

## Worth 171

### Chapter 171: To Be Bestowed the Rank of a General, Extinguish a Species!

The delivery of the missive was followed swiftly by a voice transmission from Chen Yutong.

“Junior Brother Baole, you should’ve received the missive as well. We’ll be traveling to the seventh stronghold to support the repair and restoration of the composite Numinous Treasure. Nearly all of us Dharmic Armament Pavilion disciples have been dispatched to the different primary strongholds. There are a few who will be traveling with me—you, Zhou Penghai, and someone called Sun Fang will be in my team.

“There are seven great generals in the Federation. The general stationed at the seventh primary stronghold is Zhou Dexi. Junior Brother Baole, do you know what it takes to be a general? It takes a primary stronghold, a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament, a conquest of new lands for mankind—it is the utmost glory!”

Chen Yutong’s voice was overwhelmed with excitement, as if he was brimming with anticipation for the mission to support the war efforts.

“If one wishes to become a general, one must extinguish an entire species! Annihilate any one of the top twenty species found in the Beast Records, destroy the entire bloodline, and one will receive the honored rank of general!

“Every time that a new general appears, the Federation will declare a war of expansion on the wilderness where the monsters reside. A new primary stronghold will be built in the newly conquered lands. There, we will light the Eternal Smoke Signal that will strike fear straight into the hearts of the monsters!

“The Eternal Smoke Signal is a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament crafted by all living top-rate Dharmic Armament cultivators who have been gathered by the Federation, made from the spirit blood of the extinguished species.

“My passion is to create a living puppet, and my dream has always been... to destroy an entire monster species, to become a general, and for an eighth primary stronghold to appear in the Federation, lighting the eighth Eternal Smoke Signal!”

Chen Yutong’s words climbed steadily toward a near-feverish intensity as he shared his dream. He continued speaking with inexhaustible excitement before ending the voice transmission with their date of departure.

Wang Baole placed the voice transmission token away and took a deep breath. His expression became solemn as his mind digested what Chen Yutong had said.

Wang Baole was cautious but hardly a coward; prone to anger, even more so toward violence; forceful to the extent of being overly aggressive. He understood that the threat of the monsters was akin to a sharp sword hanging over the Federation’s head. Many even believed that the second Beast War would inevitably break out in the future.

With regard to the general status and the Eternal Smoke Signal... Wang Baole felt that neither were what his final goal was. That was because his dream was to become the Federation President!

*If exterminating one monster species is what it takes to become a general, then to become the Federation President, I'll have to at least exterminate ten monster species, expand our lands and build ten primary strongholds, and light ten Eternal Smoke Signals. Else, I won't be able to keep the generals in order.*

Taking a deep breath, a fierce light burned in his eyes. He held the same fervor as Chen Yutong when it came to conquering new lands.

With that thought, Wang Baole started his preparations. He organized his Dharmic Artifacts and sold quite a few pills. During that period, he noticed the daily cruisers, each ferrying three to five people, dashing through the layered clouds from one place to another—disciples who had set off early for their respective assigned strongholds.

His eyes shone with anticipation as he saw them off. Three days later, after he had purchased all his necessities for the trip, the day of departure as agreed upon with Chen Yutong arrived.

Wang Baole left his cave abode early that morning and headed straight for the disciplinary department. He was in high spirits and greatly looking forward to the mission.

He soon reached the disciplinary department and spotted Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang. The pair had arrived early and were waiting for Chen Yutong and Wang Baole.

Sun Fang seemed especially nervous. He was speaking in hushed, respectful tones beside Zhou Penghai while his eyes wandered all over the place. Upon seeing Wang Baole, he sucked in a deep breath and took a few hurried steps toward Wang Baole. Wang Baole was hardly given any time to approach before Sun Fang cupped his fists hastily and bowed deeply.

“Fang Sun greets Senior Brother Wang!”

When Zhou Penghai, who had been standing alongside Sun Fang, heard that, an odd expression fell across his face. He had caught wind of news that Sun Fang had been referring to himself as Fang Sun. At present, after observing Sun Fang's behavior before Wang Baole, he could not help but smile. He cupped his fists and greeted Wang Baole, a tinge of deference in his demeanor.

Wang Baole broke out into laughter as well after seeing how quickly Sun Fang had fallen in line. He gave Sun Fang a pat on the shoulder before greeting Zhou Penghai warmly and drawing the latter into a lively conversation.

As for Sun Fang, he felt as if a burden had been lifted off him with that mere pat on the shoulder from Wang Baole. A great portion of the heaviness that had been weighing upon his heart finally dispersed. His spirits excited and energized, he remained cautious as he stood beside the two, nodding incessantly in agreement regardless of what Wang Baole or Zhou Penghai said.

Not much time passed before Chen Yutong also appeared, fully equipped. He looked at Wang Baole and the rest, laughed, and without saying a word, retrieved his cruiser.

Chen Yutong's cruiser was incomparable to Wang Baole's. It was of unquestionably superior quality, could seat ten people, and was painted completely silver. Its mere appearance was exceptional.

"Let's set off!" With a wave of his hand, Chen Yutong leapt on board. Wang Baole followed his lead, followed by Zhou Penghai and finally the meek Sun Fang.

Once everyone had gathered onboard, Chen Yutong took a deep breath as his eyes shone brightly.

"Everyone, let's all pull together as a team for this mission. I hope that when we return, no one will be left behind!"

After saying that, Chen Yutong's Spirit Qi suddenly unfurled; energy that far surpassed the cultivation level of Wang Baole and the rest—the peak of the True Breath realm—exploded instantaneously and fused with cruiser. That sent a tremor throughout the cruiser and sparked an incredible propulsive force; the cruiser crossed a vast distance in a blink of an eye.

Wang Baole stood in the middle of the cruiser and turned toward a Green Forest Lake, which shrunk rapidly as the distance grew. He took a slow, deep breath. His determination and resolve toward the mission shone clear in his eyes.

Chen Yutong's cruiser differed from the cruisers of the Ancient Martial realm and the common folk. As someone who was not only a top-tier disciple of Upper Academy Island but was also a popular candidate in the running for deputy Pavilion Head as well as a cultivator at the peak of True Breath realm, Chen Yutong's cruising speed was extremely fast. Despite the vast distance separating the seventh primary stronghold and Upper Academy Island, if all things went well, it would be a matter of hours before they reached their destination.

In comparison, if Wang Baole had taken the cruiser at Lower Academy Island, the traveling time would have been much, much longer. After all, they were bound to encounter numerous bad weather conditions, every manner of which would affect the speed of the cruiser.

Only cruisers such as Chen Yutong's could, due to his exceptional cultivation level, ignore and pass safely through most parts of the adverse weather. There were of course quite a few changes in the weather and atmosphere that even Chen Yutong's cruiser had to steer clear of.

As for the threat of monsters, though there existed ferocious beasts within the Federation lands, most were of the Ancient Martial realm. True Breath realm beasts generally lay low. The Federation had plans of exterminating all beasts within their territory, but this was a nearly insurmountable task. Each year, common beasts, nourished by Spirit Qi, mutated into ferocious beasts in great numbers.

It would not be completely impossible a task if the Federation was to put its mind to it. However, due to reasons unknown, the Federation only set their sights on ferocious beasts of the True Breath realm. Every year, a specialized department would conduct a targeted extermination.

There were also some territories that seemed to have reached an agreement with the Federation to keep out of each other's backyard.

