the seventh floor.

This was a highly challenging task. The End of Days Park side was already disadvantaged even before the battle commenced. If End of Days Park's contract holders were in charge of defending the World Core, they would have chosen this manner of defense. This layered defense might appear secure but has a fatal flaw: no retreat.

With no escape route, the idea was that if they couldn't defend, they'd perish. Hopeless and outnumbered, Hope would face over 70% opposition from her subordinates. If the End of Days

Park's contract holders managed to reach the seventh floor of the Twilight Palace, it meant the Reincarnation Park's contract holders were almost extinct.

Before that happened, End of Days Park's contract holders would never have had the chance to ascend. They were ready to die if they failed. This was the defense strategy of the Reincarnation Park's contract holders.

To take the World Core? They needed to eliminate them first. Until then, End of Days Park's contract holders could only watch from the outside. With the plan set, the group leaders and the crowd on the seventh floor left the Twilight Palace. Hundreds of contract holders outside the palace's platform looked at those leaders.

After explaining the plan, the contract holders briefly considered and agreed to the strategy of dying in defense. No one even mentioned an escape route. If the World War failed, it meant everyone would perish. In such circumstances, considering an escape route was meaningless. It was more important to think about surviving amidst the chaos of the contract holders' melee.

The members of the adventure groups received orders from their respective leaders and began spreading toward the nearby second zone, forming defensive lines. The individual players were scattered among the adventure group members, while some long-range snipers climbed above the Twilight Palace, taking the high ground.

Su Xiao stood on the stairs of the Twilight Palace, not intending to join the defense yet. He was waiting for someone—someone who would come to him. "Byakuya, although you're not under my command, now isn't the time to hide anything." Yanchen sat on a stone stair nearby, his gaze on the contract holders setting up defenses in the second zone, a natural maze, relatively easy to defend.

"I don't have time now. There's a tough opponent I need to deal with." Su Xiao was waiting for Ranju. He believed Ranju would come looking for him. "A tough opponent? Can you tell me his characteristics? I might have some clues. I have plenty of information about End of Days Park's contract holders."

As they were on the same front line, and considering Su Xiao had previously shown the map, Yanchen wasn't holding back. "Characteristics? He's a mechanical summoner."

Before Su Xiao could finish, Yanchen interjected, "He controls a metal arrow with a whistle? Can you detonate mechanical summons?"

"Yes, have you met him?"

"Of course." Yanchen pulled down his collar, revealing a coin-sized scar on his clavicle. "I was almost caught off guard by that guy once. You're going after him?"

"Yes, I've clashed with him before, and he escaped." Hearing the crucial word 'escaped,' Yanchen's eyes brightened. He asked, "Are you confident?"

"I'm 70% sure he'll die, leaving 30% for me to die." Su Xiao had already thought of ways to deal with Ranju. However, Ranju's abilities were comprehensive, and there were too many unexpected situations in a fight, so he had a 30% chance of dying.

"Impressive, the 'Beheader of the Night.' I'll inform you through the war channel if my subordinates spot him. Ah, I don't know if I'll make it out alive. My sister is quite beautiful, you know."

Yanchen's words might seem like he was complimenting his sister's beauty, showing a brother's concern for his sister. However, the reality was different. Yanchen was worried that if he died, his sister would end up with another man, essentially being cuckolded post-mortem.

"It seems you love your sister very much." Su Xiao faintly detected Yanchen's off-beat words. "Of course, deeply and extensively. Every inch of affection."

Saying this, Yanchen headed back into the Twilight Palace.

"This sister complex." Su Xiao wasn't stupid; he could figure out what was happening. The personalities of the End of Days Park's contract holders were unexpectedly open-minded.

Twenty-six hours they were passed quickly.

The End of Days Park contract holders were on high alert, with an airtight defense set up. However, there wasn't a single contract holder from End of Days Park attacking, nor were they even present. Silence enveloped the second zone. About ten minutes later, this silence was shattered.

Swoosh... swoosh... A dense sound of breaking wind came from the sky—hundreds of green phosphorus-burning bottles.

"Air raid!" The contract holders of the Reincarnation Park responded swiftly, firing bullets, arrows, psychic balls, magical spheres, and even rocket bombs toward the burning green phosphorus bottles.

Boom! Boom! Boom... The explosions merged into a chorus. Large swaths of green flames fell before the second zone, consuming trees and weathering stones. Neat footsteps sounded as at least ten thousand orc soldiers walked out of the forests in the third zone.

Hovering above the forest, Hope watched the contract holders of the Reincarnation Park.

"Kill." Hope's delicate fingers pointed forward, directing over ten thousand orc soldiers. She had contributions and military ranks available in the shop and army positions.

But what was terrifying was that all the combat achievements of the End of Days Park contract holders were transferred to Hope. Her rank allowed her to command over ten thousand orc soldiers.

"This woman's unexpectedly tricky. However, flowers in the greenhouse wither faster."

A black-haired, red-eyed youth removed his upper garment. He was adorned with hundreds of bombs of various types.

The black-haired, red-eyed youth suddenly charged out of the Reincarnation Park's formation straight toward the marching orc soldiers. It was evident that this guy's mind wasn't quite right. An average person wouldn't strap themselves with bombs and charge into a mass of troops.

