

War God 71

Chapter 71 Steel Puppets!

Long Chen learned a bit more about the Dawn Trading Alliance until Liu Fengfeng decided to go cultivate.

Although he truly did not like Liu Fengfeng, he was still impressed that Liu Fengfeng could reach the Ninth Draconic Stage at such a young age.

The night passed quickly as he studied the Burning Devil Sun Fist once more. The qualifiers to enter the Lingwu family would begin soon.

Dedicated personnel came to greet the participants early in the morning. Numerous young experts at the Ninth Draconic Stage or above walked out of their rooms, eyeing one another.

Most of them were from small or mid-sized factions within Yuanling City who had been arrogant all their lives. However, now that they were in the Lingwu family's territory, they controlled themselves well.

Long Chen spotted Huang Xiang immediately, who looked completely relaxed and nonchalant. Huang Xiang didn't see him because he was frantically searching for someone in the group of personnel. When he finally spotted a cold-looking man who looked like a similar but more mature version of himself, he grew excited and started to approach. "Elder Brother ..."

Huang Xiang gently called when he neared the man.

The man merely nodded at him, then he looked at the group of approximately fifty people coldly. "You're responsible for your own lives when you are competing in the qualifiers for the Lingwu family. If you have second thoughts, you may leave now. Anyone who does not wish to leave can follow me to the sparring arena.

Then he called out the few other Lingwu family members and walked in front. Huang Xiang followed him excitedly.

Long Chen and the rest also followed. They were all competitors here, so very few people were cordial enough to chat. The tension in the air was thick.

He followed them through a spiral stairway in silence.

Liu Fengfeng was walking next to him and tutted as he looked at Huang Xiang in front. "I'm done for if Huang Xiang is my opponent later. That examiner, Huang Feiyang, must be his brother. Also, he's also one of the strongest in our group of fifty. Looks like this is it for him!"

"Is that so?"

Long Chen looked at Huang Xiang walking proudly at the front of the group. Although he didn't show it, killing intent surged through him when he thought of the Black Scaled Dragon Horse that Lingqing had given him. *If I don't teach you a good lesson, I won't be able to face Lingqing when I get back. I don't care if that's your older brother. What can he do if I defeat you legitimately in a duel?*

Of course, Liu Fengfeng couldn't hear what he was thinking. He noticed that Long Chen had remained silent after hearing Huang Xiang's name and thought he was scared. "You don't need to worry. You won't even be able to pass the first round, so you won't get the chance to face him."

When Long Chen heard him say "first round," he asked, "What do you know about the qualifying process?"

Liu Fengfeng looked at him like he was looking at an idiot, speechless. "You're really ... Everyone in Yuanling City knows that there are two rounds in the Lingwu family qualifiers. Don't you know this?"

Long Chen shook his head.

Liu Fengfeng looked at him pitifully for a long time, then he shook his head and sighed. "Whatever, I guess we have some sort of karmic tie since we were allocated to the same room. I'll explain. There are two main rounds. The first round involves fighting steel puppets!"

"How, specifically?"

"We'll see a place with dozens of dark tunnels later on. Every tunnel is only three meters tall and two meters wide, but more than five hundred meters long. There are many steel puppets located inside. When you enter the tunnels alone, they will attack you! But I guess you don't know what a steel puppet is, do you?"

Long Chen replied, "I don't. I hope you can explain, Brother Liu."

He knew that he was at the bottom of the food chain in Yuanling City, so he had reined in the arrogance and boldness he displayed in Baiyang Town.

This was what Yang Xueqing taught him. Now, he had to keep it all in until the day he could shock everyone with his prowess. Only at that point would his real personality show.

Liu Fengfeng looked like he expected Long Chen to not know. "Basically, the steel puppets are like living things that know how to attack but do not possess intelligence. Brother Long Chen, let me give you a word of advice. If you find that you cannot defeat the steel puppets, do not venture too deep inside. At least you'll still be able to run out. If you go more than a hundred meters deep, no one will even know if you're dead."

Long Chen smiled, remaining diplomatic, as he continued, "Brother Liu, how do you pass this stage, then?"

Liu Fengfeng smirked. "There might be more than fifty of us here, but after the first round, there will only be ten of us left. Why? Because after we kill the steel puppets, we take their steel hearts. The ten people with the greatest number of hearts will qualify for the next round. After many years of study, this first round is nothing to me ... Right, you don't have a Universe Pouch, right?"

He could tell that Long Chen wasn't from Yuanling City. Small town folk usually didn't know what a Universe Pouch was, so Liu Fengfeng feigned a conflicted expression and said, "Without a Universe Pouch, you won't be able to take more than a few hearts with you. But this is a good thing. You should go back home and reach the Ninth Draconic Stage after this and then head to Yuandi City. You'll have a higher chance then."

By now, Long Chen had gotten most of the information he wanted. He despised the condescension in this guy but was too lazy to argue, so he walked silently.

Liu Fengfeng thought Long Chen was sad based on his reaction, and so he shook his head and shifted his attention to the rest of the participants, studying them. "The quality of the participants in this round is very high. Other than you, there aren't any ripe tomatoes soft enough to squish ..."

Amidst Liu Fengfeng's condescension, the group soon arrived at the place he had mentioned.

A small hill sat before Long Chen with tens of tunnels at its foot. Each tunnel was locked up with an iron door, but they were opened when they arrived.

The Lingwu family members leading the group climbed up a tall boulder, one of them being Huang Xiang's elder brother, Huang Feiyang.

Long Chen eyed Huang Feiyang carefully and noticed that he was a calm, cold man of few words but with a terrifying gaze. He was likely a vicious character. Anyone who offended him probably wouldn't have a good life after.

But I can't not avenge Blackie ...

Another young expert cultivator of the Lingwu family swept his gaze over the crowd, sending chills straight into Long Chen's heart. "Everyone. I'm sure everyone is familiar with the rules of the Lingwu family. The examination rules of the Turquoise family also follow the Lingwu family's rules. There are steel puppets in these tunnels, and all you need to do is enter. Whoever passes through these tunnels and obtains enough steel hearts will qualify for the next round!

"But I must remind you all that once you enter these tunnels, death is a possibility. Every one of you must be prepared to die. Now, I won't waste anymore time. Since all of you are here, you no longer have a chance to back out. Everyone, enter now and we will wait for you on the other side!"

Long Chen eyed these people coldly and thought, *These youths aren't very old either, but they seem to be at least at the Human Core Realm. Huang Feiyang is already at the Incomplete Human Core Realm, so I'm sure the others are at least the same ... This is just one of the halls of the Turquoise family. Looks like prodigies at this level are common here ...*

"Long Chen, you have something far greater than all of them. With enough time, you will quickly be able to surpass them. Just like right now. You only need to improve a bit more, then use the Ascension Fruit to catch up," Ling Xi said into his ear.

He was currently being led towards one of the tunnels. As all of the fifty-plus people were directed to their own tunnels, anxiety filled the air. Most of them felt their scalps go numb when they heard the shrill sound of metal rubbing against metal.

Long Chen didn't know where the know-it-all Liu Fengfeng had been allocated to, but he suddenly sensed a burning glare directed at himself. He turned and saw that Huang Xiang, who was nearby, had already noticed him.

Huang Xiang was prepared to show off his combat abilities until he suddenly spotted Long Chen not far away. He gasped in surprise, though he thought he was mistaken.

But when Long Chen turned around, he confirmed that it was indeed Long Chen, and he relaxed. *So, it really is that brat. He was the one who made me lose face in Yuanyang City. All I could do was kill his horse because the Lingwu family's qualifiers were starting soon. I can't believe he's here too. Now I have no choice but to kill you along the way. You have no one to blame but your bad luck ...*

When Huang Xiang thought of how he'd be able to show Long Chen who the stronger one truly was in the second round, he grew restless. *I think my elder brother is the one allocating the opponents for the second round. He can match me with you, and you'll be so dead!*

Huang Xiang was secretly feeling smug.

Due to the qualifiers being so close, he was forced to let Long Chen go the last time they met. He had been very uncomfortable with this over the past few days.

If he didn't teach Long Chen a lesson, he would never be able to resolve the torn emotions within him. Now that Long Chen was here, it was good for him to unravel this knot in him, and he was overjoyed. *But I wonder, will the brat even pass the first round? Whatever, if he dies in there, he deserves it. I, Huang Xiang, will not hold a grudge against a dead person.*

Long Chen put his guard on when he saw Huang Chen's changing expressions, finally turning into a malicious sneer. *What kind of plan is he cooking?*

Unable to figure it out, Long Chen did not dwell on the matter. The most important thing was to pass the first round. If he had to fight Huang Xiang in the next round ...

I will incapacitate that bastard.

Huang Feiyang took one glance at Huang Xuang, gave a small smile, then announced, "Open the iron doors! The first round begins!"

Chapter 72 Crazy Killing!

The group watched nervously as the large doors sealing the tunnels hiding steel puppets were slowly opened.

A dark tunnel mouth was revealed in front of every person, radiating thick killing intent. Everyone drew a sharp breath.

When Huang Feiyang saw the newbies' pale faces, he smirked and said loudly, "Remember this: you all may only stay in there for up to one hour! If you're still not out after an hour, it doesn't matter how many steel hearts you have. They won't count because you won't be able to exit anymore!"

"In one hour's time, we will close the iron doors. It doesn't matter if you're dead yet, we will declare you dead! If you want to come out, you'll have to wait for the Lingwu family's next qualifiers!"

Huang Feiyang smirked coldly to himself. *When the next qualifier comes around, you'll be nothing but bones.*

Long Chen was focused on the inside of the tunnel. There wasn't any life force detectable inside, but the air was heavy with thick killing intent and faint sounds of metal knocking against metal. Just

from these sounds alone, he could tell that the steel puppets were made of very tough metal! *Under usual circumstances, one hour is definitely enough to travel five hundred meters, but there will be steel puppets in my way. Looks like getting through within the stipulated time while killing steel puppets and getting the highest number of hearts won't be easy ...*

While his mind raced, Huang Feiyang had already declared the commencement of the qualifiers.

Long Chen and the rest of the fifty-plus competitors rushed into the tunnels. "Xiao Xi, do you know anything about these steel puppets?"

"Puppets are brought to life by unique cultivator blacksmiths using rune formations. I think they're combat machines using things like divine jades as power sources. You have nothing to worry about. These steel puppets are of the lowest tier. You have an advantage in this round."

Long Chen asked, puzzled, "Why do you say that?"

"These are simple steel puppets. Although their bodies are tough, they don't possess any combat techniques. The only inconvenient part is that there'll be many of them. If you fight them using your combat techniques, you'll soon exhaust all your Qi. But if you have some innate power to support you, it'll save you a lot of strength. You cultivated the Constellation Body and your body has been strengthened by the thousandth dragon blood droplet. And after the Dragon Soul Transformation, you possess strength equivalent to an advanced Yellow-tier Body Tempering Technique, maybe even stronger!

Long Chen was pleasantly surprised. "Xiao Xi, does this mean that my body will become stronger if I get more Blood Essence?"

"Theoretically, yes. When you're able to use all of the Inherited Blood Essence, your physical body becoming powerful is one of the benefits. Of course, there will be many more benefits you won't be able to think of, just like your Blood Transmutation and Dragon Soul Transformation!"