Presently, Chen Yutong's cruiser dashed through the clouds. From afar, one could see a streak of white arcing across the blue heavens, accompanied by the thundering boom of the sound barrier being broken resonating all around—it was like the roar of a giant beast, formidable and awe-inspiring.

Within the cruiser, Chen Yutong and Wang Baole stood at the front of the deck, gazing into the distant lands.

Cities town after cities could be sighted on the ground that passed speedily by. Most were, regrettably, in ruins and had been taken over by the encroaching jungles. A few times, they could see the remains of what had once been cities.

“When the Beast War broke out, humankind was on the losing end of the war. More than half the population died,” Chen Yutong said softly as the sight of city ruins sped past.

“I’ve read a lot about that war. During that time, among all the various political forces in the Federation camp, the highest cultivation level reached then was the Foundation Establishment realm—no one had attained the Core Formation realm!

“The monsters camp, on the other hand, had three Core Formation realm Beast Kings...

“Fortunately, during that pivotal moment of crisis, someone in the Federation finally broke through the Foundation Establishment realm and stepped into the Core Formation realm. It was this that turned the tide of the war. The Divine Armament came into being then. After battling the other political forces as well as the monsters for the Divine Armament, the four great Dao Colleges finally emerged victorious!

“The appearance of the Divine Armament resulted in the Federation’s decisive victory. The Federation built the seven primary strongholds and killed all the Beast Kings. However, they failed to drive the beasts to extinction...

“But I believe that as we continuously advance and improve, this planet beneath our feet will one day be fully ours!”

A fierce light shone in Chen Yutong’s eyes.

Wang Baole was experiencing a roller coaster of emotions. He was about to speak before he noticed a stronghold appearing on the land ahead. It sat on a mountain valley; armed with fierce-looking spikes, pitch-black stronghold walls of metal, Numinous Treasure-grade grand cannons on numerous ring-shaped platforms nested within the spikes, the stronghold exuded a fearsome aura that shook one to the core.

The countless warriors in the stronghold and the air of violence emanating from their persons were equally terror-inducing.

“Are we here?” Wang Baole looked over immediately. Chen Yutong, Zhou Penghai, and Sun Fang followed suit.

“This is a minor stronghold. The one slightly ahead is the seventh primary stronghold—the one we’re to report at!” Chen Yutong said in a low voice after he had taken a look.

“This is just a minor stronghold?” Wang Baole was stunned. He soon noticed many more strongholds like the one that he had just seen ahead. Even though they were referred to as ‘minor’, the size and scale of each stronghold was, in actuality, huge. They were often built on mountain ranges and mirrored the primary stronghold. Together, the strongholds formed an irregular blockade!

Within an hour, Chen Yutong announced that the seventh primary stronghold was right ahead of them. Wang Baole stared, in awe, at the earth-shattering, great metal wall on the mountain range in the distance.

No words could describe the tempest of emotions that he was experiencing. Wang Baole was shaken to his core. The stronghold before him, whose size and magnitude vastly exceeded the many minor strongholds that they had seen, and the imperial gate that seemed to support the heaven and earth held his gaze captive.

It was at this precise moment of weakness, of faltering, that he saw—from within the majestic stronghold walls, rising into the skies—rings of smoke clouds that continued their ascent up the heavens.

The Eternal Smoke Signal!

### **Chapter 172: A Celebrity?**

The Eternal Smoke Signal rose for more than thirty meters, appearing spectacular from afar and breathtaking up close.

One could not see its source or fathom how it came to be; what was clear in one's eyes were the rings that rose steadily and endlessly heavenward, expanded across the blue skies, and transformed into spirals in the skies. It was like a giant eye hung upon the heavens.

An earth-shattering spirit force could be felt within the smoke signal, the potency of which felt so strong it seemed as if it could, upon triggering, level mountains. Even True Breath realm cultivators like Wang Baole and Chen Yutong would be instantly disintegrated.

“Ninth-grade Dharmic Armament! The most powerful Dharmic Armament that the Federation is capable of crafting at present!” Chen Yutong sucked in a deep breath. Beside him, Wang Baole's breathing hastened as well.

The smoke signal was indeed a staggering sight. However, it was incomparable to the majestic imperial gate, the spike-ridden moat surrounding the metal walls... and beyond the imperial gate, the expanse of scorched lands and the vastly different spirit energy that spoke of a world that was drastically different from the Federation.

It was a world that seemed full of primordiality, of madness, and of violence!

“The seventh primary stronghold...” Wang Baole murmured to himself. Their cruiser approached the towering stronghold walls and, drawn by the array formation, lost all power suddenly. It was akin to being picked by an invisible hand and then placed within the walls among the countless camps.

As they descended, a dozen or so cruisers in the distance approached rapidly. They were disciples, like Wang Baole and the rest, from the various colleges. The cruisers were similarly drawn by the array and landed after another.

The camp site was vast and could accommodate a hundred thousand warriors. Upon their cruiser's landing, Wang Baole and the rest disembarked; a warrior approached immediately, saluted, and led them away.

Wang Baole turned serious as he sensed the solemn atmosphere. Alongside Chen Yutong and the others, he went through a series of examinations and was led by the same warrior to the front of another tent.

"After you've registered here, you'll receive your respective missions. Thank you all for your invaluable help!" The warrior who had led them there was a young man; he finished speaking then saluted them again.

"For mankind!"

Chen Yutong, Wang Baole, and the rest of the team cupped their fists and returned the salute respectfully. The young warrior turned away and went on to receive other newcomers.

Outside the tent, a hundred people stood waiting. Every one of them was in the True Breath realm. They wore different attire, coming from different Dao colleges. Some were excited, some were nervous, and others were silent. Some gazed repeatedly at the distant untamed wilderness, a cold light in their eyes.

"We have quite a number of people from the four Dao Colleges this around," Chen Yutong whispered to Wang Baole. Wang Baole nodded. He noticed more people who had arrived after going through the examinations.

Time passed steadily as they waited. Chen Yutong was obviously well-known around there; people standing in front or behind them in the queue soon recognized him and came forward to say hello.

Some were from Upper Academy Island of Ethereal Dao College, but there were also quite a few from the other three Dao colleges. Chen Yutong greeted all of them with a smile. He was well-mannered and charming, laughing and chatting with them. During the conversations, he would bring Wang Baole in and introduce the latter.

Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang could only look on in envy at Chen Yutong, surrounded by friends, as well as Wang Baole, who was showered by constant attention from Chen Yutong. They were not in the same league, unable to compete against Chen Yutong and his wide social network across the four Dao Colleges.

However, they were soon surprised to find out that Wang Baole seemed equally capable in his ability to make friends.

"Wang Baole!"

"It's Wang Baole!" Wang Baole was all smiles and friendliness to the people to whom Chen Yutong introduced him. Gradually, many of the new disciples from the four Dao Colleges started taking notice. When they caught his face, an odd look fell over their faces.

These were the people who had participated in the examination at Spirit Breath Village and had all advanced to become disciples in their respective colleges' Upper Academies. They knew Wang Baole all too well. They smiled wryly, and some approached him to say hello.

As this went on, Chen Yutong's curiosity grew. He tugged at Chen Yutong and asked in hushed tones.

"Junior Brother Baole, these people are giving you strange looks. What's up with them?"

"It's nothing. Basically, they all think I robbed them of their fortunes at Spirit Breath Village," Wang Baole said, almost smugly. He briefly explained what had happened in Spirit Breath Village. Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang widened their eyes in amazement and fear, as if gazing at a godly figure before them.