Seeing this scene, Hope frowned. "These lunatics." Hope's eyes turned fiery red. Boom! Before the black-haired, red-eyed youth reached the orc soldiers, he detonated himself prematurely. A blaze surged, with dirt flying and smoke billowing.

A few seconds later, a somewhat staggering figure rose from the smoke. "Damn, that hurts." The black-haired, red-eyed youth stretched his neck. With a clicking sound, a radiant light flashed on him, revealing hundreds of bombs of various types once again.

Chapter 826: Think About Life

The black-haired, red-eyed teenager walked out of the dust, their bare upper body wrapped in bombs. "This is... an undying constitution?" Hovering above the forest, Xi witnessed this scene. At that moment, a bullet whizzed by.

Ping! Shards of crystal flew as a thick, transparent crystal wall appeared in front of Xi. A sniper bullet embedded within the crystal, her current position now a target. Xi was well aware of this.

Although she feared no long-range attacks, depleting too much energy before the battle could have been more wise. She retreated into the forest. In the third area's forest, numerous contracted individuals from Apocalypse Park gathered. They were all trying to observe a single person, the black-haired, red-eyed youth.

Standing before tens of thousands of orc soldiers, the black-haired youth exhibited no fear in his eyes. He was contemplating one thing—what his name was. "I've died too many times recently. I seem to be called 'Black Blood'. But then again, maybe not."

Scratching his head, Black Blood's confused gaze gradually regained focus. He advanced towards the charging orc army. Scimitars, longswords, and battle axes swung at him, yet Black Blood made no effort to defend himself. He didn't care about these attacks. What he feared were anaesthetics or skills that could hinder him.

Black Blood was of demi-human lineage, possessing an incredibly resilient constitution. This lineage granted him immense immortality; upon death, his body would reset, healing all injuries. This was beyond what artificial or engineered lineages could compare to.

However, the demi-human lineage had a fatal flaw—relatively weaker attacking capabilities. Black Blood was well aware of this. Hence, he compensated with bombs. He had mastered a skill—Random Esoteric Explosive Generation Lv.28, capable of randomly generating dozens of esoteric bombs such as psychic bombs, magic bombs, alchemical bombs, and more.

If another contracted individual had this ability, they might become a demolition expert. But Black Blood was different; the combination of demi-human lineage and random esoteric explosive generation made him a formidable player akin to a "Taliban."

Amidst the sounds of slashing weapons, Black Blood, having charged into the orc army, lost his head and an arm without making any defence. Yet he was utterly indifferent to these attacks.

Boom! Explosions ensued, with shockwaves spreading outward, killing hundreds of orcs within a hundred meters in just one round, creating a massacre. "Is it over?" A squad leader among the orcs nervously watched the explosion's aftermath.

"Hello, little orc friends." Black Blood, wearing a smile despite his charred body, emerged from the flames, bombs reappearing on his person. "Kill him!" The orc squad leader roared angrily, seemingly fearless, yet his pupils were trembling in reality.

The orc soldiers lunged at Black Blood, who looked up at the sky. "Weird, who am I exactly?"

Boom! Another explosion and another few hundred orcs died. In the third area's forest, many contracted individuals from the Apocalypse Park witnessed this scene, leaving some of them astonished.

"Our opponents... are all like this?" One contracted individual from the Apocalypse Park gulped, not fearing Black Blood's abilities but rather the numbness towards life and death.

"Probably not everyone. This might be an exception. Even among us, some can't handle the psychological pressure."

"Exactly. I don't believe the contracted individuals from the Reincarnation Park are afraid of death."

Boom, boom, boom... Explosions echoed as more than a thousand orc soldiers were killed or injured before they even reached the second area. As the dust settled after the final explosion, Black Blood lay on the ground, seemingly exhausted. In reality, he was trying to remember who he was.

Though Black Blood lay on the ground, no nearby orc soldiers dared approach him. The orc soldiers continued their march, and a hundred-meter-wide passage appeared in the army's formation, with Black Blood lying at its centre.

No one dared to get close to this self-exploding youth, who remained motionless, seemingly contemplating life—questions like, Where am I? Who am I?

In the elevated areas of the second area, a leader among the contracted individuals from Reincarnation Park observed this scene. He was a captain. "He's not bad. Brothers, get ready to welcome our orc 'friends'." After the captain's command, the contracted individuals under his command responded weakly.

"Hey, muster up some spirit."

"Got it, boss."

"We've killed too many orcs before. It's just not interesting anymore." The contracted individuals from Reincarnation Park were scattered within the maze of the second area. For them, this wasn't a maze; it was a naturally fortified terrain.

Occasionally, green phosphorus incendiary bombs fell from the sky, an unknown quantity acquired by Xi. "Attack!" The orc army charged toward the ruins of the second area, only to be met with rifles and explosives.

Pew, pew, pew... A contracted individual wielding a dark purple-grade pistol continuously pulled the trigger. The silencer on the muzzle effectively concealed his position. Every three bullets fired resulted in a fallen orc; his marksmanship was exceptional.

Reloading and continuing the barrage, this marksman resembled a precise and rapid machine. The long-range firepower of hundreds of contracted individuals countered the orc army. The Orc army, despite its severe casualties, surged forward with sheer numbers, employing brute force tactics.