The Dragon Jade was suppressing the vast majority of the Inherited Blood Essence in Long Chen's sea of consciousness. He knew that he would start chipping away at it along his journey to becoming stronger. *When I get all of the Inherited Blood Essence and cultivate it to the maximum, I'll become a Primordial Dragon. Will I become the Ancient Bloodsoul Dragon, one of the Ten Ancient Dragon Ancestors?*

As this thought circled in his mind, Long Chen had already ventured thirty meters into the cave.

It was getting dark at this point, but the good thing was that the tunnel had widened a few times over, making it more suitable for combat.

Long Chen could vaguely sense killing intent nearing him. "Ten meters ahead! Your presence has woken up four steel puppets. They're here!"

With Ling Xi's reminder, several steel puppets erupted to life and charged at Long Chen.

Long Chen was ready. He had completely transformed with a full body of dense, neat, blood-red scales protecting him. The bony spines on his elbows, knees, shoulders, and spine, as well as his sharp claws, served as weapons at his disposal!

Sharp, ten-centimeter-long claws protruded from his fingers, each resembling a blood-red dagger. If they were used on a human, they were sharp enough to carve a human heart out of someone's chest! *We'll be participating in the second qualifier immediately after this round. Many people will exhaust a lot of Qi in the process of getting more steel hearts when they fight the steel puppets. This will become a huge disadvantage in the second round! But I have Ling Xi and I'll do my best to rely on my physical strength. I refuse to believe that my body, after being enhanced by the Inherited Blood Essence, can't defeat a few steel ants!*

An instant later, he collided with one of the steel puppets!

During their battle, Long Chen was soon able to see the steel puppet clearly. It was a humanoid puppet made completely of steel. Long Chen wasn't sure what metal it was made of specifically, but it was abnormally tough. The puppet before him was more than two meters tall with thick, strong limbs that contained immense strength. There were some black runes in its body that flashed when it attacked. Long Chen observed that the center of the runes was where the heart was located!

Clang!

The ear-piercing sound of metal rubbing against metal echoed loudly through the tunnel. Long Chen was shocked after withstanding a punch from the steel puppet!

Its strength level is between the Seventh and Eighth Draconic Stages, and this tunnel contains more than a hundred of these. It's no wonder that they say people could die inside!

Long Chen roared, his movements never slowing for a moment. When he blasted the steel puppet back with a punch, he leveraged on his speed advantage and rushed forward, slamming into the puppet's body so it fell backwards onto the ground! *My guess was right. While the puppets are tough and strong, they're not very agile!*

His Body Tempering techniques had greatly boosted his agility. When his shoulder slammed into the steel puppet, he noticed that although the spines on his shoulder had punctured big holes in its body, it had zero effect on the puppet's movements!

But this was not his main attack. After he knocked the steel puppet over, he dug his claws hard into the center of the runes. Long Chen dug with all the strength in his body and his claws sank deep into its heart! "That's right! Grab that hot rock and pull it out!"

Listening to Ling Xi's guidance, he felt something like a hot rock and pulled it out without hesitation!

When he pulled it out, the ferocious steel puppet suddenly let out a human-like wail and started begging.

Long Chen had successfully targeted its Achilles' heel. These were nonliving things, so he would never show mercy. He retreated quickly while the steel puppet crashed into the ground and stopped moving! "One steel heart!"

Long Chen took a glance at the steel heart in his hand and found that it was a divine jade-like rock. It felt warm and contained thick earthly spiritual Qi.

But there were also traces of other Qi in it!

He immediately put it in his Universe Pouch while the three remaining steel puppets started to charge towards Long Chen in a series of clangs and clangs! “You guys may be strong, but you’re so stiff! How could you ever be a match for me?”

After gaining experience with the first puppet, he turned to face the others! With three attacking me at the same time, it will be a little too crowded and I won’t be able to move properly, but ...”

In a flash, Long Chen went to the back of one of the puppets. It turned around and swung a fist with a whoosh, but Long Chen climbed onto its body and clung like a gecko. He then dug his claws into its back and pulled its steel heart out. At this point, the other two had just turned around! Ling Xi’s right! With my strong, agile body and sharp claws, I have a huge advantage over the puppets. Someone without a Body Tempering method would not dare to face them like this! They would attack using combat techniques! But that would make it very difficult to target the puppet’s sole Achilles’ heel! I will always be faster than the puppets!

When he thought of Huang Xiang, his eyes flashed coldly. Huang Xiang has cultivated an advanced Body Tempering technique. As long as he brings a sharp blade with him, killing steel puppets will also be very easy! It’s no wonder he spent time cultivating a Body Tempering technique; he has a relative in the Lingwu family, so he knows what to do to get an advantage!

As expected, the other two puppets also crashed in front of his feet. By this point, the sounds of their encounter had already triggered the rest of the steel puppets.

“Careful! The steel puppets nearby are all approaching you!”

Long Chen nodded. “I need to get to the other side of the tunnel in one hour. It looks like it’s more suitable for me to kill them en masse there so I can easily get out when time is almost up!”

With that thought, Long Chen sprinted deeper into the tunnel. After killing a few steel puppets, he slowly grasped the proper technique and found more efficient ways to take them down. The two techniques he initially used—slam-and-claw, as well as climb-and-claw—were extremely successful!

Just relying on these two techniques alone, Long Chen easily killed the increasing number of puppets emerging from the tunnel!

When he arrived at a vast, half-circle space, he saw an iron door. But the space was crowded with puppets!

Long Chen’s gaze swept the room and realized that there were at least a hundred inside. “The Lingwu family’s too generous, sending this many steel puppets to greet a single guest like me. There are more than fifty participants, so there must be a huge number of puppets for all of us!

“I’ve gotten twenty-eight steel hearts along the way. There’s about forty-five minutes left, so that’s enough time. Let me unleash a massacre in here. It’s a good opportunity for me to train my melee combat techniques!”

While fighting the steel puppets, Long Chen realized that he was lacking in the melee combat department. His life of cultivation training had been interrupted after all. When he was younger, he used to practice martial art movements every day. But after a long time without practice, he had

already forgotten some of the basic moves. The vast number of steel puppets were good training partners for him!

Long Chen was like a wolf infiltrating a herd of goats. He turned into a red illusion as he killed his way through the crowd of puppets!

He was enjoying himself thoroughly and forgot about the time until Ling Xi suddenly said, “Hey, the hour’s almost up. Are you going out or not?”

He finally stopped and checked his Universe Pouch, smiling bitterly. “One hundred and five steel hearts in total. I wonder if this is enough to finish in the top ten?”

Chapter 73 Huiling Grass

At the gathering point of the Turquoise Sun Hall, there was a hill designated for training. Tens of iron doors lined both sides of the hill. Beyond the iron gates on the shaded side of the hill was an expansive plaza with several people sitting in a row of chairs, watching the hill with cool gazes.

There was first silence, but as the hour slowly passed, the doors were pushed open one at a time. Various disheveled folks walked out, some even bearing severe injuries. When they saw the sunlight outside, they all looked excited despite the severity of their injuries.

Huang Feiyang looked at the dozen or so people who had exited. He cocked an eyebrow, then turned to a young teenager next to him and said, “Give some Huiling Grass to the ones with severe injuries so they can recuperate.” The teenager obeyed hurriedly.

He then turned to the young man next to him and smiled. “Brother Wen, it’s been an hour already, right? The participants this time aren’t bad at all; there are about twenty people here. About a dozen exited from the other side, which means only a dozen or so people died. “

Wen Ya’s gaze swept across the group as he said, “There’s still a bit of time left. We will lock the doors as soon as the hour is up. Anyone who hasn’t exited by then, if they are alive, will probably be on the verge of death anyway. After all, it isn’t easy to enter the Lingwu family.

“Right, Brother Huang, your younger brother is performing well. He doesn’t look like he sustained any injuries at all. He might do the best out of all of them. Everyone else looks like they’ve at least sustained some injury.”

Huang Feiyang displayed a rare moment of pride when he heard him mention Huang Xiang. “My younger brother’s personality has always been similar to mine. Hardworking and resilient. I’m sure he will be as successful as I am in the future.”

Wen Ya nodded. After a long, silent pause, he said, “Time is almost up. Shall we lock the doors and start counting the steel hearts?”

Huang Feiyang was looking at his younger brother. Huang Xiang gave him a reassuring look and so he nodded with a smile.

Huang Xiang looked at the group of twenty who had passed. When he noticed that Long Chen wasn’t there, his brows furrowed. *His physical body was quite strong at Yuanyang City, and he managed to withstand my Wheel of Glory. There’s no reason why he couldn’t pass the first round. Did he really die in there ...*

But the Lingwu family members had already started locking the doors. Huang Xiang smiled, exasperated. *Huang Xiang, Huang Xiang. You have greatly overestimated him. Your peers are prodigies from the four main inner Lingwu families. That small-town nobody wasn't worth worrying about at all ...*

Huang Xiang then turned his attention to the experts of the Lingwu family and stopped thinking about Long Chen.

To him, Long Chen dying inside was not at all surprising.

On the other hand, Liu Fengfeng was surveying the group. When he realized that Long Chen was not out yet, he smirked. *I hope he knew his limits and gave up. If he died inside, he only has himself to blame for not listening to my warnings. You can't blame anyone! I knew you'd die just from the way you acted!*

When he thought about the number of steel hearts he retrieved, Liu Fengfeng was extremely pleased. *Twenty-three steel hearts in total. This should be enough to put me in the top ten, right?*

He drew in a sharp breath when he thought about the terrifying steel puppets in the tunnel. If he hadn't prepared so thoroughly, he probably would've died inside. *But I've already spent half of my Qi. The second round won't be easy...* Liu Fengfeng eyed everyone around him and felt much better when he realized that everyone was as disheveled as himself. *All these people are like me too. I still have a chance.*

As the iron doors were closed one by one, Huang Feiyang had already stood up and was about to announce the end of the first round. Suddenly, one of the doors that was about to be locked was suddenly blasted open. The person locking the door was thrown a few steps back by the blast, then he peered inside in annoyance. No one had expected a participant to exit right at the last moment!

The huge commotion attracted everyone's attention.

A silhouette slowly exited the dark tunnel. When everyone finally saw the foreign, young face, they were stunned.

But Huang Xiang and Liu Fengfeng were more than surprised.

Liu Fengfeng was speechless, his mind going blank. After a long time, he finally accepted that this was reality. *How lucky did he get? Escaping the tunnel at the last second? Just based on how he looks, he probably didn't get more than a few steel hearts. It's useless even though he made it out.*

This was what he thought, but even he couldn't explain why Long Chen had made it out without a scratch. He frowned. *Maybe there were very few steel puppets in his tunnel?*

When Huang Xiang saw Long Chen exit, his eyes turned cold, though he had another thought. *Anyone who can withstand my attack should be able to pass this test. It's a good thing you didn't die in there, because now I get to kill you! Let's just hope you have enough steel hearts to be in the top ten!*

Long Chen was startled to see so many people grouped together as soon as he came out. He quickly joined them. *Damn, I was focused too hard on killing. If I had been just a little slower, it would've been all over for me!*

He smiled coldly in response to Huang Xiang's glare filled with killing intent.