A look fell over Chen Yutong's face after he heard the story as well. He felt as if he had gained a whole new understanding of this junior brother of his. He patted Wang Baole on the shoulder and was about to say something when suddenly, a newcomer in the new batch of arrivals—a girl—saw Wang Baole and narrowed her eyes.

"Wang Baole!" The girl was wearing the robes of White Deer Dao College. Her pretty, petite features were marred by the glaring almond-shaped eyes and gnashing teeth.

"Li Yi?" Wang Baole turned his head and gave an enthusiastic wave.

This girl was Li Yi. She glared at Wang Baole, snorted, and turned her head the other way, ignoring him.

Chen Yutong, witnessing the scene before him, whispered to Wang Baole questioningly, "Also someone you got to know in Spirit Breath Village?"

"Yup. This girl is vicious. She wanted to strip me naked then. Luckily, I was careful, else I would have been in danger," Wang Baole lamented.

Chen Yutong opened his mouth, as if to say something. Moments passed, and the words would not form. He simply shook his head and smiled wryly. As for Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang, they were once again stunned beyond words.

In the following time, the people waiting outside the tent got to know one another. Those queuing in the front entered the tent, and when they reappeared, they retrieved their cruisers and left. It was as if the registration dispelled the effects of the array formation on them.

Finally, the row of people ahead of Wang Baole stepped into the tent as well. Soon, it would be their turn. It was then that a shout resounded in the distance. The explosion of the sound barrier being broken pierced through the air.

It was an ear-piercing sound, driving pain into all who heard it. They were compelled to look upward, and when they did, the expressions on their faces changed. Wang Baole raised his head hastily. Beyond the stronghold wall, in the skies above the wilderness, three gigantic flying beasts were headed straight for the stronghold.

The three flying beasts had huge forms that spanned more than thirty meters. Their serpentine bodies were covered with feelers while countless pairs of wings grew on their backs. They were swift and looked ferocious. The waves of cultivation energy being emanated struck fear in everyone's heart. The cultivation energy was more powerful than even that of Chen Yutong.

As the beasts dashed through the skies, the stronghold wall tremored. Three beams of light exploded from within. Their force was earth-shattering; it felt as if they could pierce the heavens itself. Where the

light passed, they left scorching heat in their paths. The three flying beasts tried to escape but to no avail. Light pierced through their bodies, and the beasts exploded into clouds of dust, killed instantly!

“That’s the Fire God Cannon!” Chen Yutong exclaimed, excitement bright in his eyes.

“The Federation gathered all its top-tier Dharmic Armament cultivators, who researched and fused hundreds of Numinous Treasures together to finally craft a great cannon of devastating, destructive power!

“That is the mission that the Dao College has given us—protect and repair the Fire God Cannon!”

Wang Baole was taken aback by the Fire God Cannon’s destructive power. Then, he realized that the warriors around him had not once raised their heads during the commotion. It was only then that he realized that perhaps for the warriors, who were stationed here year round, such incidents were a common sight.

“This is what the frontier is like...” Wang Baole calmed himself down. He had noticed the Fire God Cannon that Chen Yutong spoke of when he had been traveling in the skies earlier. As he immersed deep in thought, a group of people who had entered the tent stepped out. They bade Wang Baole and his friends farewell, retrieved their cruisers, and left.

Chen Yutong took a deep breath and looked over at Wang Baole. Both of them entered the tent, one after another. Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang hastily suppressed their feelings of shock and awe as they swiftly followed.

The tent was not too spacious. Four warriors stood on two sides; in the middle was a table, and behind the table sat a young woman. She was dressed in uniform and had an air of alertness and competency to her. A more diligent observer might have been able to discern the untamed wildness in her eyes.

Zhou Penghai’s and Sun Fang’s eyes brightened when they saw the young woman. Chen Yutong remained unfazed. As for Wang Baole, he was flabbergasted.

*Not this...* Wang Baole subconsciously touched his nose. This was not going well. The young woman before them turned out to be Zhou Lu.

Zhou Lu saw Wang Baole as well. She did not seem the slightest bit surprised. She had gotten hold of the list of names prior and knew that Wang Baole would be coming.

Her eyes were like frost. She eyed Wang Baole up, then sneered.

“Wang Baole, remember me?”

Her words caught Zhou Penghai, Sun Fang, and Chen Yutong by surprise. They looked toward Wang Baole in unison. The people who recognized Wang Baole in this stronghold seemed to keep growing larger and larger in number.

Wang Baole blinked. If this had been Ethereal Dao College, based on Wang Baole’s character, his admission might have been without question, but he was in enemy territory now; a momentary retreat was nothing to be ashamed of. He looked at Zhou Lu with surprise and confusion.

“Fair lady, you know me?”



## Chapter 173: The Calm Before the Storm

Zhou Lu's breath froze upon hearing Wang Baole's words. She had expected Wang Baole's denial, but she never would have thought that he would call her a fair lady.

The compliment did nothing for her temper. She snorted. This was not the time for revenge, however. She glared at Wang Baole and turned toward Chen Yutong, rising to her feet and saluting him.

"You must be Senior Brother Chen Yutong. If you may, please let me have the jade missive issued by Ethereal Dao College," Zhou Lu requested; regardless of her military status, a greater degree of courtesy was required for someone like Chen Yutong.

There was his cultivation level to consider as well as his family background. For someone to become a candidate included in the running for the Dharmic Armament Pavilion's Deputy Pavilion Head, his status outside the college would have to be extremely elevated.

Chen Yutong set aside his thoughts and feelings, stepped forward, and presented the jade missive. He was courteous and respectful despite Zhou Lu's lower cultivation level. The positive feelings that Zhou Lu had for Chen Yutong increased substantially.

It helped that Chen Yutong had the appearance of a gentleman—well-mannered and polite. With such status and cultivation level, he was the object of adoration of many female and male disciples in Ethereal Dao College's Upper Academy Island. Despite that, he remained alone and free of romantic entanglements.

The exchange between Zhou Lu and Chen Yutong proceeded smoothly; Ethereal Dao College's missive was swiftly executed by the military. They were arranged to be stationed at a minor stronghold. Between Beast Tides, they would be charged with the task of repairing and restoring the Fire God Cannon in that stronghold.

After the mission was confirmed and they had received the safe travel jade slip issued by the military, Chen Yutong, alongside Wang Baole and the rest, walked out of the camp. Zhou Lu leveled an icy glare at Wang Baole's retreating back and sneered silently.

*I, Zhou Lu, am not one who abuses public power to avenge a personal wrong. If I were the sort, getting him skinned alive would be a piece of cake! But I will get my revenge... eventually!*

She turned her eyes away from Wang Baole and continued with her work.

Outside, having left the tent and boarded the cruiser once more, in preparation of heading toward the mission's designated minor stronghold, Chen Yutong, Zhou Penghai, and Sun Fang looked at Wang Baole. The latter two did not feel like it was their place to ask any questions, but Chen Yutong could not help his curiosity and finally spoke.

"Baole, you definitely know the female officer just now. Did you meet her in Spirit Breath Village as well? Can it be that she tried to strip you naked, too? That doesn't seem right. She didn't seem like she had been enrolled in the Upper Academy of the four Dao Colleges. If she had, she wouldn't have been

able to join the army at such a young age. This must have been some arrangement by some family clan..." Chen Yutong looked at Wang Baole with suspicion.

Wang Baole let out a cough. There was no one else here. He decided not to hide the truth any longer. Exasperated, he spoke.