Swoosh~ Green phosphorus incendiary bombs rained down as several contracted individuals scattered, but an orc soldier grabbed one. With a crack, the incendiary bomb shattered upon hitting the ground, releasing green flames.

"Ah!" A contracted individual engulfed in green flames screamed in agony, enduring burning pain worse than death itself. Given the adhesive nature of the green phosphorus, his fate was sealed.

Acknowledging this fate, the contracted individual aimed his gun at his head and pulled the trigger. Bang! Brain matter splattered, and as he collapsed, his body was instantly consumed by the flames, turning to ashes.

Several contracted individuals from the Reincarnation Park nearby witnessed this scene unperturbed, having grown accustomed to life and death. As the Orc army breached the second area,

they had already suffered casualties exceeding 4,000, and nearly half of their forces were decimated.

Would Xi let these orcs die in vain? Absolutely not. She was using them as cannon fodder, reducing casualties among the contracted individuals from the Apocalypse Park by employing the orcs as a shield. With these orcs at the front, her contracted individuals could avoid over 90% of the long-range attacks.

The wise ones knew that over ten thousand orc soldiers would soon be eliminated by a few hundred contracted individuals. Xi didn't expect these orcs to break through the defences of the Reincarnation Park. She was merely reducing casualties among her contracted individuals.

Clearly, Xi succeeded. This wasn't a conspiracy; it was a strategy. Over ten thousand orcs had to be dealt with. If they weren't, the contracted individuals from Apocalypse Park would take advantage of the situation and rush in.

Chapter 827: War Letter

Yanchen stood above the Twilight Palace, seeing through Xi's plan. However, even though he saw through it, it didn't matter much. The most significant advantage of a strategy is not fearing exposure.

"Estimated ten minutes to clear out these orcs. That woman played us." Yanchen sighed, his eyes narrowing. Suddenly, some memories surged in his mind. "Don't show me these!" Yanchen's face turned ferocious suddenly. After a few seconds, his expression returned to calm.

"Just an illusion." Yanchen breathed deeply, refocusing his attention on the chaos among the contracted fighters. It didn't take the contracted individuals from Apocalypse Park ten minutes. In less than eight minutes, over ten thousand orc soldiers had perished.

However, before the orcs were annihilated, the contracted individuals from the Apocalypse Park surged towards Zone 2. "Split into four teams, four breakthrough points." A female gunman from the Apocalypse Park shouted, and the contracted individuals behind her quickly split into four teams, each with over two hundred members.

Each team had defence experts at the front, followed by close combatants, ranged fighters, and support-type contracted individuals. The Zone 2 maze had four large entrances, and Apocalypse Park's contracted fighters seemed to understand the terrain.

The contracted individuals from Apocalypse Park swiftly entered the maze. A primary tank holding a heavy shield charged like a tank towards an employed individual from the Wheel of Samsara faction.

"Idiot." The Wheel of Samsara-contracted individual made an obscene gesture towards the main tank. The tank smirked, but suddenly, a change occurred. A skull appeared above the tank, quickly reducing his equipment's defensive power.

Sniper bullets rained down on the main tank, sparks flying. The combined impact made it hard for him to cover with his shield. This was simultaneous sniping from ten snipers from the Wheel of Samsara faction.

In less than two seconds, the shield in the main tank's hand was pockmarked, and after five seconds, cracks appeared on the security. The tank could no longer hold onto it. A primary tank without a

shield met a predictable fate. Bullets struck his body, some carrying energy or additional skill effects. In an instant, he was brought down to the ground.

Three seconds later, he was turned into a pile of flesh. The tank was instantly eliminated! This fallen tank was ranked in the top ten in strength among the defence-type contracted individuals under Xi.

This was the chaos among the contracted fighters. No matter how strong the main tank was, once marked and focused upon after debuffs, it was mere seconds to be killed. As for the close combatants, it would be at most five seconds, and ranged fighters fared worse. Even without debuffs, they would be instantly killed.

In this chaotic combat among contracted fighters, one should be in the initial phase moderate. Otherwise, there was a high chance of being focused and eliminated. Neither Xi nor Yanchen nor Su Xiao had appeared yet for this reason.

Being focused by a dozen ranged attackers was manageable, but being focused by dozens would ensure their demise quickly. Both parties' contracted fighters rushed into the natural maze formed by the ruins of Zone 2. In such a maze, the significance of formation coordination was minimal.

The area was too small, and splitting into groups of 5 to 10 members for each side was more appropriate. Bang, bang...Bullets pierced through the ruins and walls, shrapnel flying. Severely weathered stone walls were left with pockmarks from the gunfire.

An Arcane Magic caster concealed behind a stone column, as a squad of fighters from the Apocalypse Park approached, elemental energies surged within him.

Hum!

Several connected magic arrays on the ground were activated. Spikes of arcane energy shot up underground, enveloping the squad from Apocalypse Park. After a round of screams, four out of five members of the squad fell, three were severely wounded, and one was on the verge of death.

Pew, pew, pew... More bullets struck, and the four severely wounded individuals were finished off. The potions they were about to consume fell to the ground. The surviving defense-type contracted fighter panted heavily, blood dripping down his face. He felt a sense of despair.

"I... I surrender. I give up on this battle." Hearing this, an Arcane caster and a gunman positioned on two stone columns hesitated momentarily. Then, without a word, they attacked the defense-type contracted fighter. The defense-type contracted fighter rolled on the ground.