Huang Xiang was both speechless and amused that Long Chen dared to act so defiantly. *Is this because I killed your horse? Is that even worth being angry over? When I kill you, you'll know that killing the horse was nothing ...*

When Long Chen joined the group, everyone finally saw his face and they were no longer interested in paying him any more attention.

Liu Fengfeng approached and patted his shoulder with a grin. "Good one, kid! You didn't disappoint me at all! You made it out alive, and that's good! How many steel hearts did you get?"

Long Chen looked at him and smiled bitterly, shaking his head.

Liu Fengfeng acted like he had expected this response, then he said in an encouraging tone, "That's fine. It doesn't matter if you didn't get a steel heart. At least you're not hurt! You still have a chance in the next Yuandi City qualifiers!"

In the middle of Liu Fengfeng's relentless chatter, Huang Feiyang suddenly noticed the cold glare between Huang Xiang and Long Chen. He frowned, looked at Long Chen, and thought, *Is there some enmity between Huang Xiang and this kid? That brat. He knows I'm here and yet he dares to offend a Huang family member. How bold.*

He initially wanted to announce that due to Long Chen's slightly late arrival, he would not qualify for the next round. But Wen Ya, who was standing next to him, started his announcement before he spoke. "Alright, the hour is up! Get in line and submit your steel hearts!"

Since Wen Ya had spoken first and Huang Feiyang didn't want to make him lose face, he kept quiet. *Whatever. Even if you get into the top ten, you'll be dead later.*

He sat down and flipped through the registration records on the table to look for Long Chen's profile. *Long Chen. From ... the Yang family of Baiyang Town. Beast Warrior. Eighth Draconic Stage. His Beast Soul is from the Underground Blood Lizard? Huang Xiang hasn't gotten rid of him yet even though he's this weak. Looks like my little brother's strength is still lacking.*

Wen Ya started recording the number of steel hearts for each member.

"Chen Wenlong, eighteen hearts!"

"Qing Xue, twenty-nine hearts!"

"Xiao Yan, eight hearts!"

About twenty people lined up in front of Wen Ya and took out their steel hearts from their Universe Pouches, waiting anxiously. Liu Fengfeng patted Long Chen's shoulder and said, "Wait here, I'm going to submit my steel hearts first!"

The results were announced very quickly.

"Liu Fengfeng, twenty-three hearts!"

Liu Fengfeng returned to Long Chen with a smug look and said excitedly, "I'm ranked ninth! The remaining few all look severely injured, except for Huang Xiang. I expect to be ranked tenth today! The heavens are kind!"

As he spoke, Huang Xiang cast Long Chen a hostile look and walked up to Wen Ya. When Wen Ya saw that it was his good friend's younger brother, he smiled warmly. "Are you Huang Xiang? Come, show me your steel hearts and we'll see how you did!"

Huang Feiyang gazed lovingly at his brother and said, "When I competed years ago, I retrieved fifty-eight steel hearts, while Brother Wen Ya had sixty-seven. He was stronger than I was. The highest number right now is forty-one. Huang Xiang, do you have any hopes of getting number one?"

Huang Xiang smiled confidently. "All you have to do is count."

He then poured a pile of steel hearts out of his Universe Pouch. The other cultivators drew sharp breaths when they saw the shiny rocks, while Wen Ya and Huang Feiyang beamed with approval!

Liu Fengfeng was pale. "I underestimated Huang Xiang's strength. There's got to be at least sixty hearts there! Looks like he will be number one and I will be tenth! At least I will get to the second round ..."

Wen Ya counted, then he broke into a grin. "Good one, kid! Not bad! Sixty-eight! That's one more than I had!"

Huang Feiyang was proud to see his younger brother doing so well.

He nodded at Huang Xiang, who mouthed something. Huang Feiyang glanced at Long Chen not far behind and instantly understood what he meant.

Then Huang Feiyang nodded too.

Huang Xiang finally left. At this point, the heavily injured cultivators who were previously being treated with spiritual medicine approached. As Liu Fengfeng expected, their steel heart count rarely exceeded ten, and his grin widened. "I barely managed to qualify. That was close ..."

Long Chen was exasperated by Liu Fengfeng's relief, because he was the only one left who hadn't submitted his steel hearts.

When Liu Fengfeng saw Long Chen suddenly heading towards Wen Ya, he was stunned. *Does this mean that the kid actually managed to get steel hearts?*

Chapter 74 Intense Battle!

"State your name."

Wen Ya glanced at Long Chen, then he looked down while twirling his brush. "Long Chen."

He nodded, then found his name in the list. He said mildly, "Show me the steel hearts you retrieved."

Long Chen nodded. He knew that Huang Feiyang was glaring at him coldly, but he was unaffected.

Long Chen was the only one left, and if everything went as expected, then the top ten had already been decided.

Liu Fengfeng was grateful to be in the top ten, watching Long Chen excitedly. He wanted to see if Long Chen had even one steel heart.

Huang Xiang was more solemn because he hoped Long Chen would enter the top ten for him to vent his anger. *I hope you got at least twenty-three!*

Long Chen was younger than Liu Fengfeng, so if he did indeed have twenty-three hearts, he would take precedence due to his age, resulting in Liu Fengfeng's elimination.

Wen Ya watched intently as Long Chen took out his Universe Pouch. One by one, steel hearts fell into Long Chen's palm. Liu Fengfeng was shocked to see them. *So, he really did get some steel hearts! More than ten too! This is ...* He was already shocked, but when he saw even more steel hearts pouring nonstop out of the Universe Pouch, his relief turned into anxiety and he started to tremble.

When there were obviously more than twenty-three steel hearts on the table, Liu Fengfeng paled and glared daggers at Long Chen's back, his eyes turning blood-red! *Long Chen! This is impossible! He's just a village boy from some small town. How could he be better than me, a person who grew up in Yuanling City?*

Liu Fengfeng's eyes were filled with disbelief. He rubbed them hard, but he could not change what was happening before him.

When Wen Ya and Huang Feiyang saw that Long Chen had obtained more than twenty-three hearts, they were shocked and took him more seriously. Huang Xiang heaved a sigh of relief and mocked him privately. *You've gotten more than twenty-three, meaning you're getting into the second round. You were the one looking for death, so don't you blame me when it happens.*

But Long Chen's number kept increasing. Everyone's jaws were on the ground as they watched.

When the number approached fifty, everyone was left in a daze. Even the way Wen Ya and Huang Feiyang looked at him changed greatly.

Huang Xiang's brows were knitted tightly. He had been very confident that he would be the champion, but it looked like there was a possibility that he would be surpassed!

He was furious when he realized that he might lose to Long Chen.

He had already tolerated Long Chen once. If Long Chen still didn't know what was good for him, then his killing intent would only grow stronger.

When the count approached sixty, Wen Ya smiled at Long Chen. "Not bad, kid!"

Huang Feiyang's expression remained neutral. Everyone else had gone numb upon seeing the count increase, while Liu Fengfeng felt dizzy!

Huang Xiang clenched his fists tightly because the count was going to surpass his!

And at the next moment, it did. Huang Xiang's face reddened slowly as he glared at the person who had robbed him of first place. Hatred slowly spread through his heart. *You must die, or I won't live in peace for the rest of the year! Anyone who offends me is fated to die!*

Everyone looked at Long Chen, flabbergasted, as he put away his Universe Pouch. When they saw that his pile of steel hearts was taller than Huang Xiang's, they started to look at him differently!

Wen Ya smiled warmly. "Seventy-five hearts in total. This is the highest number in this round's qualifiers. However, you are a Beast Warrior and you've got a physical advantage, so these results are not very surprising. Most Beast Warriors end up with great results!"

Long Chen actually had a hundred and five steel hearts, but he had decided to keep some since he was already in the first place.

When Wen Ya announced Long Chen's number, Liu Fengfeng could no longer stand on his own and collapsed.

It was already clear who the top ten were. Long Chen was the legitimate champion, Huang Xiang had come in second, and Liu Fengfeng had been squeezed out of the top ten.

This meant that he was eliminated from the Lingwu family's qualifiers.

Wen Ya's cold gaze swept across the group, and he said coldly, "Everyone who isn't in the top ten, leave now. There will be other qualifiers. You still have other chances!"

The dizzy Liu Fengfeng was carried out of the venue. His eyes were fixed on Long Chen the whole time, not understanding how this had happened.

Ten participants remained. "You guys should rest. The next round will begin very soon. The contest is ..." Wen Ya looked around before he continued, "Solo dueling. Our rules are simple. We will divide you all into five pairs. Each pair will duel each other. Whoever wins will become a Lingwu family member. Do you understand?"

Long Chen and the others nodded hurriedly.

Huang Xiang's eyes were fixed on Long Chen. Even Wen Ya could sense the power surge inside Huang Xiang.

He frowned, then he turned to see that Huang Feiyang looked nonchalant and didn't comment on it. He announced, "We shall announce your pairings in fifteen minutes! You may prepare now!"

There was a gigantic sparring stage in the plaza. That was where the duels would take place.

Huang Feiyang started discussing something with the other family members while the competitors quickly treated their injuries to prepare for the next round.

Long Chen had nothing much to prepare. He looked at Huang Xiang and found that he was also looking at him. The killing intent in his eyes was too obvious. "You annoying fly! You have reached the end of your road today!" threatened Huang Xiang coldly.

"Aiyo, did the little dog just speak? That scared me!"

Long Chen imitated a woman's tone to the others' disgust. But to Huang Xiang, it was a gigantic humiliation.

He clenched his fists tightly. If the Lingwu family wasn't present, he would have charged at Long Chen already. *You won't be smirking when you hear who your opponent will be. The Lingwu family is my territory, do you think you're fit to be here?*

Everyone rested, and the fifteen minutes passed quickly.

Wen Ya and his team had long completed the pair allocation at this point. Long Chen could sense that Huang Feiyang's and Huang Xiang's glares bore ill intentions.

When he looked at the older brother, Long Chen knew what the results would be.

As expected, when they announced the pairings, Long Chen learned that Huang Xiang would be his opponent and their duel would be the last. *Huang Xiang must've requested this. Now that I've robbed first place from him, he must hate me to the bone, right?*

Long Chen glanced at Huang Xiang, who was smugly staring back, and smirked to himself. *You'll soon find out who the stronger one truly is!*

Under Wen Ya's arrangements, two muscular men at the Ninth Draconic Stage started fighting on the stage. They were at the same stage as the Yang patriarch, but they were much more powerful. "People in Yuanling City—even just in this tiny corner—are all not as simple as they seem." Long Chen learned a lot from watching these people fight. Time passed as each pair dueled it out.

Very soon, four of the five spots in the Lingwu family were filled.

There was one spot left, and it would go to either Long Chen or Huang Xiang.

All eyes were on those two now. Huang Xiang gave Long Chen a faint smile, then he walked onstage first.

Offstage, Wen Ya was watching the ice between Huang Xiang and Long Chen. He glanced at Huang Feiyang next to him, whose expression was icy, and shook his head with a bitter smile. *Long Chen has great potential, but it is extremely unfortunate that he offended Huang Xiang. It doesn't matter how talented he is, he's done for. And if Madam Administrator finds out that I rigged the rounds, it'll be over for me!*

There was actually a set rule for how the participants should be paired. It would be according to the first round's rankings, so the one who came in first would compete with the tenth, the second with the ninth, and so on.