"Her name is Zhou Lu. She didn't try to strip me naked, but... I kicked her once on her butt. I remember her wearing something skin-tight then. The kick made one cheek bigger than the other... turned a peach into a gourd..."

Wang Baole's description was extremely vivid. A very clear picture of what had happened appeared in the other three's minds. Zhou Penghai and Sun Fang had no choice but to concede defeat then. They stared at Wang Baole and could not help but think that the fatty standing before them had reached a certain pinnacle when it came to flirting with women, one that left them trailing in the dust.

Chen Yutong smiled wryly before giving Wang Baole a pat on the shoulder. He spoke slowly and with great intent.

"Baole, women are troublesome creatures. My advice is to stay clear of them in the future. They are too much trouble. I'm speaking from experience, so just take it from me."

Wang Baole thought there was something odd with what Chen Yutong just said. He barely had any chance to mull it over before the cruiser that they were on reached the designated minor stronghold.

The minor stronghold was built on a mountain peak. From afar, the stronghold looked pitch-black in its entirety and was shaped like an enormous, metallic half-moon. It towered hundreds of meters tall and spanned more than three thousand meters. The primordial jungle-facing side was curved like an arc; from it, hundreds of branches spread out and ended in a moon-shaped platform. The entire structure looked like a spoon.

Atop each round platform stood a huge Fire God Cannon that rose thirty-odd meters skyward. On each round platform, many warriors were stationed, numbering to the thousand.

Some of the warriors were responsible for the basic repair of the Fire God Cannon; others were tasked with exterminating monsters during Beast Tides and preventing the monsters from breaking through and damaging the Fire God Cannon.

The arrangement was decided because, on the one hand, the Fire God Cannon required guarding, and on the other hand, the collapse of the Fire God Cannon would result in an explosive self-destructive force, which meant that it could not be placed too near the stronghold.

Concurrently, on both sides of the stronghold, within the rise and fall of the mountain range, could be seen a translucent barrier. It flowed with the mountain range and expanded toward both ends. It was like a protective shield that not only served as a defense measure against the beasts surging from the wildlands but also as a link to two farther strongholds on either end.

If one were to stand perched on the highest peak and lower their gaze upon the scene before them, they would see that each and every one of the minor strongholds were like tiny spots that surrounded the focal seventh primary stronghold and sat within a vast and shimmering glow of a protective array formation.

Besides defending against the invasion of Beast Tides, the minor strongholds were also tasked with the mission of guarding against array formation attacks targeting the seventh primary stronghold. Regardless of where the Beast Tide sprung from, the spirit energy from the array formation attacks that they conjured would be dispersed across the various minor strongholds. Such a strategy strengthened the stability of the protective array formation.

As a result, every minor stronghold became a potential breach point in the eyes of the monsters. That was why each minor stronghold was equipped with its own Fire God Cannons. Though the numbers were not as great as that of the primary strongholds, they still numbered in the hundreds. In addition, there was also a teleportation formation, so backup could be sent or received in a moment's notice.

These destructive minor strongholds under the seventh primary stronghold numbered in the hundreds. Together, they formed the Federation's Seventh Imperial Gate. They were like an impenetrable wall that had stood the test of countless Beast Tides to this day, prevailing at the end of each battle.

The flying cruiser descended and landed in the stronghold. Wang Baole and his friends met the commander-in-charge, a strong bulky man with a huge beard, and eased themselves into the crowd.

In the blink of an eye, three days passed.

During these three days, Wang Baole barely had any time for cultivation. He followed Chen Yutong's lead and inspected a portion of the Fire God Cannons.

Many disciples from the four Dao Colleges had also been assigned to this minor stronghold. Combat cultivators counted for the majority, but a number of Alchemy and Array Formation cultivators, as well as cultivators from other disciplines, were also present.

Everyone had their own task. Dharmic Armament cultivators tasked with the repair and restoration of Fire God Cannons, including Wang Baole's group, numbered at a dozen or more. All of them spread out to repair the cannons; only thirty cannons fell under the care of Wang Baole's group.

It was a low number; however, the Fire God Cannon was a machine of great complexity. During those three days, Wang Baole studied and inspected the machines ceaselessly; he had been blown away by the cannon's structure right from the start.

Every Fire God Cannon had been constructed from more than a hundred Numinous Treasures. Each Numinous Treasure formed one part of the machine. When the Fire God Cannon was activated, its power was more than the sum of all the Numinous Treasures combined.

It was precisely because of such complexity that ordinary cultivators were unable to manage when things went wrong. The warriors were not qualified to repair Numinous Treasures. Even Wang Baole, Zhou Penghai, and Sun Fang could only serve as assistants; the primary duty of repair and restoration fell upon Chen Yutong.

Wang Baole was already capable of crafting Numinous Treasures, though. As such, during these three days' study, his understanding of the composite Numinous Treasure grew at a rapid pace, astounding even Chen Yutong. The latter eventually grew confident enough to let Wang Baole go about the repair work independently. This lessened the team's workload substantially.

Such busy work continued for a week. Only after they had inspected all Fire God Cannons, as well as repaired and replaced the necessary parts, did Wang Baole's team have time to take a breather.

At this point, their mission was almost halfway to completion. What remained was to ensure the cannons' smooth operations during the Beast Tides.

During the time leading up to the Beast Tides, Chen Yutong spent a large part of his making friends with other disciples from the other Dao Colleges. Zhou Penghai eagerly followed suit, while Sun Fang got friendly with the military officers.

Wang Baole was the only one who took a greater liking to the warriors instead of the army commanders. During the course of the week, on many occasions, he found that many of the warriors were at the Ancient Martial realm. They were obviously not his match, but when they looked at him, their eyes were filled with admiration as well as protectiveness.

Not seeking to be protected but to protect Wang Baole, or to be more precise, to protect cultivators like Wang Baole!

Wang Baole's repeated encounters with such a protective streak left him greatly shaken.

Despite being a cultivator, these Ancient Martial realm warriors still thought of protecting him.

In their eyes, cultivators were few and rare; they symbolized hope; they were to be protected at all costs!

Cultivators who could create and restore Fire God Cannons all the more so!

As Wang Baole gradually came to this realization, a strange and indescribable feeling stirred within him. He saw many warriors his age, the battle scars many of them carried, and the marks left on their Dharmic Artifacts that spoke of countless damages and repair.

As he was cultivating in the Dao college, these people were engaging in life-or-death battles with monsters.

These were the warriors who gave their blood and life in exchange for time for cultivators to mature and strengthen and a more peaceful life for the common folk.

This was why as the work slowed down, Wang Baole chose to approach these warriors and, to the best of his ability, repaired and treated the flaws on Dharmic Artifact. His work and his character gradually led to his fostering a familiarity with the warriors.

After they got familiar with one another, on many occasions, Wang Baole forgot his position as a cultivator. He was different when he was in the company of the warriors.

"Come, who was it who said that I won't be able to beat him at arm wrestling? Let's put that to the test today. Loser washes the socks for everybody!" At the open square, outside barracks that housed a hundred odd warriors, laughter and cheering rang out loudly. Sat there was Wang Baole. He slammed the fist of a thick-muscled, grimacing man before him onto the table and shouted smugly.

## **Chapter 174: The Beast Tide Begins**

Laughter resounded all around. The cynics soon stepped forward for another round of arm wrestling with Wang Baole. They had all agreed at the start that Wang Baole was not to use his Spirit Qi; he could only rely on his physical strength.

The warriors who stepped forward were all of them at the peak of the Pulse Enrichment level. One after another, they lost to Wang Baole with grimaces on their faces. Round after round of friendly jeering arose.