"Do we have to go this far? I'll give up three pieces of equipment..." Pew, pew, pew... Three bullets pierced through the defence-type contracted fighter's head, and his eyes quickly lost their lustre.

The gunman removed the magazine and said, "What are these guys thinking? Surrendering now?"

"Who knows, that's their style over there. Continue to ambush the next wave. How many have you killed?"

"Six. What about you?"

"Four. You jerk, always stealing kills."

"Hey, my bullets pack a stronger punch."

The caster and the gunman were both freelancers, but they were not weak. Their personalities aligned well, so they formed a temporary team. Inside the maze, a squad of six contracted individuals from the Wheel of Samsara.

These six were covered in blood, surrounded by around twenty from Apocalypse Park, divided into three squads. "Not good; it looks like we'll all die here. Brothers, even though we weren't familiar before, it seems we'll die together."

"Heh, I've long expected this day. Surprising to reach Tier 2, even for myself."

"Don't say pessimistic words. We still have a chance." The contracted individuals from the Wheel of Samsara whispered among themselves while the surrounding employed individuals from the Apocalypse Park gradually closed in.

"Hey, guys, see that mage from their side? He's quite arrogant. We're all going to die anyway. Why not team up and take him down?"

"Good idea."

"Agreed." The six individuals' gazes focused on a mage from Apocalypse Park. Suddenly, the mage's expression turned grim. "Kill them." When the mage's words fell, the six contracted individuals from the Wheel of Samsara rushed towards him without hesitation.

A few minutes later, seven bodies lay on the ground. The surrounding contracted individuals from Apocalypse Park wore grim expressions. "Jonathan's dead. What do we do? He was our main force."

A female contracted individual turned her head, unable to bear looking at the mage's body. It was no longer a body but a pile of rotten flesh. "These idiots have a problem with their heads. They were plotting against each other, and now they suddenly unite before dying."

Various lights glimmered within the maze. Gunshots, collisions, and screams merged into one. Contracted individuals with different abilities fought together, and the speed of casualties on both sides was breakneck. It was like an elimination match, and only the strong survived after the game.

In front of the Twilight Palace, Su Xiao watched the battlefield from a distance. Though he wanted to charge in, there were better times. Lan Jue's invincibility was a thorn in his side.

Lan Jue's metallic arrow was perfect for ambush.

If Su Xiao had been in a tough battle when Lan Jue appeared, his chances would have been slim. However, Lan Jue faced a similar situation. He didn't dare to appear on the battlefield, either. If someone detained him, Su Xiao could take advantage and get close, sealing Lan Jue's fate.

Neither side dared to recklessly engage in battle, which made Su Xiao somewhat impatient. Killing a contracted individual from Apocalypse Park would yield 3 to 5 points of merit, essential for the rewards in this world.

With this battlefield situation, the contracted individuals from the Wheel of Samsara who ranked high in merits might receive additional rewards. However, the Wheel of Samsara should have publicized this to prevent internal conflicts among their contracted individuals.

Buzz... A mechanical bee flew overhead on the battlefield. Its compound eyes flashed red as it quickly locked onto Su Xiao's location, descending toward him. Seeing the mechanical bee, Su

Xiao had a rough idea of what was happening. As the robotic bee flew over Su Xiao, it dropped a black ball about the size of a walnut.

Chapter 828: The Right Way to Get Merit

As the black sphere descended slowly, when it was three meters above the ground, it shattered, forming words in mid-air. 'Perimeter of the ancient ruins, east side of the desolate grassland, life or death.'

This was Lan Jue's declaration of war. He wanted to avoid engaging with Su Xiao on a chaotic battlefield, hence choosing a relatively remote location. It could be a challenge, or it could be a trap.

Su Xiao pondered momentarily, then got up and walked towards the natural maze ahead.

The natural maze formed a circular structure overall. At this moment, numerous contract holders were spread throughout the maze. Su Xiao headed in the direction of fewer contract holders.

The inner side of the maze was occupied by contract holders from the Cycle Paradise, while the outer side was occupied by those from the Dawn Paradise, both sides fiercely engaging each other.

Delving deeper into the maze, a seven-person team of contract holders from Dawn Paradise stood before him. The seven individuals glanced at Su Xiao, gradually spreading and encircling him.

"Resolve him within a minute. This direction has weak defence; there's a possibility of a surprise attack."

"This guy looks somewhat familiar."

"Forget about that. The most important thing is the surprise attack." A mage's staff pointed towards Su Xiao, surging with phoenix elements. "It's unlucky for one person to encounter us." As the mage finished speaking, Boom! Debris flew around.

Clang! A five-meter-diameter blade beam attacked the group. "This guy is abnormal!" The front tank on the team roared. Just as he raised his shield in front of him, a gust of wind hit.

A bright blade light entered his vision; his pupils faintly ached, seemingly affected by the blade light.

Simultaneously, with a slight movement, his shield had been diagonally cleaved into two sections. According to the Cycle Paradise standards, this shield was a purple-quality shield. How could a purple-quality shield withstand a pale golden-quality dragon slash?