Usually, the more steel hearts a person retrieved, the stronger they were. The top five of the first round almost always ended up entering the Lingwu family, but due to Huang Feiyang's interference, Long Chen was now up against Huang Xiang.

Both should have been able to enter the Lingwu family, but now only one of them would. *Although Long Chen gathered more steel hearts, he doesn't understand just how wealthy the Huang family is. Just that Black-tier technique alone is enough to feed him for a very long time.*

That was what Wen Ya thought. He looked at Long Chen with some pity, then announced that the duel would begin!

Huang Xiang smirked. "You brat, you must remember the taste of my Wheel of Glory from last time, don't you? Well, you'll get to experience it again today! You might've withstood it once, but I refuse to believe that you can do it again!"

Long Chen's aura rapidly strengthened, and very soon, he activated his Dragon Soul Transformation once more under the group's shocked gazes. The scales and spines across his entire body made their brows furrow tightly.

He clenched his fist tight and sneered. "If I can block such a weak technique once, I'll be able to block it again!"

"Is that so?"

When Huang Xiang smirked, he activated the Wheel of Glory once more.

Just like the last time, a powerful wave of aura crashed into Long Chen! “The same attack again. How uninteresting!”

Just like the last time, Long Chen also charged towards Huang Xiang at lightning speed, shooting out multiple dragon projections that flew towards Huang Xiang with a *whoosh!*

“Wheel of Glory!”

“Primordial Dragon Seal!”

Wen Ya’s and Huang Feiyang’s faces changed when they witnessed the collision.

Huang Feiyang was in utter disbelief when he saw the advanced Yellow-tier Primordial Dragon Seal cancel out the Huang family’s Black-tier technique!

Wen Ya shook his head with a bitter smile. *This Long Chen kid just keeps surprising me ... But if this is all he has, I’m afraid he’s going to die today ...*

Chapter 75 Wheel of Life and Death!

Both sides collided with immense force. The most shocking part was that Long Chen had used a Yellow-tier technique to forcefully withstand Huang Xiang’s Black-tier technique!

The crowd erupted in gasps!

Long Chen and Huang Xiang were blasted back by the force, struggling to stabilize themselves. Much to Huang Xiang’s shock, he realized that he had been thrown back almost the same distance as Long Chen, unlike last time!

This meant that Long Chen had grown significantly stronger over the past few days!

Having someone like that as an enemy was an annoying thing to Huang Xiang. His face contorted in rage, and he roared, “Long Chen! You have angered me! I swear, you will die this time!”

Long Chen remained silent. The moment Huang Xiang killed the Black Scaled Dragon Horse was the moment he received his death sentence.

When Wen Ya and Huang Feiyang saw Long Chen use the Primordial Dragon Seal to block the Wheel of Glory so well that they seemed to be equals, they looked at each other. “Brother Huang, this guy is something.”

Huang Feiyang smirked. “So what? He has offended the Huang family, so he must die! Huang Xiang told me that he has already studied *that* technique. Although he still isn’t familiar with it, it will be enough to defeat Long Chen!”

“What technique?”

Wen Ya thought for a moment and finally understood what he was referring to. He then smiled bitterly. “Indeed. That kid will never survive the Wheel of Life and Death. You were only able to use that technique when you first reached the Human Core Realm. I can’t believe Huang Xiang can use it despite only being at the Ninth Draconic Stage.”

Huang Feiyang nodded. “Huang Xiang has worked very hard in secret to catch up to me. I’m very happy for his success!”

Onstage, when Huang Xiang saw that the Wheel of Glory was once again ineffective against Long Chen, he was first furious, but that cold smirk appeared again. He launched more attacks at Long Chen and sneered. “You might be able to withstand my Wheel of Glory, but with this next move, I’m afraid you’ll die a corpseless death. You brat, you mustn’t blame me when you die. You can only blame your bad luck for meeting me!”

Sensing the changes in Huang Xiang’s aura, Long Chen was privately surprised. *Will this be an attack more powerful than the Wheel of Glory?*

Long Chen was familiar with how powerful the Wheel of Glory was. The last time they fought, he had lost to the Black-tier technique. But after attaining the intermediate Black-tier Burning Devil Sun Fist ... *You may have a more powerful technique, but do you think I don’t? Let’s see who is the stronger one this time, you, or me!*

Huang Feiyang watched him even more closely and smiled. “Indeed, Huang Xiang’s going to use the Wheel of Life and Death!”

He’d just finished his sentence when Huang Xiang smiled onstage. Power surged through his body and the air around him turned into multiple tornados spinning at insane speeds!

For a brief moment, countless faint white and black runes that looked like tadpoles flew to form a light wheel around Huang Xiang’s body.

A suffocating aura that seemed to be as expansive as the heavens closed in on Long Chen, who could feel his opponent’s extremely powerful state. But he did not give up! *This technique is more than ten times stronger than the Wheel of Light!*

Huang Xiang’s face was cold as usual, as if he had control over the fate of the world. He directed a mountain-like force toward Long Chen, making it even more difficult for him to move! *That illusory rune light wheel is so powerful ... but do you think you’re the only one with a Black-tier technique?*

Long Chen’s blood-red Qi started rumbling through his body as if he was going to burst into flames.

Invisible Qi currents appeared all over his scales, and he felt like there was an invisible fireball burning him!

Everyone around felt the temperature skyrocket. It was already deep into fall, but because of Long Chen, it was now hotter than a summer day! “This is ...” Wen Ya and the rest were shaken.

Then Long Chen’s eyes sprang open. There seemed to be a fire burning in his blood-red eyes, and a huge force spread from his body like heat from a fire!

To the audience, he had turned into a gigantic boulder of Yang energy that was shining with infinite light!

Waves of heat were blasted at the audience. To their shock, there was a blood-red flame quickly forming on his right fist!

The blood-red fire vibrated slightly, causing Long Chen’s body to tremble a bit. They could tell that Long Chen wasn’t very familiar with this technique, but Huang Xiang was doing even more poorly. The black and white rune light wheel was trembling harder than the flame, so much so that Huang Xiang couldn’t control it! “Die! Wheel of Life and Death!”

Being unable to control his technique, all Huang Xiang could do was launch the attack at Long Chen as soon as the wheel formed. At this point, Long Chen's aura was as powerful as his!

The blood-red fire had completely covered Long Chen's fist. His eyes flashed coldly when he saw Huang Xiang's Wheel of Life and Death closing in. He then sprinted forward and punched with a loud *whoosh!*

Boom!

The fire erupted and charged at the Wheel of Light and Death, swallowing everything in its way. "Burning Devil Sun Fist ... Blazing Flame!"

Long Chen's attack skyrocketed to its peak power. Initially, it was just powerful enough to match the Wheel of Life and Death. But when it was unleashed, his Qi became a few times stronger!

The blinding light from the Wheel of Light and Death dimmed and was quickly shattered by Long Chen's violent, direct, and decisive punch. Long Chen's manic roar shook Huang Xiang so much that he was left in a daze!

The violent attack blasted Huang Xiang up in the air, its sheer force destroying his body. Several mouthfuls of blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he crashed unceremoniously into the ground, his face fully smeared with black blood!

His clothes had been incinerated by Long Chen's attack. By now, his entire body was a burnt black and the smell of cooked meat spread in the air. The smell originated from the twitching Huang Xiang.

He curled up in pain and his blurry gaze fell on Long Chen. When he saw that Long Chen was unscathed while he was in such a painful state, he felt like he was dreaming and was in utter disbelief. The shock, paired with the endless pain, caused white foam to bubble from his mouth and he went unconscious!

He refused to believe that his most powerful technique had completely lost to Long Chen!

He had been mocking Long Chen for being from a small town and not possessing any good combat techniques, but the Burning Devil Sun Fist was basically a hard slap to his face!

The remaining eight cultivators drew in sharp breaths and fell to a fearful silence when they saw Huang Xiang's situation.

They were all grateful that they weren't Long Chen's opponent, or the person lying on the ground now would be them!

When Wen Ya saw this, his lips trembled and his teeth chattered as he stared at the stage in shock. Long Chen was still standing on the stage. Wen Ya shivered, unable to say a word. *He ... defeated the Huang family's Wheel of Life and Death? How's that possible? And he's only at the Eighth Draconic Stage? Is Long Chen really that talented?*

After using the Burning Devil Sun Fist, Long Chen felt like his entire body had been completely drained. Fatigue suddenly washed over him.

The Burning Devil Sun Fist was an intermediate Black-tier combat technique. Being only at the Eighth Draconic Stage and using a technique usually reserved for Earthly Core Realm masters had obviously exhausted a great amount of energy!

Long Chen was at his limit.

Despite being victorious, he didn't get a chance to breathe, because he already knew he was in trouble!

As expected, the moment he defeated Huang Xiang, a powerful aura erupted nearby!

It exuded an amount of energy that Long Chen could not withstand. The source of the aura arrived next to him in a flash, and with only a bit of Qi left, he could not defend himself at all!

Though he still wouldn't have been able to resist it even in his peak state, because this person was Huang Feiyang!

When he saw his younger brother being so brutally beaten, his eyes reddened with rage and he immediately attacked. Even Wen Ya couldn't stop him!

Previously, Ling Xi had spent three Lingzhi Mushrooms to take Xue Yuanzi down, so the only thing Long Chen did was clutch the Ling Xi Sword with all his might!

Ling Xi was pale with panic within the sword, but Long Chen was covering his whole ear with his hand. If she shot the sword out, she would have to puncture his palm!

She could not bear to hurt Long Chen, so that moment of hesitation made her lose her chance to save him!

Huang Feiyang's attack appeared in front of Long Chen in a flash!

Ling Xi's eyes were filled with tears as she panicked! "You idiot! Move your hand! Move!"

Despite screaming with all her might, Long Chen did not react.

She knew that Long Chen was well aware that she had enough Dream Lingzhi Mushrooms to survive for a few more months. If she used her power now, she might not be able to live any longer. He would rather die than have her sacrifice herself for him!

Ever since the fight over the Ascension Fruits, Long Chen had secretly made the decision to never let Ling Xi use her power if they didn't have enough herbs. That was when he thought of this trick to cover his ear with his hand!

That brief moment was only enough for Long Chen to clutch his ear. Afterwards, Huang Feiyang blasted him into the air!

This was his first time receiving a direct attack in his transformed state. He thought he was going to die for sure, but after withstanding the full force of Huang Feiyang's punch, he realized that although the wound hurt terribly and he felt as if his body would split apart, there was still some distance between him and death! *How tough are these dragon scales?*

Long Chen was pleasantly surprised with this discovery, but Huang Feiyang's punch still made blood spray out of his mouth. He had sustained internal injuries!

When he crashed into the ground, Long Chen noticed that his limbs were stiff. Although Huang Feiyang hadn't killed him, he was incapacitated at the very least.

If he struck again, Long Chen would die!

And Huang Feiyang was currently charging towards him!

Chapter 76 Madam Administrator!

Long Chen faintly heard Huang Feiyang's voice. "Long Chen has broken the competition rules. I hereby announce that he has been disqualified!"

He was lucky because he hadn't died after taking such a powerful attack from Huang Feiyang, but he was not happy at all.