“Wang Baole, are you sure you’re a Dharmic Armament cultivator and not a Combat cultivator?”

“I heard that the Combat cultivators from the four great Dao Colleges were skilled in enhancing their physical abilities. Never heard that the Dharmic Armament cultivators were the same.”

Upon hearing what the crowd said, Wang Baole patted his tummy smugly.

“That’s all due to my good looks. You know how good-looking people are usually geniuses.” Wang Baole laughed. He started letting himself go in this convivial atmosphere. He took out a bag of snacks and started munching.

The laughter from the surrounding warriors grew when they heard Wang Baole’s words. The teasing got worse, but Wang Baole had thick skin and was immune to the friendly heckling. He started taking out more snacks and distributing them to the warriors. Soon, everyone was sitting together, munching on snacks.

“Wang Baole, I’m not going to eat your snacks for nothing. Do you have a girlfriend? I have a sister. How about I introduce her to you when I go home visiting? Let me tell you, my sister is real pretty!” The muscular man who had lost to Wang Baole earlier grinned and spoke with great pride, all the while eating Wang Baole’s snacks.

Wang Baole was momentarily stunned. He had lived for quite some time; this was the first time that he had encountered something like this.

“You’re talking about matchmaking me?”

Upon hearing the exchange between the man and Wang Baole, the crowd started another round of cheering. The man had likely forgotten the number of people to whom he had told he would introduce his sister. As soon as someone did him a favor or gave him a gift, he would immediately think of introducing his sister to the person. His mentioning of that now sparked unending teasing from everyone.

After hearing what everyone else said, Wang Baole could not help but find the whole thing funny. The thick-muscled man chuckled and continued shoving food into his mouth without a hint of embarrassment.

There were so many people snacking together. The sounds of crunching traveled and caught the attention of many patrolling warriors. They also laughed when they saw Wang Baole. During this period, Wang Baole’s name had traveled far and wide in the barracks; there was no one who did not know of him.

He was different from the other cultivators. The warriors were not stupid; they could see that Wang Baole was sincere in being friends with them, and he had a likable personality. Since his arrival, the stronghold had heard more laughter than in the past.

This caught the eye of the military officers as well as big-bearded commander-in-charge. Their impression of Wang Baole continued to deepen.

Half a month passed by harmoniously. Just as Wang Baole fully assimilated himself into the warriors' group... the Beast Tide arrived!

One night, a shrill, ear-piercing whistle suddenly erupted, shaking every resting person in the entire stronghold. They dashed out and looked into the sky beyond the stronghold.

Wang Baole had been deep in cultivation. He opened his eyes abruptly and immediately came out from his residence. He heard the piercing alarm and saw a number of the warriors in the stronghold marching off in a swift and organized manner toward the spoon-like structure and the platforms connected to the stronghold and housing the hundred-odd Fire God Cannons.

The scene before him was a dose of sobriety. His body shook slightly and burst into sudden speed. When he reached the boundaries of the stronghold, he cast a look outside. In an instant, his pupils contracted. He was utterly stupefied.

Beyond the stronghold, on the primordial wildlands, between the heavens and the earth, appeared a boiling mist. Within the fog, one could vaguely make out numerous ferocious-looking beasts. The horde of beasts, roaring and thundering, were headed straight for the stronghold.

The beasts were each three to seven meters long. They differed from one another in appearance and speed, but they were all of them exuding ferocity and wildness. They carried the scent of blood, which filled the air.

They were filthy and had a strange, gruesome appearance. Some were wolves with two heads or some alligators with countless bone spikes growing out from their bodies; there were even a few grotesque-looking beasts that escaped Wang Baole's identification.

Among them was a beast towering twenty-odd meters. Be it raging bears, giant elephants, or even dinosaur-like, gigantic beasts, their numbers were great.

Wang Baole was especially stunned by what he thought that he saw in the distant Beast Tide—thirty-meter-tall giants that held heaven-piercing tree branches, their figures striking fear into hearts with every step that they took.

As they drew near, the earth trembled. Standing on the stronghold, Wang Baole could feel the growing tremors traveling through the mountains under his feet.

In the skies, swarms of ferocious beasts gathered like a dark thunder cloud and approached with the Beast Tide on land. They were like a great flood threatening to sweep away and destroy everything that stood before them.

This was Wang Baole's first time witnessing a Beast Tide and his first time seeing such a huge horde of beasts. He did a rough count, and the number of beasts likely exceeded a million!

Even the weakest-looking beasts in the horde could rival one at the Physical Seal level, not to mention the many others who gave Wang Baole an impression of facing off a True Breath realm cultivator!

Such a sight not only blew Wang Baole's mind, it also sent fear deep into the cultivators from the four Dao Colleges who were participating in their first Beast Tide.

It was then that a thundering bellow, brimming with violence and ferocity, rose from within the stronghold, from the big-bearded commander-in-charge.

"Such a puny Beast Tide. Give them a salvo of our Fire God Cannon and show them what we've got!"

Big Beard's words resounded throughout. Beyond the stronghold, on each platform where the hundred-odd Fire God Cannons sat, the warriors gathered around the cannons and fired.

The entire stronghold shook violently. A roar like thunder rose from the hundred or so Fire God Cannons. As the sound shook the air, explosions burst forth from the cannons.

The explosions were followed by what seemed like a roar from a metal beast. As the hundred Fire God Cannons fired at the same time, beams of light exploded into being. The beams of light were infused with thick Spirit Qi and gave off a spirit force that was fearsome beyond measure. Even a True Breath realm cultivator would not survive such a cannon blast; they would instantly be disintegrated!

And now, more than a hundred Fire God Cannons fired at the same time, the power of which was beyond immense; it shook one to their very core!

Wang Baole watched as the hundred beams of light blasted out and, with stunning speed, hit the Beast Tide. The heavens shifted in an instant, while the earth rumbled. Waves of air rolled outward, like a tornado sweeping through the stronghold, sending everyone's hair into a mess. Wang Baole's breathing hastened. His ears were pounding, and he stared at where the light beams landed. The expanse of jungled ground was completely disintegrated.

One following another, the beasts let out savage howls and turned into dust!

The sky seemed to darken. One giant took a direct hit from a cannon blast and collapsed instantly!

Almost a third of the fearsome beasts in the air were wiped out by the Fire God Cannon blasts. In a short span of time, the Fire God Cannon blasts ceased. The battleground was an expanse of scorched land, and the Beast Tide had been scattered by the blast. The vicious howls and blood lust of the surviving beasts did not dissipate, however. The horde, thinned out, moved more quickly. They headed straight for the stronghold.

"A mindless mob!" Big Beard snorted and barked out an order.

"Fire God troops, fire at will! Target the bigger beasts—I want them all exterminated!"

"The First Army, dispatch immediately!" The military officers executed Big Beard's commands. Soon, Wang Baole could see a hundred thousand warriors surging out from the stronghold gate!

The hundred thousand warriors donned armor and held Dharmic Artifacts. As the bloodlust in the air became palpable, the Combat cultivators from the four Dao Colleges rushed out as well. They clashed with the beasts on the grounds before the stronghold, and... a massacre began!

The Fire God Cannons fired here and there. Their targets were the twenty-odd-meter tall beasts. The situation on the battlefield seemed volatile. However, in reality, the Beast Tide was crumbling and disintegrating rapidly.