Moreover, Dragon Slash's attributes were not inferior to those of a golden-quality weapon; in terms of sharpness, it completely outperformed a golden weapon. "Impossible..." The tank immediately tried to leap back, but it was too late. Su Xiao's blade was too fast; even agile contract holders, let alone a tank, couldn't evade it.

The blade edge sliced through the tank's throat, effortlessly penetrating his body's defences.

With one strike, most of the tank's throat was slashed open. When he saw the battle information, he altogether despaired.

[Warning: You have been pierced.]

[Under erosion of unknown energy, 160 points of your mana have been devoured.]

[You have suffered 240 true damage (unknown energy damage) + 64 actual damage (Demon Seal) + 175 slashing damage + 217 blade damage + 166 fortress damage (throat slash).]

[Warning: You have entered a critical state.]

[Warning: Your remaining health is 6%.]

[Tip: You are under a debuff effect, being judged.]

Warning: This effect ignores judgment. [You will be immobilized for 2.2 seconds.]

...

The tank's body stiffened mid-air, then suddenly plunged into darkness. From the moment Su Xiao struck to decapitating the enemy, it didn't take more than two seconds. Having just killed the tank, his body arched, and attacks from the remaining six contract holders had already come—three energy stabs formed from wind elements and two bullets.

Snip! With a whoosh, Su Xiao disappeared from his original position. While dodging the attacks, he had already rushed towards the mage. This was a Phoenix-type mage with no weak points in attack or survival capabilities.

"Raging Wind Ride." The Phoenix-type mage tapped the ground with his staff, creating a whirlwind around him and blowing in all directions. Su Xiao was struck head-on; a force pushed towards him. He planted Dragon Slash into the ground, half-crouched, and slowly moved backwards.

Sizzle... A wireframe dart shot out, its tip flashing a cold light. After its enhancement to +10, the dart received a boost as well. The dart broke through the raging wind, swiftly aiming for the Phoenix-type mage. The phoenix-type mage was in the middle of casting a spell. If he activated a defensive skill or tried to dodge, the large-scale knockback skill he was currently using would fail.

Just a second ago, witnessing the tank being instantly defeated, the Phoenix-type mage, sporting a small goatee, swore to the heavens that he wouldn't let this monster, capable of swiftly taking down tanks, get close within ten meters. Once the skill successfully repelled the enemy, he would immediately flee. He didn't want to fight a monster from a completely different dimension in terms of strength.

Pfft! The wireframe dart pierced the Phoenix-type mage's thigh. The Phoenix-type mage's expression didn't change; he could easily ignore this slight injury. As the wind pressure gradually pushed back Su Xiao, he activated the Azure Steel Shadow energy.

The skill description of Azure Steel Shadow was: "Each melee attack burns 160 points of the enemy's mana and inflicts true damage equal to the burned mana x 1.5." And now, the situation was somewhere between close combat and ranged attacks.

The Azure Steel Shadow energy rapidly spread towards the Phoenix-type mage along the wireframe. "Electric?" The Phoenix-type mage activated a skill from an item on his body, temporarily increasing his resistance to fire and electricity.

The Azure Steel Shadow energy infiltrated the wound on the Phoenix-type mage's leg just as he was prepared to withstand the electric shock. A nearly unimaginable pain suddenly struck his brain.

The Phoenix-type mage's eyes rolled back, saliva dribbled from the corners of his mouth, his spellcasting halted, and his body slumped forward. Before he hit the ground, a pale blue blade beam had already slashed at his throat.

The blade beam sliced through his throat, a gush of blood spraying out. The Phoenix-type mage didn't even feel the pain; those Azure Steel Shadow energies that entered his brain weren't just superficial damage and control effects. The Azure Steel Shadow energy directly disrupted his mana flow, temporarily 'crashing' his brain.

Taking care of two core members of the seven-person team, Su Xiao glanced at the remaining five people. The Phoenix-type mage's skill had also forced these five back. This was a real battle; there was no talk of immunity from teammates. Sometimes, friendly fire was more dangerous than enemy attacks.

At this moment, the remaining five didn't even glance at Su Xiao. They were all rushing at full speed to escape the natural maze. They were terrified by Su Xiao's power of attack.

Three minutes later, a contract holder lay on the ground, his face and hands covered in blood. Su Xiao stood with one foot on his back.

"Don't... don't kill me. I can give you..." Swoosh! A sharp blade cut through the flesh; the slaughter knife slit the throat of the contract holder beneath Su Xiao's foot. Unlike the anime-based worlds, this guy had a unique ability, seemingly from a different world entirely.

This was one of the five contract holders who had fled earlier; two managed to escape, while the other three were chased and killed by Su Xiao. Dozens of meters away from Su Xiao, a contract holder from the Dawn Paradise hid in a crevice between rocks.

She was a petite girl; otherwise, she wouldn't have fit into such a small crack. She was a perception-type contract holder, capable of completely masking her presence. At this moment, the girl with heightened perception was trembling.

She was one of the members of the seven-person team who had faced off against Su Xiao earlier. The sound of footsteps appeared, drawing closer. Her heart was racing; tears streamed down her cheeks, her hands covering her mouth.

Recalling a few minutes ago, she suspected she was dreaming. Her team had surrounded an enemy, thinking it would be an easy resolution. However, in just a few seconds, the nightmare began. Her teammate's seemingly impregnable shield was cleaved by a single strike, and then they were beheaded. It didn't end there; their team's mage inexplicably collapsed and was subsequently killed.