Huang Feiyang would never let him leave alive, and Long Chen's hand had left his ear due to the impact of the blast, so Ling Xi was now free to emerge!

Long Chen screamed with all his might, "Ling Xi, get the fuck back! Or I'll hate you until my last breath!"

The Ling Xi Sword started to move. She heard his frantic voice but couldn't process his words.

Long Chen was currently at the brink of death, and this was the only thing on her mind.

"Ling Xi! Listen to me, please!"

Long Chen's desperate screams did not cause Ling Xi to change her mind!

Huang Feiyang had already arrived in front of Long Chen by now, his eyes bloodshot. Without another word, he launched his next attack!

The Ling Xi sword was just about to leave Long Chen's ear to defend him!

At the very last second, a woman's cold voice suddenly rang out, and Huang Feiyang was blasted backwards. He stumbled several steps back and looked at the incoming person with a pale face!

Huang Feiyang's furious expression suddenly changed when he saw who it was, and he greeted hurriedly, "Greetings, Madam Administrator!"

Wen Ya, who was next to them, also bowed.

Long Chen didn't know who she was, but he recovered slightly and managed to stand up with great effort. Ling Xi, who was about to attack, saw that Long Chen was saved and finally sighed in relief.

"You're dead when we get back!"

After scaring Ling Xi with this threat, Long Chen clenched his teeth and dragged himself onto his feet despite the intense pain.

He was barely holding on, but he still looked at the newcomers.

Everyone watched as a group of people approached.

These were no ordinary people. They looked like they were a lot more powerful than Huang Feiyang and Wen Ya, especially the lady in the center. This made Long Chen squint.

The lady was extra eye-catching among the group of young men. She was wearing a red dress, had delicate, feminine features, skin as white as snow, and a beautiful smile. Her curvy and elegant figure attracted all the men's attention as she walked.

The sudden arrival of such a beautiful lady caused the eight cultivators to gulp, their eyes wide.

Long Chen was already shy around beautiful girls like Ling Xi and Yang Lingqing, but this lady was a completely different type. Every move, every look, and every smile radiated maturity, intellect, and elegance. This was a level of attractiveness that a normal man could not withstand!

Beauty beyond this world. This was the phrase that popped into Long Chen's mind.

But he was now in extreme pain, and he didn't care about flirting with her. And she was crazy powerful, so she wasn't someone he could flirt with at his level.

And so, Long Chen immediately turned into an injured, innocent teenage boy. He bit his lip and glared coldly at Huang Feiyang.

He already had handsome features, but paired with an innocent expression that contained a hint of arrogance, he immediately attracted the beautiful lady's attention.

Long Chen was only sixteen and had the look of a teenager. There was still blood on the corner of his mouth. When the lady saw this, her brows furrowed. It looked like her heart was aching for him.

She quickly turned to Huang Feiyang, looking at him in half-amusement. "Huang Feiyang, may I ask what it is you were trying to do?"

The lady's voice was high-pitched and flirtatious, which ignited a fire in Long Chen. But when he remembered that Ling Xi was still living in his ear, he deflated like a balloon and didn't dare look at her.

She was speaking in a completely nonchalant tone, but this was the tone that Huang Feiyang feared the most. He quickly replied, "Madam Administrator, it happened like this: these two were dueling to decide who would enter the Lingwu family, but this teenager named Long Chen was vicious. He had clearly won the duel already, but he was relentless and attempted to kill his opponent. This behavior is against the rules, so I think he should be disqualified and chased out of this place!"

"Oh?"

The lady regarded Long Chen with her beautiful eyes and gave a small smile, as if this didn't matter to her. "Huang Feiyang, tell me, when did the Lingwu family ban killing? Have you forgotten already? We encourage killing ..."

When Huang Feiyang heard her reply, his face changed and he was about to argue when the lady suddenly looked at him. He suddenly felt suffocated and his face paled, not speaking another word.

Long Chen was secretly shaken. The lady was twenty-seven or twenty-eight at most, yet she was far more powerful than Huang Feiyang. He was previously shocked by her beauty, but now he admired her strength greatly too.

"Is that person your younger brother?"

Her voice slithered into Huang Feiyang's ear like a venomous snake, causing drops of cold sweat to sprout from his forehead. He didn't dare utter a single word, his face turning white and his body trembling.

She had a very seductive smile, just flirtatious enough to intoxicate any man. But to Huang Feiyang, it was a nightmare. "Huang Feiyang, you're under me, Liu Lan. How dare you misbehave on my watch? Aren't you afraid of going to the Star Devil Prison?"

Her suppressed, low tone scared Huang Feiyang to his core. When Liu Lan saw him tremble, she straightened her back and giggled happily. She then waved. “That was a joke, I’m just scaring you. Don’t do this again, alright? Scram now ...”

Wen Ya was initially too afraid to breathe, but he sighed in relief when Liu Lan said that. He quickly dragged the stunned Huang Feiyang away and said hurriedly, “Thank you for your mercy, Madam Administrator! We’ll leave now!”

Liu Lan paid them no attention. She turned to a young man next to her and said, “Huang Feiyang is useless. Make the necessary arrangements for these five newcomers and brief them on the things they should know, especially the Lingwu family’s rules. Understood?”

The young man nodded hurriedly. “Yes, Administrator Liu!”

Liu Lan nodded, then her beautiful eyes fell on Long Chen and she smiled. “Take extra care of the kid. I’ll meet him alone tonight ...”

Then she left with the group.

When Long Chen watched her leave, his tightened muscles relaxed. But Huang Feiyang’s hostile glare was something he would never forget. *I’ve only just arrived in Yuanling City, yet I’ve made such a huge enemy already. What bad luck. I really need to be careful in the future.*

The man who stayed behind eyed all five participants, his gaze lingering a little longer on Long Chen, then he said, “My name is Gan Lin. The Lingwu family is the same as a large sect, and we work under Administrator Liu. You may call me ‘Senior Gan.’ Understood?”

Long Chen and the rest nodded.

When he saw them being so obedient, he was satisfied and said, “Why don’t you guys introduce yourselves?”

The five of them announced their names and families, including Long Chen, who repeated the details he had given during registration.

When Gan Lin heard that Long Chen was from a small town in Yuanling County, he looked surprised and praised, “I was watching your fight from afar just now. You’re so young and from a small town too—I’m impressed you managed to reach such a high cultivation level!”

Being humble was the way to go. Senior Gan was friendly, and Long Chen needed many answers from him, so he decided to do his best to maintain this relationship.

“I had some luck, but most of it is because I’ve cultivated hard since young.”

Long Chen didn’t put himself down, nor did he speak too humbly, so Gan Lin was very satisfied and patted his shoulder with a smile. “Now that you’re in the Lingwu family, you’ll need to work harder in the future. This is the true battlefield, and anyone with true talent and determination will shine. Those who slack off and rely on their family and parents for everything will die tragic deaths. Just like the kid you defeated just now.”

He then turned to the others and said, “Now I will bring you all to Lingwu City. I’ll also give you your identity jade tokens and brief you further. Ask me if there’s anything you don’t understand, and I’ll explain. This is to avoid making mistakes in the future that might cost you your lives.”

Long Chen and the other four nodded. Under Gan Lin's lead, they walked towards Lingwu City. That was where the Lingwu family's true base was.

As Long Chen looked at Gan Lin's tall figure in front, he thought of Xiaolang, Liu Lan, and many other things.

This is where my real trials will take place. Just from Liu Lan and Gan Lin's words, I can roughly tell how intense the competition within the Lingwu family is. Now I've entered the Turquoise Sun Hall, and Administrator Liu is obviously ranked highly here, judging from how terrifyingly powerful she is. And the Turquoise Sun Hall is just a piece of the Turquoise family. Other than the Turquoise family, there's eight more outer families. And the true Lingwu family has four main inner families ...

Long Chen was momentarily speechless.

When I was in Baiyang Town, I had only heard of the Lingwu family name, but I didn't know how scary it all was. The Blood Saints really are nothing compared to this, though they are now related to the fate of the Yang family. If I don't improve quickly, the Yang family will be done for!

Long Chen felt an insurmountable pressure.

They had followed Gan Lin for approximately two hours when he suddenly turned and said, "We've arrived at Lingwu City!"

Chapter 77 Lingwu City

When Long Chen looked up, he saw a vast, endless city.

The city was pure white and surrounded by imposing walls. Behind them were buildings so tall that they touched the clouds, all as white as jade and shining brightly in the sun.

After seeing Yuanling City, Long Chen wasn't as shocked by the vastness of Lingwu City.

However, this city resembled a gigantic, orderly, white cloud, so Long Chen was still in awe of its magnificent beauty.

The other four had seen Lingwu City before, but they were also very emotional because today was finally the day they could enter.

Gan Ling looked at the young cultivators and gave a small smile. "Alright, follow me inside. Once you've settled down, I'll brief you about the Lingwu family."

Under Gan Lin's lead, Long Chen and the rest entered Lingwu City. Yuanling City was extremely rich in Long Chen's eyes, but Lingwu City was the concentration of luxury. It was no wonder the ruler of Yuanling City resided here. "Lingwu City is divided into the outer and inner cities. The outer city is divided into nine main districts, each as a base to one of the nine main outer families. The Turquoise family is in the Turquoise district, which is where we're currently at, and the gate you entered from is the gate belonging to the Turquoise district."

As they walked, Long Chen passed by many cultivators. Some were at the Ninth Draconic Stage like them, but most were at the Human Core Realm or sometimes higher.

Now that Long Chen was in a place where almost everyone was stronger than he was, he completely reined in his temper.

From his previous experiences, the Lingwu family isn't as harmonious and peaceful as it seemed on the surface. Long Chen was privately shocked by the darkness and killing intent that lurked beneath the calm. *This is a scary place. Looks like I'll have to keep my tail between my legs and start being humble here ...* With that thought, Long Chen felt so claustrophobic that he wanted to run away.

But he had put in so much effort to enter Lingwu City, and this was a good opportunity to utilize his talents. It would be a pity to leave now, and Long Chen was not afraid of a challenge, so he decided to stay. *Now that I am a member of the Lingwu family, I'll ask them about the Blood Saints later to see if they can deal with them.*

Occasionally, someone would greet Gan Lin along the way. When they saw the group, they'd tut and eye them with a grin. "More newbies? Looks like it's going to be lively in the Turquoise Sun Hall again. I hope these calves won't give you too much trouble."

Long Chen made it a point to remember this.

Very soon, Gan Lin led them into a large courtyard. It was a gigantic place that could fit at least a hundred houses if they wanted to.

Gan Lin turned and said, "This district belongs to the Turquoise Sun Hall. This courtyard is the Turquoise Willow Residence, and it is under Administrator Liu's jurisdiction. We're all subordinates of her department. Now, I'll begin allocating your quarters and then brief you about Lingwu City."

It was daytime, and there were few people in the courtyard. Gan Lin was extremely familiar with this place, so they quickly arrived at a row of individual houses. He pointed at the sophisticated structures and said, "These will be your quarters; they're for Level Four disciples. You five will stay here from today onwards until you are promoted to Level Three disciples. You may all choose your rooms now. Afterwards, complete your registration and I will wait for you at the Martial Hall." All four of them immediately left to choose their room.