The Array Formation cultivators as well as the Beast Taming cultivators from the four Dao Colleges stepped in as well. The battlefield was thrown into earth-shattering chaos. Wang Baole and the other Divine Armament cultivators had their own tasks; they were to repair the Fire God Cannons under their respective charge and made sure that the cannons stayed at peak condition.

Chen Yutong led the tense Zhou Penghai and a Sun Fang who was breathing heavily to take care of twenty Fire God Cannons. Wang Baole himself was charged with ten cannons.

Wang Baole made his way from one platform to the other, inspecting the cannons while keeping an eye on the battlefield. The roars of beasts and humans, as well as blasts of explosions, resounded in his ears. He slowly calmed himself down from the earlier shock. Battle lust rose to take its place. With a wave of his hand, nine mosquitoes appeared. They dashed out from within his palm toward the battleground.

*Let's test out the bite of my mosquitoes. The skin of the beasts looks thick and furry. Not sure if this will work...*

## **Chapter 175: An Itch Beyond Relief**

The dangers posed to a Divine Armament cultivator were not great. However, the stress on their technical capabilities was great and the volume of work substantial. This was especially true for Wang Baole, who was in charge of ten Fire God Cannons. He could not spend too much time on a single platform.

After each inspection, he had to hurry to the next platform. He had to keep a sharp eye out at the same time for any Fire God Cannons that might be experiencing malfunctions; any problems would have to be attended to immediately. In the event that the malfunction was something that he could not manage, he would need to shout for Chen Yutong's urgent help.

Time would be needlessly wasted if he returned to the stronghold before heading to the next platform. Wang Baole retrieved his cruiser and flew it around the grounds outside the stronghold, weaving his way among the ten platforms. He managed to catch a breather then and called out his mosquitoes. He was just about to search for a test subject for them.

It was then that one of the Fire God Cannons started shaking and experiencing instability. Wang Baole set aside his attempt at controlling the mosquitoes and raced to the platform where the unstable Fire God Cannon was. He gave a simple order to the mosquitoes to sting True Breath realm beasts; there was no time to tend to them for the time being.

The nine mosquitoes made their way rapidly through the battlefield, hunting for prey.

They soon locked onto a target. It was a beast in the form of a leopard. It had surpassed the Ancient Martial realm, the aura exuding from its body that of the True Breath realm. Its fearsome form moved swiftly through the battlefield.



The beast was extremely cunning. It avoided the attacks from the Combat cultivators of the four Dao Colleges and instead sought out Ancient Martial realm warriors. With a leap, it would surge forward, rip the throats of these warriors out, and slip away in a blink of an eye.

At present, the leopard carried a cold glint in its eyes as it dodged another attack from the Combat cultivators from the four Dao Colleges and licked its lips. Its eyes narrowed and locked onto the throat of a muscular, middle-aged warrior. The man was in a fierce battle with an Ancient Martial realm beast.

As it dashed out, suddenly, nine mosquitoes appeared in the vicinity. They landed on the beast without it noticing. Its proboscis whose length originally seemed unable to penetrate furry skin suddenly grew in length, piercing through the furry skin and straight into the leopard's body. The nine mosquitoes drank, and the next moment, they flew off.

As they flew further away, a harsh bright light exploded. The leopard that had been charging the middle-aged strongman suddenly widened its eyes. Its body spasmed mid-leap, and a pained howl tore itself out from its throat. The lunging form trembled and, without rhyme or reason, suddenly changed course and charged headfirst into the ground!

The leopard hit the ground and started howling madly. Its body wriggled on the ground ceaselessly, its paws trying to scratch itself; it was as if it had been hit by an uncontrollable itch all over. It was an extraordinary itch that seemed to sink through the bones to the depths of the soul. That left a leopard that rivaled a True Breath realm cultivator shrieking in agony. Its battle prowess was drained away almost entirely. It was as if there were countless insects biting it, inside and outside its body. Its eyes screamed fear.

The beast tried to get on to its feet but failed. The itch was indescribable. It could only howl madly. Its screams did not travel far; the beast's strange behavior caught the attention of a Combat cultivator from one of the four Dao Colleges. He approached speedily and drove his sword straight through the leopard's forehead!

"What's the situation!" Upon seeing how the leopard did not attempt to dodge the attack, allowing itself to be killed instantly, the Combat cultivator froze. He could not spare further thought on this though as he immediately retreated and attacked another beast.

The episode was akin to a small wave in the huge ocean, drawing little attention. Even Wang Baole, busy with inspecting the malfunctioning Fire God Cannon, had no energy to meld with the mosquitoes. The nine mosquitoes continued their flight through the battlefield.

Violence permeated the battlefield; the smell of blood rose heavy in the air while howls of rage resounded through the battleground. Injuries and death abound. However, the nine mosquitoes were not only agile but small. Be it cultivators, warriors, or even the beasts, barely anyone noticed them.

With such stealth, the nine mosquitoes accomplished Wang Baole's order perfectly without drawing attention. They began to frantically sting the True Breath realm beasts that appeared before them, one after another.

Gradually, a string of strange phenomena took place on the battlefield. Many True Breath realm beasts, which had appeared fine and had been engaged in fearsome battles with great prowess a moment

before, suddenly widened their eyes and fell to the ground with an agonizing cry, wriggling uncontrollably as if trying to scratch an itch.

Those who could reach the itch started scratching at the indescribable itch, as if practicing self-mutilation, until their skin broke and flesh tore.

Those who could not ease the itch flew into a mad frenzy; in their howling madness, they did not differentiate ally from foe, charging blindly at and tearing into the beasts around them.

An isolated scene started repeating itself, quickly and in large numbers. It was like a plague and caught the attention and surprise of many people.

“What’s going on?”

“These beasts, have they gone mad? What are they doing? Scratching an itch?”

“Are my eyes deceiving me?”

Warriors and cultivators alike exclaimed in surprise as more and more of such strange beast behavior occurred. This was especially so for the warriors on the Fire God Cannon platforms—their elevated positions gave them a grander view. Every one of them was stunned beyond belief.

They had lived through countless battles with beasts, fought beasts all year round, but never had they seen such a sight before.

As for Wang Baole, he had just completed the repair of the Fire God Cannon. He raised his head in surprise when he heard the disbelieving cries. At that timely moment, a flying beast in the sky fell to the bite of the mosquito. It screamed in pain midair, and its wings froze. With an excruciating cry, it crashed heavily to the ground.

What was most amazing was how as the beast fell—one could clearly see with one’s eyes its body swelling up.

As this sight blew everyone’s mind away, Wang Baole’s body shook slightly, and the expression on his face shifted, barely noticeable. Spirit Qi flowed into the scabbard housed within his body. The scene before his eyes transformed, becoming fused with the mosquitoes’ fields of vision. The scene of the entire battlefield appeared before his eyes.

There was no attempt at further control. Instead, Wang Baole observed as the mosquitoes inflicted swift bites on one True Breath realm beast after another before flying away, leaving the bitten beasts in howling, frenzied madness. Wang Baole sucked in a deep breath, his eyes wide.

“That... that’s seriously fierce!” Wang Baole muttered to himself in both disbelief and excitement. With the aid of the mosquitoes’ fields of vision, his eyes landed on the beasts’ teeth... and brightened suddenly.

“There are teeth everywhere. The Dragon’s Tooth that I’m crafting requires a huge number of beasts’ teeth. This place is like a treasure trove!” Wang Baole became excited. He immediately commanded a mosquito to return to him. The mosquito’s field of vision would be used to monitor the ten Fire God Cannons. His form blurred as he sped toward the battlefield before him!