The enemy didn't say a word from start to finish; they did nothing extra beyond killing, savage and sharp, offering no chance to beg for mercy. While the girl trembled in the rock crevice, Su Xiao exited the natural maze, heading towards the edge of the ancient ruins.

"Indeed, killing enemy contract holders is the fastest way to gain merit in paradise."

Not long after Su Xiao left the maze, Bubu Wang trotted out from within, following him.

Su Xiao checked his merit in the Cycle Paradise as he walked: 22 points.

When he was in the Black Soil Fortress, Su Xiao had only gained 3 points of merit after such a long war. But now, at the beginning of the contract holders' grand melee, he had already earned 19 merit points.

Chapter 829: Big Gift

"Perimeter of the ancient ruins, desolate grassland. The Contract Holders' Great Melee has begun. Inside the ancient ruins, there's continuous roaring, but it's pretty lonely on the outskirts.

A gentle breeze blows, lifting a myriad of grass seeds into the air, swirling amidst the grass blades. Su Xiao walks through the desolate grass, a map in front of him. Bubu Wang, who has been trailing him, is nowhere to be seen.

Though Bubu Wang's combat strength is weak, he serves as an amateur caretaker and a professional scout. Yes, Bubu Wang is a professional scout. Its 'You Can't See Me (Passive, Self-Comprehensive Skill)' can shield it from most perceptions.

Moreover, after seizing the World Core, Su Xiao discovered an additional skill for Bubu Wang. Skill 7: The Secret Gaze of the Wang Star (Passive, Self-Comprehensive Skill). While observing enemies within 30 meters, there's an 80% reduction in the chance of being detected. If an enemy senses Bubu Britney's gaze, it swiftly enters the 'You Can't See Me' state.

...

This newly emerged skill is quite simple: when Bubu Wang observes enemies within 30 meters, there's only a one-fifth chance they'll detect its gaze. Even if they do, it immediately enters the 'You Can't See Me' state. The combination of these two skills is shameless.

Bubu Wang gazes at the enemy. If the enemy notices, Bubu Wang swiftly melds with the surroundings. The enemy loses track of Bubu Wang's location, and the cycle continues. The enemy's experience isn't pleasant.

By now, Bubu Wang has already arrived first at Lan Jue's appointed battle location to observe the situation. Su Xiao holds a communication device, knowing Bubu Wang can't use a language communicator. Even though Su Xiao's 'Beast Language MAX,' when communicating with Bubu Wang, relies on the dog's expressions and actions to understand its intentions.

After about ten minutes, the communication device in Su Xiao's hand flashes a green light, indicating a message has arrived. He opens the communicator. Bubu Wang: "Master, I spotted an enemy at the specified location, bald, wearing a leather jacket." Seeing the message from Bubu Wang, Su Xiao nods. Lan Jue's coming for the appointment isn't surprising.

Su Xiao: "Are there others?" Bubu Wang: "I didn't see... wait." After a while, Bubu Wang sends another message. Bubu Wang: "There seem to be many creatures lurking near the enemy. Master, I need to pee." Su Xiao: "Hold it. Lazy donkeys pee a lot. Keep observing."

Bubu Wang: "Okay, but... I still want to pee~"

Closing the communicator, Su Xiao heads in Bubu Wang's direction. After a preliminary observation, Lan Jue is coming along for the appointment. On the desolate grassland, a cheetah lazily lies on the ground, with Lan Jue sitting beside it.

"Too bad, I can only transform insects into summons. I hate bugs." Lan Jue pats the cheetah's head in front of him; it's just an ordinary wild cheetah. "Go back; I'm waiting for someone." Hearing Lan Jue's words, the cheetah stands up and looks at Lan Jue.

"Let's go; it's dangerous here."

Lan Jue removes his leather jacket. He wears a black vest with slightly tanned skin, and the metallic arrows of the Ghost Bee flutter inside his arrow sheath around his waist. The cheetah gradually walks away, occasionally glancing back at Lan Jue. It doesn't sense hostility in this human but instead feels a sense of closeness.

After the cheetah leaves, the smile fades from Lan Jue's face. He feels like someone is watching him, but no matter how he looks, he can't find where that gaze is coming from.

With grass fragments floating around, Lan Jue's gaze shifts to a distant figure gradually approaching.

"It's surprising you've come alone to face me. I thought you'd bring help, or perhaps your assistants are hiding in the shadows." Lan Jue shouts, simultaneously snapping his fingers. Hundreds of mechanical bees appear by his side; this is Lan Jue's summoning style—hundreds and hundreds of summons.

"You guessed right. This time, I'm not alone. I have prepared a grand gift for you."

Su Xiao stops about a hundred meters away from Lan Jue, knowing that Lan Jue will retreat if he advances further.

"A gift? Coincidentally, I've prepared something for you, too." Lan Jue's voice grows softer. The reason is that Su Xiao takes out a glass bottle about the length of a finger, emitting a shimmering golden light.

"This thing... doesn't seem too friendly." Lan Jue knows he can't delay any longer; he's ranged, while his enemy is melee. The longer the delay, the more advantageous it is for the enemy. They've already had one encounter, so there's no need for further probing.