Long Chen was fine with any room, so he looked at a random house number and then followed Gan Lin to the Level Four disciples' Martial Hall.

Gan Lin was fully aware that Long Chen had followed him there and sat down as soon as they entered. He eyed Long Chen for a while, then he said, "Have a seat. Once the rest are here, I'll tell everyone about the Lingwu family in one shot. You may ask any questions then."

Long Chen nodded. He had nothing to say, so he took a seat on the side. Very soon, the other four arrived, looking emotional.

Gan Lin shook his head at the excited faces. But he was very satisfied with Long Chen's mild expression. With everyone present, he nodded and said, "I'll first explain to you the Lingwu family and our daily tasks. If you have any questions, you may ask them." Everyone nodded obediently.

Although it wasn't intentional, the wealth and power of the Lingwu family put a weight on their chests. "The Lingwu family is one of the two main factions of Yuanling County. And because we've retained the upper hand in the recent struggle between us and Yuandi City's Beast Soul Hall, we've maintained our position as the ruling faction of Yuanling City for more than a hundred years now."

Gan Lin smiled before he continued, "The Beast Soul Hall may be specialized, but the Lingwu family is more than ten times their size with more than twenty thousand members. About two

thousand are inner Lingwu family members. The outer family is divided into nine families, which are Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Turquoise, Indigo, Violet, Silver, and Gold.

“Every family consists of about two thousand outer family members, but you all must know that although the Turquoise family and the inner family have a similar number of members, the inner family is the true Lingwu family. That is the number one thing you must remember. We are merely mercenaries of the Lingwu family, their subordinates. So you must never have conflict with them, or no one will pity you if you die!” Gan Lin’s eyes flashed coldly and their chests tightened.

Long Chen’s brows furrowed when he heard the word “subordinate.” He asked, “Does that mean we have to do everything they say? Even if they’re sending us to our deaths?”

Gan Lin said mildly, “Don’t be too pessimistic. The fact that the outer families have expanded to their current size without rebellion proves that the inner families treat us well. Of course, that is assuming you don’t cause any conflict with them. Think about it. Even in a regular family, a subordinate wouldn’t incite conflict with the masters, right?”

In Long Chen’s understanding, the inner families were the masters and the outer families were merely subordinates.

He was very frustrated about this, but when he thought of how the Lingwu family would be a platform for him to grow his talents and the fact that his cultivation level was at the absolute bottom ...

A gigantic superpower like the Lingwu family has allowed me to become a subordinate of theirs. I guess they’re already giving me face. Then again, based on Gan Lin’s words, as long as I listen to their instructions and contribute more, I’ll probably benefit a lot. A true man must know when to bow. So why should I be afraid of them?

Gan Lin’s gaze swept across the group with reverence in his eyes. “What I said just now wasn’t to instill enmity in you towards the inner families. To be honest, although they are similar in numbers to us, they are much more powerful than all nine outer families combined!

“In some ways, they are the guardians of the outer families. We help them execute tasks while they give us sufficient resources and powerful support. We’re the vines and they are the tree trunk. Without the tree trunk’s support, the vines would only be crawling on the ground.

“Of course, if any of you guys prove to be extraordinarily talented, perhaps you might even be directly recruited into an inner family. There have been cases like that in history!”

When he said that last point, Gan Lin was mostly looking at Long Chen.

Out of the five, he felt that Long Chen had the most potential, though he smiled exasperatedly when he thought of the extremely strict conditions.

Long Chen was very interested in entering the inner families, so he asked hurriedly, “Senior Gan, may I ask what is considered ‘extraordinarily talented?’”

Gan Lin smiled bitterly. "I'm not sure either, but ... there are about ten thousand young people in the outer families, and only a handful get recruited into the inner families every year. I can imagine that at your age, you'll need to be at the Earthly Core Realm at least."

Long Chen was speechless. *Earthly Core Realm, at my age ... How many nonhuman talents are in this Lingwu family? I was called the ultimate prodigy in Baiyang Town, but I'm literally weaker than shit here!* This immense pressure didn't suffocate him but turned into motivation and passion. When he thought about how he might have a chance to climb up the ranks in the Lingwu family, he was filled with fighting spirit!

Looking at Long Chen's burning eyes, Gan Lin was about to quash his dreams, but he then thought, *Whatever. I don't need to bash him now. Once he spends some time here, he'll naturally learn that some things are just impossible ...*

He was once like this too, a young person who didn't know his limits and thought he could enter the inner family. In the end, he kept hitting walls and even sustained severe injuries before he finally curbed his ambitions and focused on cultivation. *How nice it is to be young ...*

Long Chen got the hint from the emotion in Gan Lin's eyes, but he wasn't the kind to give up when he was being underestimated.

Gan Lin continued, "I won't explain the inner family's structure for now, but each of the nine outer families has one leader. We call them the Grand Elders. Beneath the Turquoise family's Grand Elder are the eight Sect Elders that control the eight halls. The Turquoise Sun Hall belongs to a Sect Elder named Liu Yuan, and under him are five Administrators. Each Administrator controls about fifty members. We're under Administrator Liu. Do you guys understand the hierarchy?"

With such a clean explanation, how could they not understand?

But Long Chen was a little uncomfortable with the strict hierarchical system. He felt like there were countless people sitting on top of him!

He wasn't happy with this at all, but he had no power to fight against it!

Before they could completely digest the information, Gan Lin continued, "We're all disciples now. Cultivators at the Draconic Realm are Level Four disciples, while Initial Human Core Realm cultivators are Level Three. Reaching the Mid Human Core Realm will put you at Level Two and the Late Human Core Realm at Level One. I am now a Level One disciple. If you reach the Earthly Core Realm, you'll be considered management level. Anyone who is particularly strong will be appointed as an administrator in the outer families!

"The Turquoise Sun Hall is considered weak compared to the other outer families. There are fewer than ten Level One disciples working under Administrator Liu. Including her, there are only four Earthly Core Realm masters."

Long Chen asked, "Senior Gan, may I ask what the purpose of dividing disciples into levels is?"

Gan Lin looked at him approvingly and said, "This is related to the next matter that I'll be talking about—what the Lingwu family actually does!"

Chapter 78 Miniverse

Long Chen was indeed confused about this part. He only knew that the Lingwu family was the biggest faction in Yuanling County, so he had come to Yuanling City and registered to enter it.

Everyone from Yuanling City knew at least a little about this, so Long Chen was the only confused one.

Knowing that Long Chen wasn't from Yuanling City, Gan Lin made an effort to give a detailed explanation. "Everyone knows that the Lingwu family rules over Yuanling County. It oversees the entire county, and all the district cities and small towns are governed by district mayors and town mayors who are subordinates to the Lingwu family. Long Chen, the Yang family just gained the right to rule over Baiyang Town, right?"

Long Chen nodded. "Yes."

Gan Lin continued, "Yuanling County is vast, and countless things are happening daily, such as robberies, murders, and theft. When local mayors are unable to solve these problems, they need help from the Lingwu outer families."

Long Chen finally understood.

The Lingwu family was the official head of the county, while the outer families were its teeth and claws that helped stabilize its rule through military might.

Gan Lin looked out of the door and squinted. "We, the Turquoise family, are responsible for the peace and stability of a region within Yuanling County. In the Turquoise District of Lingwu City, there is a massive building that we refer to as the Martial Deeds Hall. The Lingwu family possesses a formidable intelligence network, and numerous missions appear in that hall practically every day. Anyone from the outer families may head there to collect missions, and when they are completed, the assignee receives a reward. Of course, the family will also directly assign missions to specific people. You Level Four disciples must complete at least one Level Four mission per month, or you will be kicked out! The same applies to the others—Level Three disciples must complete at least one Level Three mission per month!

"Some missions are mandatory and cannot be avoided, but you shouldn't be resentful—always be aware that your efforts will be repaid. The Lingwu family has infinite resources, techniques, weapons, and spiritual herbs. Of course, they are only available to people who contribute. These things cannot be measured by divine jades like external marketplaces, so you can't get anything here with divine jades. Everything must be earned through effort. Every time you complete a mission, someone will evaluate your contribution. The most important data point in the Lingwu family is contribution points.

"Every artifact is priced using contribution points. The more points you have, the more things you can get. The Lingwu family is rich in resources, as rich as the Dawn Trading Alliance. Getting things through the Lingwu family is much easier and cheaper than buying them with divine jades outside."

When he heard Gan Lin, Long Chen's eyes brightened. He was in awe of the Lingwu family's sheer wealth and power, and at the same time, he was sure that this large family had soul-nourishing herbs

too. *Does this mean that if I work for the family, I'll be able to get those herbs without having to struggle to save money myself?*

Long Chen was pleasantly surprised with the contribution points reward system.

Even in the Yang family, one could receive rewards when helping the family, but there was no system and it was according to the patriarch's whims. Other people had no power to decide. It was different in the Lingwu family. This huge system allowed anyone to take the initiative to strive for what they wanted!

Long Chen was impressed. *The Lingwu family is indeed an exceptional organization. We being outsiders would naturally lack loyalty and enthusiasm, but with a system like that, won't we all do our best to complete missions?*

Then Gan Lin asked, "Do you guys understand what I just said?"

Long Chen and the others nodded. One of them asked, "Senior Gan, how will our contribution points be recorded?"

Gan Lin froze, then grinned. "Mm, how could I forget ..."

He took out a token made of white jade that radiated spiritual Qi from his Universe Pouch. The token was made of divine jade! "Every member of the Lingwu family has their own identity jade token. Do you guys see the runes on the back? They record important information like your identity, cultivation level, origin, and most importantly, your contribution points.

"That is why all you need to do is show this token when you take on missions or buy goods with points. If you quiet your heart down and place the identity jade token in your palm, touching it with your Qi will allow you to access the information within."

When faced with such a magical object, Long Chen had to admit that he indeed was the frog at the bottom of the well like Ling Xi had said.

He was very interested in the identity jade token and asked, "May I ask when we'll get our own identity jade tokens?"

Gan Lin smiled. "They're already making them now and will be delivered very soon. Once you get them, you'll all be true Lingwu family members. The average faction in Yuanling City would not dare cause conflict with you in broad daylight."

The Lingwu family had wealth and power that ran down with a clear hierarchical system. It was basically a country!

Long Chen and the other members were on a rollercoaster of emotion.

When Gan Lin saw the looks in their eyes, he shook his head without a word. After a long pause, he finally said, "Remember these important places: the Martial Deeds Hall, where you retrieve and submit tasks, and the Treasure Pavilion, where you purchase goods. You may visit these places now to familiarize yourselves with them. The third place is the training grounds, but you'll only be able to enter when you have reached the Human Core Realm."

"Training grounds?"

This piqued Long Chen's interest. He asked hurriedly, "Senior Gan, may I ask what that is?"

Long Chen's interest in this topic proved his strong desire to grow.

Looking at the teenager with blazing eyes, Gan Lin thought to himself, *He's only at the Eighth Draconic Stage, but he has already used an intermediate Black-tier combat technique. No one in the Turquoise family has ever done that. Madam Administrator is paying him close attention and he's very ambitious. Let's hope he maintains that mindset for a year ...* Gan Lin smiled and said, "Sure, I'll tell you about it. The Lingwu family has its own Miniverse. The entrances to this dimension are all located in Lingwu City, and each of the nine outer families has their own entrance to the training grounds. The training grounds are called the Heavenly Martial Realm!"