His appearance caught the attention of many warriors. They were about to shout out their concern, but Wang Baole was too fast for them. He appeared almost instantly on the battlegrounds. As he dashed forward, a raging bear-like beast charged toward him, howling. Wang Baole teleported next to it while it was in mid-leap, raised his left hand, and caught the lower jaw of the raging bear. With a twist of fingers, the bear's mouth fell open.

"That's not a bad-looking tooth." Wang Baole's eyes glimmered. His right hand shot right in, grabbed hold of a molar, and broke it off without mercy. With a wave of his hand, seven to eight flying swords flew out and beheaded the howling beast. Then, he sped off.

The warriors who had been about to call out to Wang Baole witnessed the entire scene. They gasped and stared at Wang Baole in shock.

That raging bear was a True Breath realm beast!

Before Wang Baole, it seemed as weak and fragile as a thin piece of paper.

Wang Baole excitedly tossed the tooth into his storage bag. With the aid of the mosquito stationed at the Fire God Cannons, he checked that the cannons were in order. Utilizing the field of vision of the other mosquitoes, he moved from one part of the battlefield to the next. Soon, the terrific screams of beasts losing their teeth echoed across the battlefield.

Amid their screams were Wang Baole's shouts of delight.

"This tooth will do!"

"Eh, this molar's not bad!"

"This tooth looks sharp—I'm taking it!"

Wang Baole wove in and out of battle on the battleground, like a fat ghost; he appeared before beasts that had been bitten from his mosquitoes, pulled teeth out, and slew the beasts. His movements were fast and fluid, like a passing cloud or flowing water, gone the next moment.

Gradually, more and more people bore witness to such a scene. Be it warriors, Combat cultivators from the four Dao Colleges, or even the many in the stronghold, they all saw Wang Baole striking and... extracting teeth.

"What sort of hobby is Wang Baole into? Teeth extraction?"

As each and every one of them bore an odd expression on their face, they were also amazed in equal measure. It was as if Wang Baole had eyes on the back of his head; amid the chaos of the battlefield, his eyes seemed to see all, and his ears hear all. He moved fast, like a fat loach that slipped through the grasp of the beasts that tried to encircle him time and time again. When he struck, he would, without fail, pull a tooth out.

Every beast that fought him would fall howling to a strange itch and lose their ability to retaliate. Within a short span of two hours, the beasts that died by Wang Baole's hand rose to a count of thirty!

He had exterminated an even greater number of Ancient Martial realm beasts along the way. His body count surpassed that of many Combat cultivators and sparked flames of rivalry in the hearts of many cultivators who witnessed his battle prowess. Thus, their attacks quickened.

All of a sudden, those standing on the side of the stronghold seemed fearsome beyond measure. Even though Wang Baole's mosquitoes suffered some damage, as long as his Spirit Qi did not run dry, he had an infinite number of mosquitoes at his command. He grew fiercer in battle, and his methods at teeth extraction became more efficient. With a brief glance, he could assess the beast's teeth and determine how to extract it from the root up.

"Could it be that I am naturally gifted at dentistry?" Wang Baole murmured, surprised. He approached a green-skinned, lion-like beast speedily. The beast's form was obviously swollen and enlarged beyond its original size. It wriggled on the ground, trying to reach an itch.

### **Chapter 176: A Threat Appears**

Wang Baole neared in an instant. He grabbed the beast's tooth and was about to break it off when the beast released a bolt of lightning from the tooth in its struggle. It shot into Wang Baole and loosened a splinter off the crystallized Spirit Qi within his body.

The lightning, when compared to what he had suffered at the hands of Little Missy Black Mask, was insignificant to the point of being negligible. His body pushed on without pause, and with a straight pull, he extracted the beast's tooth.

Wang Baole felt the warm sensation of smug satisfaction. He took a look at the battlefield; more than half the beast horde had been decimated, and many beasts were already retreating. The end of that round of the Beast Tide was nigh. It was then that a series of quakes shook the earth. In the distant skies, a heaven-splitting tornado ten times the size of the previous one appeared abruptly!

The tornado was formed from the stirring of dust and earth and the flocks of beasts in the skies. They shadowed the earth and blanketed the heavens. As the tornado approached at a rapid pace, the tremors grew stronger. No warrior or cultivator remained unshaken. As they stood, stunned and awed, a whistle sharper and more piercing than the first alarm sounded from the stronghold.

Big-bearded commander-in-charge's voice carried a tone of hastiness and gravity that hadn't been present earlier. His words traveled across the battlefield.

"The First Army and all cultivators, fall back immediately!"

"Activate the array formation!"

"Fire God Armament Soldiers, prepare for five salvos of cannon shots!"

Wang Baole could feel a strong sense of foreboding and danger as he heard the chain of orders being barked out. He retreated speedily, pulling along other warriors as he passed them.

Everyone fell back quickly under the crowd's nervous watch. Wang Baole and Chen Yutong stood together on the stronghold, with their eyes fixed on the distant lands. No matter how accustomed he grew to that place, he was still taken aback by the sight.

In the distance, between heaven and earth, the Beast Tide rose once again. The scale of it dwarfed the first tide by at least ten times, and as it rushed forward, the hundreds of thousands of beasts spread across the horizon, seemingly without end. The sight was enough to drive fear deep into all those who were watching and stun them beyond belief.

Strong winds carrying the smell of blood surged forward; the earth itself seemed to move, its mountains waver. Within the Beast Tide stood countless beasts towering twenty-odd meters tall. A hundred-meter-tall beast could even be seen—a true blue giant beast—dragging boulders along as it charged at the stronghold.

If that had been the end of it, it might not have been so bad, but behind the endless Beast Tide rose seven individual Spirit Qi. They rose up into the heavens and exuded power clearly beyond the True Breath realm—possibly leaving the True Breath realm in the dust. The Spirit Qi formed a howling hurricane in their approach.

What was within the hurricane couldn't be seen clearly. Though, on its edges floated seven fearsome beasts. The seven beasts had strange and extraordinary physical appearances, and inscriptions flashed and glimmered on their bodies. They stood in mid-air, on stone-like structures. The stones seemed extraordinary; they were like Dharmic treasures and gave off a strong imposing aura.

The fearsome and imposing aura that rose from all seven creatures shook everyone to their core.

“Foundation Establishment realm!” Chen Yutong, who stood beside Wang Baole, breathed heavily and spoke in a low voice.

Upon hearing the two words, “Foundation Establishment”, Wang Baole's pupils contracted. He had already been aware that beyond the True Breath realm lay the Foundation Establishment realm!

The power of the Foundation Establishment realm was too great; the chasm separating it from the previous realm was far wider than the gap between the Ancient Martial realm and the True Breath realm. It could even be said that beyond the Foundation Establishment realm, the True Breath realm was only marginally stronger than the Ancient Martial realm. Those of the True Breath realm weren't ants, but to crush them would be an easy feat.

The chasm in power wasn't something that sheer numbers could overcome. Even if a group of True Breath realm cultivators launched a unified attack, a Foundation Establishment realm opponent would decimate them!

An overwhelming sense of danger rose within Wang Baole. He couldn't have guessed that the scale of that round of Beast Tides would be so great. The enemy even had seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts!

“This is just a minor stronghold, and we're already facing such a Beast Tide. What about the other strongholds... and the primary stronghold—does it mean the Beast Tides they are facing are on an even greater scale?” Wang Baole sucked in a deep breath. He took out the glove that he had refined into a Numinous Treasure and put it on without thinking.