With a tight grip, Su Xiao snaps, and the golden glass bottle in his hand shatters.

[Tip: You have used 'Ashes of Resentment (Golden).']

[Intelligence attribute assessment is in progress...]

[Current intelligence attribute: 69 points.]

[Tip: Detecting the skill 'Supreme Sovereignty (Passive)' attached to the 'King's Supreme Arm Armor.' [This assessment's correction value is +10.]

[Tip: Current intelligence attribute assessment: 79 points.]

[Tip: Summoning the Orphan of Resentment·Sis is underway...]

[Summoning successful.]

...

The 'Ashes of Resentment' floats in mid-air. This item is a one-time-use golden-quality item that, when used, summons the Orphan of Resentment. The Orphan of Resentment·Sis exists for 3 to 20

minutes, and Su Xiao's intelligence attribute determines its existence duration. The Orphan of Resentment's various attributes also follow this rule.

[Tip: The Orphan of Resentment·Sis will exist for 18 minutes and 56 seconds.]

Name: Orphan of Resentment·Sis (Life Assimilation Rate: 99%)

Category: Resentful Creature·Lord-level Creature

Life Points: 100%

Mana Points: 1000/1000

Strength: 70

Agility: 73

Stamina: 76

Intelligence: 65

Charisma: 8 (Normal State: 65)

Skill 1: Source of Resentment (Passive LV.29): +1000 Life Points, +350 Mana Points

Skill 2: High-Intensity Skeleton (Passive LV.25): Due to long-term immersion in the Eternity Pool, Sis's bones are incredibly resilient, +24 Defense.

Skill 3: Life Assimilation (Active LV.25): Can increase 'Life Assimilation Rate' and restore a large number of life points by consuming flesh and blood of creatures. When the 'Life Assimilation Rate' reaches 100%, it will evolve into a complete form. Because the Orphan of Resentment·Sis is a temporary summon, this skill is now disabled.

Skill 4: Life Ladder (Passive LV.33): 'Life Assimilation Rate' has not reached 100%; this skill is inactive. Reading...

Skill 5: Soul Infection (Aura LV.20): Can erode the souls of all creatures within 30 meters, dealing 5% of the enemy's maximum life points as actual damage per minute.

Skill 6: Immortal (Passive LV.37): 'Life Assimilation Rate' has not reached 100%; this skill is inactive.

Skill 7: Summon Creature (Passive MAX): Can use thought to manipulate the actions of the Orphan of Resentment·Sis. The remaining duration of the Orphan of Resentment·Sis is 18 minutes and 53 seconds.

...

The Orphan of Resentment·Sis, standing over three meters tall, is in front of Su Xiao. Sis has no muscles or skin, only bones. Careful observation reveals organs within its ribcage and body tissues like eyeballs and a brain inside the skull.

The white bones are wrapped in a thin membrane as if the flesh has been peeled off. The Orphan of Resentment·Sis holds a muscular, curved knife as its weapon. The Orphan of Resentment·Sis nearly beat Su Xiao to death before. Now, it is Su Xiao's summons."

Chapter 830: Lan Jue's Counterattack

"The Orphan of Resentment·Sis appeared, and Lan Jue, who was a hundred meters away, immediately detected its attributes. Upon seeing the title 'Lord-level Creature' and attributes of Strength, Agility, and Stamina all above 70, Lan Jue's expression turned grim.

When Lan Jue saw the seven skills of the Orphan of Resentment·Sis, he immediately realized that this thing was the boss of some world, summoned here. What troubled Lan Jue the most was 'Soul Infection (Aura LV.20),' dealing 5% actual damage of the maximum life points per minute.

This thing would cause a chain reaction. If he were to be affected by this aura for some time, Su Xiao might be able to finish him off with a few strikes. If it were just the Orphan of Resentment·Sis alone, Lan Jue was confident in dealing with it. But with the Orphan of Resentment·Sis and Su Xiao?

Lan Jue only thought for two seconds before turning around to escape. What challenge, what fighting to the death—1v1, he might not even win confidently, let alone the enemy summoning such a monstrous thing. What a joke.

"Command: Self-destruct." A large swarm of mechanical bees swooped towards Su Xiao. Su Xiao didn't even look at the incoming mechanical bees; meanwhile, the Orphan of Resentment·Sis had already charged forward.

Lan Jue's speed was not slow; his Agility attribute was inherently high, and with his escape skills, he was faster. Su Xiao didn't catch up; although the battle hadn't begun, the chance to strike a falling enemy was already present.

Taking out the Spider Queen, Su Xiao crouched halfway down, pulled the bolt, and aimed at the fleeing Lan Jue. As Su Xiao locked onto him, Lan Jue stopped in his tracks and turned to face Su Xiao.

Bang! A smoke burst from the Spider Queen's muzzle, bullets shooting out from the smoke, heading straight for Lan Jue's head. "Command: Guard." Over a hundred mechanical beetles appeared, forming a wall in front of Lan Jue.

Boom! Boom! Two explosions followed in succession: the first was from the mechanical bug wall in front of Lan Jue, the second from the Orphan of Resentment·Sis surrounded by mechanical bees.

Seeing Su Xiao pull out the Spider Queen, Lan Jue abandoned the idea of escape because he couldn't. Based on Lan Jue's observation, that was a semi-automatic heavy sniper cannon. Preliminary judgment suggested that its rate of fire and power were strong, and its effective bullet range was also considerable.