When he saw their puzzled looks, he smiled bitterly. "Looks like you guys don't know what a Miniverse is, do you? Just take your Universe Pouches for an example. The space inside doesn't belong to our world. You can think of a Miniverse as a gigantic Universe Pouch. The Heavenly Martial Realm is almost as big as Yuanling City. All sorts of demonic beasts live inside, and their reproductive speeds are frightening. I hope you get the picture. When we aren't executing tasks, we spend the rest of our time cultivating. But cultivation alone isn't enough to grow our strength, so we still need to hunt demonic beasts to train! And the Heavenly Martial Realm is a heaven for training that uniquely belongs to the Lingwu family! Right, I forgot to tell you this ..."

Gan Lin looked at their excited faces and continued, "The demonic beasts in the Heavenly Martial Realm reproduce very quickly and exist in huge populations. There are even Category Nine Black-tier demonic beasts in there. Based on your cultivation levels, you all go ahead and kill as many demonic beasts in there as you can. All the demonic cores, beast souls, and carcasses you collect can be taken to the Treasure Pavilion to be sold for contribution points! For example, I killed a Category Three Black-tier demonic beast a few days ago. I then took the contribution points earned from its demonic core and beast soul and bought some elementary Black-tier spiritual medicine!"

Isn't that basically Baiyang Town's Desolate Mountains? thought Long Chen.

He had never heard of a Miniverse, but he understood Gan Lin's explanation. *Just as Ling Xi said, the Dragon Continent is vast. I guess if it has a few goosebumps that become Miniverses, it makes sense!*

Ling Xi then said, "Eh? There's even a Miniverse in a small city like this? Interesting! Long Chen, if you get the chance, can we go in and take a look?"

Men may never understand the curiosity of women, so Long Chen agreed quickly and asked, "Xiao Xi, have you seen many Miniverses?"

Ling Xi blinked. "Where I'm from, they're everywhere."

Long Chen's self-esteem was hit, so he didn't dare ask further.

Lingwu City was already a gigantic presence in Long Chen's eyes, and the extent of its power was far beyond his imagination. So where in the world did Ling Xi come from?

While Long Chen was shocked by the sheer size of Ling Xi's birthplace, Gan Lin thought he was shocked about the Heavenly Martial Realm. He patted Long Chen's shoulder and grinned. "Don't worry. Once you've entered the Human Core Realm, you'll be able to get your new Beast Soul Origin in the Heavenly Martial Realm! If that happens, those of us under Administrator Liu will help you out." When Beast Warriors stepped into a new major cultivation realm, they could cultivate a new beast soul that would become their Beast Soul Origin. Long Chen knew this, but he

wasn't even a Beast Warrior and had never cultivated a beast soul. Therefore, he wasn't sure how he'd explain himself when he entered the Human Core Realm.

But now was not the time to worry about that. "Thank you so much, Senior Gan. I will work hard to reach the Human Core Realm!"

With a treasure like the Ascension Fruit in hand, he would be able to advance into the Human Core Realm as soon as he reached the Ninth Draconic Stage.

Long Chen now had two major stressors: the Blood Saints and the Lingwu family. He needed to become strong enough to deal with both! *If the Heavenly Martial Realm really is, as Gan Lin said, filled with countless beasts, I will enter alone and unleash the Blood Transmutation one day. My cultivation level will definitely skyrocket if I do that! The demonic cores and beast souls can be sold for contribution points too!*

The Lingwu family truly suits me after all!

That was when a man appeared outside the door.

Chapter 79 Nine Heavens Dragon Step

When Gan Lin saw the newcomer, his pupils constricted and he asked mildly, "Feng Wutian, are the identity jade tokens here?"

Long Chen also looked at the young man who had just appeared outside the door. He looked about twenty years old or perhaps even younger, at least much younger than Gan Lin, though he seemed to be more powerful than Gan Lin.

Everyone watched as the handsome man named Feng Wutian strode into the Martial Hall. He took out five identity jade tokens, then he turned and left without a word. When he left, he took a cold glance at Long Chen, which sent chills straight to Long Chen's heart.

He drew a sharp breath.

Once Feng Wutian left, Gan Lin asked with concern, "Long Chen, are you alright?"

He nodded and asked, "Senior Gan, I've never met Feng Wutian in my life. Why did he seem hostile towards me?"

Gan Lin shook his head with a bitter smile. "Feng Wutian is Administrator Liu's most talented subordinate. He turned nineteen this year and is already at the peak of the Human Core Realm. He will likely reach the Earthly Core Realm soon. It's best not to offend a person like that. But let me tell you this: Huang Feiyang used to be one of his lackeys, so they're close. And Administrator Liu punished Huang Feiyang because of you today, so Feng Wutian ..."

Long Chen's face darkened.

He had already gained an enemy in Huang Xiang over the horse Lingqing had given him. And Huang Feiyang couldn't wait to kill him because he had hurt Huang Xiang. Now, because Huang Feiyang was punished, he had subsequently provoked a prodigy so far out of his league ...

Long Chen fell into despair. *I can't even defeat Huang Feiyang, now Feng Wutian has appeared ...*

He was very annoyed by Feng Wutian's cold glare, but he knew he was too weak, and his life was as fragile as a piece of straw to Feng Wutian. That was why all he could do now was hold it in! *Once I become stronger, I will take my revenge on every single person who has offended me ...*

With this thought in mind, a fierce glint flashed in Long Chen's eyes. Gan Lin shook his head when he saw his expression. "Don't you be too brash. Forget about Feng Wutian—even Huang Feiyang is too strong for you. They are both subordinates of Administrator Liu, so it's best you avoid conflict with them. Feng Wutian's potential is greater than yours and Administrator Liu likes him very much. If it came down to it, she might even incapacitate you herself. I'd advise you to be humble and apologize, as that's absolutely a possibility. A true man knows when to bow."

Gan Lin's words impacted Long Chen like a hammer to his head. He bit his lip, knowing that all he could do was bear with it because of the Yang family.

He didn't dwell on the topic, seeing as Long Chen didn't react. He gave everyone an identity jade token then said, "Try out these tokens according to what I taught you."

Long Chen took the jade token, which was the size of his palm. There was a strange rune carved onto one side, while the other side had two protruding, carved characters: Long Chen. It was exquisite. Clutching the token, he extended his Qi to feel it, and a stream of information flowed into his brain.

Name: Long Chen

Sect: Outer family. Turquoise family. Turquoise Sun Hall.

Cultivation level: Eighth Draconic Stage

Warrior type: Beast Warrior

Draconic Realm Beast Soul Origin: Underground Blood Lizard, Category Five Yellow-tier Demonic Beast

Origin: Yang family. Mayor family of Baiyang Town. Yuanling County.

Contribution points: 0

"The data will change in real-time," explained Gan Lin.

Long Chen put it in his Universe Pouch.

Now that he had this token, he was a true Lingwu family member.

Gan Lin had finished his briefing, smiling faintly at the ground. "You all will receive your first mission in five days. This mission is especially important to all of you, so you must do your best to complete it!"

"So soon?"

Long Chen thought they'd let them recuperate for a while since they had just completed the qualifiers and everyone was hurt.

He had completely lost his ability to fight after Huang Feiyang's punch, and he had barely been able to sit through the briefing.

Gan Lin nodded. "This will be your first trial, and also the time to display your loyalty to the Lingwu family. I know you all are injured, so I came prepared ..."

He retrieved a few spiritual herbs from his Universe Pouch. “These are stalks of advanced Yellow-tier Huiling Grass. They can nourish your internal organs and help with the healing of external injuries. It’s enough for you guys to return to your peak strength in five days’ time. Consider this your first reward since entering the family!”

Long Chen’s concern dissipated when he received the Huiling Grass. Everyone took the herbs and put them in their Universe Pouches. Gan Lin then took a piece of lambskin parchment from his pouch with a grin. “Every person who enters the Lingwu family gets a reward: one elementary Black-tier combat technique and ten divine jades. I’ll distribute the divine jades in a moment, and you all may pick a combat technique from this list. You may also ask me for more information about these skills.”

As he spoke, he passed the parchment to one of the members and then took out fifty divine jades, distributing them to all five members.

Long Chen’s savings were now a mere eleven divine jades.

Cultivators who first entered the Human Core Realm usually owned fewer than a hundred divine jades. *The Lingwu family is very generous! Advanced Yellow-tier Huiling Grass, ten divine jades, and most importantly, an elementary Black-tier combat technique!*

He was privately shocked.

After Gan Lin answered their questions, the other four members found themselves a combat technique that suited them. The parchment finally arrived in Long Chen’s hands. He glanced through the list and noticed that all the techniques had cool names. There were fist techniques, finger techniques, seal techniques, claw techniques, footwork, and everything else. There were even sword techniques. *I already have the intermediate Black-tier Burning Devil Sun Fist. If I get another elementary Black-tier attack technique, it probably wouldn’t be very effective ...*

Long Chen skipped all the titles at the top and went straight to the bottom. He finally found a Body Combat Technique named Nine Heavens Dragon Step.

And so, he asked, “How is the Nine Heavens Dragon Step?”

Long Chen already possessed an intermediate Black-tier combat technique, so Gan Lin wasn’t surprised that he had picked a Body Combat Technique. He looked like he expected this choice. “The Nine Heavens Dragon Step is one of the most famous elementary Black-tier Body Combat Techniques. When utilized, it will be as if the user has turned into a water snake—fast and hard to pinpoint. It makes it difficult for your opponent to track your movements. If combined with a powerful attack, the effects are immense. Your body becomes very tough after your Beast Soul Transformation, so this skill suits you greatly!”

Since Gan Lin had spoken so highly of the Nine Heavens Dragon Step, Long Chen made a quick decision. “I’ll choose this, then.”

Gan Lin was happy that Long Chen could pick a skill that suited him. Now that he had briefed them about the essentials and distributed the necessities, Gan Lin stood up and stretched. “It’s been a long day. Go home and treat your wounds; take your time to familiarize yourselves with the new techniques. I live at the Level One disciple quarters of the Turquoise Willow Residence. Feel free to come to me if you’ve got any questions!”

Then he left.

Everyone was in a hurry to get back, so after a brief chat to get to know each other, they all returned to their rooms immediately. “The common person can’t get into another Lingwu disciple’s room. The door is opened by my identity jade token.”

Long Chen’s world expanded once he opened the door and saw the delicate and luxurious furnishings inside. The Lingwu family was indeed rich if even a Level Four disciple could live in such a luxurious room.

When he closed the door, Ling Xi immediately flew out of the Ling Xi sword. As she surveyed the quarters made of white jade, she broke into a wide grin. She circled the room for a while, then sank happily into the bed, mumbling to herself, “Finally, a place that somewhat satisfies me. This bed shall belong to me from today onwards!”

Long Chen teased, “Xiao Xi, shouldn’t that be mine? Don’t you think it’s a little inappropriate for two single people of the opposite sex to be sleeping on the same bed?”

Ling Xi leaped up immediately, glaring at him. She scolded, “You lecher! In your dreams! I don’t want to sleep with you! I’m taking the bed and you’re taking the floor!”