After Su Xiao fired the first shot, Lan Jue roughly estimated that to escape Su Xiao's range, he would need to survive at least 5 to 7 shots. Leaving aside whether he could withstand these shots, just the brief pause during each defensive move might allow the skeletal creature to catch up.

If he got entangled by that creature, in combination with the enemy's close and distant attacks, he wouldn't last long. The more frightening thing wasn't the enemy's combination of close and distant attacks but rather if they both got close.

In that case, he'd die quickly. Since he couldn't escape, Lan Jue decisively gave up on running away. A mechanical beetle appeared in his hand, no bigger than a fingernail, entirely blood-red. Lan Jue looked at the beetle with complex emotions.

"I am the greatest, I am the strongest, I won't die, won't die, absolutely won't die."

While muttering to himself, the blood-red beetle burrowed into his palm, and Lan Jue received numerous notifications from the Paradise of Apocalypse.

[Notification: You have been parasitized by the Mechabug King. Assessment of Strength, Intelligence, and Willpower attributes in progress... Any failed assessments will trigger an immediate death state.]

[Strength assessment successful; Mechabug King has successfully parasitized one-third.]

[Intelligence assessment victorious; Mechabug King has successfully parasitized two-thirds.]

[Willpower assessment successful, Mechabug King has successfully parasitized your body.]

[Notification: Due to parasitization by the Mechabug King, permanent -15 Strength, permanent -20 Stamina, permanent -200 HP, permanent +15 Intelligence.]

[Notification: The Mechabug King will die in 30 minutes.]

[Notification: Your mana temporarily +3000. After the Mechabug King's death, this bonus will disappear.]

[Notification: Your summoning limits in quantity and variety have been lifted. After the Mechabug King's death, this effect will vanish.]

[Notification: After the Mechabug King's death, you will undergo another Stamina attribute assessment. Failure will trigger an immediate death state.]

...

A sense of weakness overwhelmed Lan Jue. He had used his least preferred ability, allowing the Mechabug King to parasitize him. If he failed any of the three assessments during the parasitization, he would die instantly. Even if he succeeded, he would lose a significant portion of his attributes.

After being parasitized, there were three advantages: a permanent +15 Intelligence, a temporary +3000 mana, and the temporary lifting of limits on the number and variety of summons.

In other words, Lan Jue could summon all of his stored summons, provided he had enough mana. Lan Jue had 12,604 mechanical insect summons in stock, and summoning all of them required 4653 mana.

While summoning over ten thousand mechanical insect summons was different from what Lan Jue wanted, he desired to lift the limit on summoning creatures. Of course, Lan Jue wanted to use something other than this ability. Using it would mean mutual destruction with the enemy.

Although Lan Jue had passed the initial three assessments, after the Mechabug King's death, he would have to undergo another Stamina attribute assessment. In his exhausted state and with a permanent -20 Stamina, the hope of passing was slim.

This was Lan Jue's first time using this ability, and there was a more than 98% chance it would be his last. A bullet flew towards Lan Jue; he closed his eyes, and countless mechanical bees appeared out of thin air. He didn't even make the summoning gesture this time; it happened instantly.

Over a hundred mechanical bees formed a circle, blocking the path of the bullet. Boom. An explosion occurred. Although the mechanical bees couldn't stop the bullet, their powerful explosions caused it to deviate from its trajectory.

Swish. A 17.36mm calibre bullet flew past Lan Jue's ear; he could even feel the heat emanating from the bullet. "Three against one? But not now." Lan Jue took a deep breath; he was pushed to the brink by Su Xiao; as a 'return,' he intended to send Su Xiao to hell within half an hour.

Moreover, if he could kill Su Xiao, Lan Jue wouldn't have a chance of survival. If he fought other enemies, Lan Jue would have a 98% chance of dying after the battle, but Su Xiao was different. Su Xiao was a hunter in the Paradise of Reincarnation.

Once Lan Jue completed the Apocalypse Paradise's mission by successfully killing the enemy park's hunter, would the Apocalypse Paradise let him die in such a humiliating state? It isn't peculiar. Countless mechanical insects appeared—mechanical bees, mechanical dragonflies, mechanical beetles, and dozens of other types.

Over ten thousand mechanical insects emerged from a distance; they resembled a dark cloud with flashes of red light inside—the eyes of each mechanical insect. Upon seeing these over ten thousand mechanical insects, Su Xiao immediately sensed trouble. A few hundred mechanical dragonflies could rupture a counter shield.

If over ten thousand exploded simultaneously and he was near the centre of the explosion, he would be obliterated. Of course, the possibility of him being blown up by these over ten thousand mechanical insects was low. In a precarious situation, he could retreat to a distance, letting Sis withstand the explosion.

"Ultimate command: Fusion." Lan Jue clasped his hands together, and over ten thousand mechanical insects gathered, approximately 500 merging into a single entity, melting like ice and snow. They fused.

Soon, the over ten thousand mechanical beetles disappeared, and 25 metallic arrows appeared in mid-air—Ghost Bees. The Ghost Bee beside Lan Jue drifted into the group of 25 Ghost Bees, now totalling 26. "I'm running out of time. Let's begin."