Long Chen chuckled, ignoring her. He took a few steps inside and discovered an underground room. Based on its furnishings, it was a cultivation room. He entered and sat on a cushion, then he announced to Ling Xi, who was enjoying herself up there, “Hey, you enjoy yourself up there. I’m treating my injuries.”

Admittedly, Huang Feiyang’s punch had moved his internal organs slightly. If it wasn’t for pure willpower, Long Chen wouldn’t be standing right now. Gan Lin had noticed his resilience, which had gained even more of his approval.

When he took out the Huiling Grass, Long Chen studied it and realized that its medicinal scent was much more pungent than the demonic ginseng. *It’s no wonder this is considered an advanced Yellow-tier herb!*

When he consumed the Huiling Grass, he felt a refreshing current flow through his body, gently nourishing and healing it. Long Chen subtly moved his Qi around to support the Huiling Grass’ medicinal power and heal his injuries.

In less than fifteen minutes, Long Chen discovered that his body had an extraordinarily high recovery rate. An injury that would take other people five days to heal took him only one day.

When he opened his eyes, they were filled with coldness. “Huang Feiyang! One day I shall return the punch you gave me!”

Although there was a gap between them, closing it wasn’t impossible. “Once I enter the Human Core Realm, I will use the Burning Devil Sun Fist and Dragon Soul Transformation ...”

Long Chen knew that Huang Feiyang hated him to the bone. Since they both lived in the Turquoise Willow Residence, if Long Chen didn’t kill him, he would one day kill Long Chen.

Night arrived quickly. There was a sudden knock on his door. Ling Xi looked disgusted when she said, “That damn woman’s here to see you!”

“Who?” Long Chen didn’t understand why Ling Xi looked so annoyed.

“It’s that woman from this morning, Liu something. How dare she come here in the middle of the night! Does she have no shame?!”

Chapter 80 Warm Fingertips

When Long Chen heard Ling Xi’s remark, he finally recalled who the visitor was.

He waited until Ling Xi returned to the Ling Xi Sword, sulking, then opened the door. His jaw dropped.

Beneath the moonlight, Liu Lan was clad in a long, black chiffon dress that faintly revealed her seductive curves. Her sparkling eyes were fixed on Long Chen, eyeing him with a teasing look. Long Chen’s mouth went dry.

He had decided to pretend to be an innocent teenager in front of this lady, so he put on a dazed look and stuttered, “A-administrator Liu.”

When Liu Lan saw his stupid look, she burst into a giggle and asked seductively, “What? Am I not welcome here?”

“It doesn’t seem quite appropriate,” said Long Chen, despite his inner thoughts.

Liu Lan didn’t reply but reached out to push the door open gently. She pushed Long Chen inside, then closed the door with a thud, gazing at him flirtatiously.

Long Chen’s dazed look made her laugh. She casually lay down on a lounge chair and looked at him smilingly, leaving his eyes glued to the curves of her body. “Alright, I won’t tease you anymore. I came here tonight mainly for you to get to know me. Don’t overthink it. I’m only this late because I had to go to the other four people’s rooms.”

Long Chen feigned innocence while secretly eyeing the beautiful, curvy lady. *Being an administrator, she must be at the peak of the Earthly Core Realm. Huang Feiyang is so afraid of her; it must be because she’s extremely powerful. I must not be led astray by her looks ...*

These thoughts were racing through his mind, but he asked, “May I ask if there’s anything I can help with?”

“I’m just here to get to know you. Also, I wanted to ask if you have any enemies you need help with.”

Long Chen froze.

This was exactly the reason why he had entered the Lingwu family. Seeing as Gan Lin hadn’t mentioned this topic in the orientation, he wasn’t in a hurry to ask. So, Chen Xiongzhou and Feng Mingyang were right after all. The Lingwu family was indeed powerful enough to help a mere outer family member clear off his enemies.

After a moment of hesitation, under her fox-like gaze, Long Chen finally gave his answer. “I do. The Blood Saints.”

When Liu Lan heard the name, she furrowed her brows and shook her head. “How did you become enemies with the Blood Saints?”

Long Chen was secretly overjoyed to hear that she knew of the Blood Saints, though he replied cautiously, “One of the Blood Saints’ Grand Protectors went to Baiyang Town and conspired with the Bai family to destroy my family, the Yang family. I killed that Grand Protector. So, if the Blood Saints discover that I am the killer, the Yang family is done for.”

“Is that why you joined the Lingwu family?” Liu Lan saw through his plan immediately.

He nodded. “Can the Lingwu family help me?”

Long Chen looked at her expectantly, but she suddenly giggled and shook her head. “You’re now a Level Four disciple. Clearing this enemy of yours requires a master at the Earthly Core Realm, which is beyond your rights. Also, your contribution points as well as the Potential Value I gave you aren’t enough for the Lingwu family to clear the Blood Saints for you. So ...”

His face darkened. He was looking at such a beautiful woman, but he could not feel happy. *Beyond my rights? And there’s something called a ‘Potential Value?’ I used an intermediate Black-tier combat technique in front of them, and they didn’t give me enough Potential Value to defeat the Blood Saints?*

The livelihood of the Yang family was Long Chen’s top priority. He wasn’t strong enough to face them at his current level, so all he could do was ask the Lingwu family for help. But now, it was obvious that he had no power to make the Lingwu family help him.

Liu Lan stood up from the lounge chair and slowly approached Long Chen. A fragrance that could make anyone fall in love wafted over to him. When he looked up, Liu Lan was only half a meter away, the pale curves on her chest right in front of his eyes, close enough to do anything he wanted to her.

A fire lit up within him, but it was immediately put out by a stabbing pain in his ear. Long Chen knew that the consequences of making his madam angry were heavy, so he quickly averted his eyes and didn’t dare look at Liu Lan again.

Liu Lan burst into a chuckle again after seeing Long Chen’s face. *Is this a newbie or an actual gentleman? How amusing. But the Lingwu family is brutal and not a place for silly children. I’ll teach you about the brutality of life today ...*

She said mildly, “Long Chen, I want the Lingwu family to help you. Let me give you a pointer. Your disciple level, contribution points, and Potential Value are all extremely important. So far, I still can’t see what your potential actually is, so I need to remind you that if you want to be outstanding, you must work hard consistently. The Lingwu family does not need useless trash ...”

Although Liu Lan’s words were cold, he could tell that the Lingwu family was decisive and cold-blooded. Everything here was a trade. Need help from the Lingwu family? Simple, just show them your contribution or potential. *If you guys are saying I don’t have enough potential, I’ll show you exactly what my potential is!*

Long Chen had always known that it wouldn’t be easy. He was simply not strong enough to have the Lingwu family clear off the Blood Saints for him, but there was a lot of room for improvement. He refused to believe that he couldn’t succeed!

She patted his shoulder and gazed into his eyes. Her voice crawled into his ears like ants. “Long Chen, you must remember one thing in the Lingwu family—core competency. If you prove that you are competent, then money, techniques, herbs, weapons, and even women will all be yours!”

When she mentioned women, Liu Lan blew a fragrance right into his face that stirred Little Long Chen to the core. However, the pain in his ear snapped him out of it immediately.

At this moment, he realized how painful meeting Ling Xi was.

But he noted down her reminder on core competency. “Don’t worry.”

When Liu Lan saw that the newbie didn’t have guts, she lost interest in teasing him. She took a few steps back and combed her long hair. “The Lingwu family has a powerful information network; I’ll help keep an eye on the Blood Saints’ activities. I’ll let you know if I receive any news.”

Although they wouldn’t eliminate the Blood Saints for him, this would be very helpful. He was grateful. “Thank you, Madam Administrator.”

Liu Lan nodded and walked out of the door. Before she left, she turned and smiled at him. “Little Long Chen, you must do your best on your first mission. The Lingwu family will give you a true evaluation based on your performance!”

Ling Xi rushed out of the sword as soon as Liu Lan was gone, glaring angrily at Long Chen with puffed-up cheeks as if she wanted to eat him up.

Long Chen smiled awkwardly. “Uh ... I need to go check out the Nine Heavens Dragon Step ...”

She glared furiously, not saying a word.

He quickly slipped away into the underground room, patting his chest. *I only took a few looks at her, and the girl’s already so mad. How scary ...*

Seeing that Long Chen had slipped away so quickly, the miniature Ling Xi huffed and landed on the bed that now belonged to her. She looked down, and her furious glare suddenly turned into a lost look as she caressed the sheets. They didn’t feel the same as they used to.

A spirit’s sense of touch was far inferior to what a body could feel.

A huge wave of resentment gushed through her, and she had a sudden urge to cry. She then looked towards Long Chen and mumbled, “Does he still prefer girls with a body ... It makes sense. I can’t even call myself a human in this form, so I can’t give him anything ...”

Clenching her teeth, Ling Xi grieved for a while.

After a long time, she sighed and recalled her recent experiences. “If I remain like this, it doesn’t matter if I live or die. Nothing will happen between me and him. I shouldn’t overthink it. He has his own life; I mustn’t control him. Being able to protect him a few times and remaining by his side is still a nice feeling ...”

Ling Xi looked up at the snow-white ceiling. “Father, Mother, you must protect me. I really wish I could see you two again ...”

If she still had tears, her eyes would well up every time she thought about her parents.

“Xiao Xi, you look grumpy. Thinking about something? A penny for your thoughts?”

Long Chen suddenly appeared next to the bed, leaning on the wall with a grin.

When she saw his mischievous look, her frustration dissipated instantly. She felt like she had embarrassed herself greatly and frantically changed her expression. She glared angrily at him, threatening fiercely, “You bastard! You’re a bad person! I don’t want to talk to you!”

He sat on the edge of the bed and suddenly seemed mature. He held a solemn but gentle expression and reached out, placing a finger gently in front of Ling Xi. He said with full seriousness, “Touch my finger with your finger.”

“What are you doing?”

Ling Xi didn’t know what he was up to, so she eyed him suspiciously. “Just touch it.”

Seeing as he was serious, Ling Xi huffed and reached out her tiny and delicate finger and gently touched his index finger, then quickly retracted it and eyed him cautiously.

She looked adorable, but Long Chen wasn’t laughing. He asked, “Did you feel my body’s warmth?”

His abrupt question made her freeze. She nodded, puzzled.

He smiled and retracted his finger. “I have a wish. I would like to help you get your body back. Just tell me what to do. I would like you to also have this warmth in you.”

These words and the serious look on his face were deeply etched into her mind. She didn’t know what to do, knowing that he must’ve seen her look of despair just now, or he wouldn’t have said this.

Ling Xi was so touched that she wanted to cry.

“Tell me now, don’t waste my time.”

When she saw his fierce glare, she answered hurriedly, “I can recover if I get a Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit.”

Long Chen was overjoyed to hear that it was possible for her to recover. “Where can we get a Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit?”

She shook her head bitterly. “Forget about it. Even if you become the most powerful person in Yuanling City, you still won’t be able to get something like that ...”

Ling Xi had a mysterious identity, so he wasn’t surprised that she needed such a high-level antidote. He fell silent for a while, then gave a small smile. “Ling Xi, I’ll visit the Dawn Trading Alliance tomorrow to get you some soul-nourishing herbs!”