Wang Baole wasn't the only one experiencing a shift in his emotions. A serious look also fell over the faces of the warriors who were stationed at the stronghold year round.

As the tense atmosphere permeated the entire stronghold, and as the frenzied Beast Tide approached steadily, the entire stronghold suddenly quaked. Numerous inscriptions appeared on the exterior of the metal stronghold walls. The inscriptions shimmered, and a translucent protective barrier appeared suddenly.

The barrier surged outward with explosive force. Where it swept past, the surviving beasts that roamed outside the stronghold trembled and instantly burst apart.

Wang Baole's pupils contracted upon witnessing the barrier's destructive capabilities. As a Dharmic Armament cultivator and based on his understanding of Dharmic Artifacts, he knew that such grand-scale protective barriers couldn't be sustained for long periods of time. As such, they were only activated in moments of extreme necessity.

It was clear that the big-bearded commander-in-charge of the stronghold had decided that it had reached a point where it was necessary to activate the barrier. Wang Baole watched as the barrier roared outwards, pushed itself out three thousand meters and beyond, then stopped—forming the first shield against the Beast Tide!

As soon as the protective shield appeared, the formidable Beast Tide charged towards it, thundering. Savagery and violence were the essence of their nature. Without a hint of hesitation, the beasts bashed into the barrier, crimson-eyed and thirsting for blood.

Thunderous roars resounded through the air. Regardless of the level of their cultivation, every beast that touched the barrier collapsed in a pile of blood and mangled flesh. Bright red blood spilled across the land, but more beasts charged forward, fearless of death. The barrier trembled and blood splattered across it.

Waves of emotions swept through Wang Baole as he witnessed the madness. It was then that the Fire God Cannons started firing rampantly. The loud cannon shots sounded as if the heaven and earth roared in unison. Each cannon fired five blasts, forming five salvos of cannon shots—five waves of killing shots!

Each wave was a hundred-odd beams of light shooting across the skies. The sunset skies lit up in a fiery instant. The beams of light fell like rain, shooting through the protective shield and landing on the Beast Tide.

The earth trembled, its quakes rippling outwards without pause. Hordes and hordes of beasts were torn apart instantly and turned to dust. The explosive power of five hundred cannon beams decimated half of the Beast Tide outside the barrier.

Seas of blood and mountains of corpses spanned as far as the eye could see!

However, within a blink of an eye, the next wave of Beast Tide surged forward and took over. Hordes of beasts gathered without rest in the distance. Their numbers seemed to grow, and they charged at the shield without pause. The shield warped and bent under the attack as if it couldn't withstand such force for much longer.

In the skies, the hurricane approached. The seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts at the edge of the hurricane neared steadily, and the suppressive aura exuding from them seemed to grow ever more vicious.

Big-bearded commander-in-charge narrowed his eyes and cursed, “Didn’t the Federation predict a small-scale Beast Tide? Screw that. This is the first time I’m seeing a Beast Tide of such proportions!”

In a moment of haste, big-bearded commander-in-charge sent a plea for aid to the primary stronghold. However, the situation at the primary stronghold was equally dire. In fact, every stronghold was currently facing an unprecedented Beast Tide; the primary stronghold especially, because a Core Formation realm Beast King had made an appearance!

Upon hearing the sighting of a Beast King, big-bearded commander-in-charge inhaled sharply. He watched with reddened eyes as fractures appeared in the protective shield under the assault of the beast hordes. Viciousness flashed through his eyes. He raised his hand abruptly and barked out an order.

“Self-destruct the barrier. Let’s give these wretched creatures one hell of a blow. Fire God Cannons, ten salvos of cannon shots! Array Formation troops, activate the array formation inscription. The Second Army, the Flying Sword Rites!”

Big Beard issued his commands. Soon after, the collapsing barrier holding off the Beast Tide exploded and caught the beasts unaware. Its sudden explosion was like a huge scimitar; it swept across the land, amidst the screams of beasts, slicing their bodies into clean halves!

It was then that thousands of cannon beams exploded from the Fire God Cannons in ten consecutive shots. The earth quaked, and waves of air rose into the heavens. The beams fell alongside the virtual scimitar, and triggered another wave of slaughter!

The decimation of a huge horde of the beasts still didn’t put a dent in the sea of beasts. The growing number of beasts, eyes red with rage and howling for blood, was like a flood surging into the three-thousand-meter distance separating it from the stronghold. They rushed towards the mountain peak where the stronghold sat in a mad frenzy.

If one were standing atop the highest point in the stronghold with their gaze lowered, they would see ferocious-looking beasts charging forward in hordes. Their numbers were uncountable and stretched into the distance with no end in sight under the darkening sunset skies...

Within the seventh primary stronghold’s sphere of jurisdiction, all minor strongholds were faced with the same predicament at that moment. The Beast Tides they faced were all beyond the scale expected by the Federation!

That was especially so for the seventh primary stronghold, where the Beast Tide was overwhelming to an extreme and included the presence of a Core Formation realm Beast King. The Foundation Establishment realm beasts under the Beast King’s command were equally dangerous, and they mobilized a grand army of beasts. Even the seventh primary stronghold faced the threat of danger.

The entire seventh line of defense raised the alarm—it was an emergency!

At the same time that a great army of beasts assailed the seventh line of defense, the first to sixth primary strongholds in the Federation—and the areas under their commands—were also defending against huge beast armies beyond their wildest imagination!

The fourth primary stronghold, especially, was at the brink of being broken through. The beast armies targeted it as the main breaching point, mobilizing eight Beast Kings!

No one knew why the round of Beast Tides had arrived so suddenly and with such vehemence.

The Federation did respond as soon as they could. However, the battlefields spread across too many locations, and the aid they could render wouldn't be able to reach everyone. They could only prioritize military aid to the fourth primary strongholds.

The four Great Dao Colleges were activated as well, as were the senators and the various factions. They weren't headed towards the battlefields outside the strongholds though. That, to their mind, would be meaningless.

Under the Federation's secret orders, the highly skilled from the various political forces would—using the opportunity presented to them from the surging Beast Tides—leave the Federation and infiltrate the primordial jungles. Their target... the sea of beasts within the primordial jungle land!

It was where the base of the beasts sat!

The strategy had the intention of setting up an ambush on one hand and, on the other, the aim of launching an attack from behind. They planned on forcing the enemy to retreat from their own forward assault to deal with the split attacking forces. Of course, the success of the strategy rested on the seven primary strongholds standing strong against the enemy forces!

### **Chapter 177: Qi-Stopping Sound Waves**

Wang Baole was in one of the minor strongholds along the seventh line of defense that was engaged in the battle for mankind's survival. He didn't possess the capability to command and direct the battle, and neither did he possess invincible cultivation. To a certain extent, he was but an insignificant True Breath disciple.

He was also shaken by fear, and his body trembled uncontrollably; however, Ancient Martial realm warriors around him continued to engage in battle. As a cultivator, how he could try to escape the battle of the Beast Tide?

*Let's do this!* Wang Baole decided. It was as if he was back in the Pond Cloud Rainforest, and a wave of murderous intent burst forth from his person. He leaped into the air, stepped onto the flying cruiser, and traveled amongst the ten Fire God Cannons under his charge. He inspected and repaired cannons without rest, and made sure they were all running smoothly.

It was then that the countless waves of beasts outside the stronghold rushed into the ten-thousand-foot perimeter, thundering as they charged. The big-bearded commander-in-charge watched as they approached. A tinge of madness colored his eyes, and he raised his right hand and swept it across in a violent wave.

"Array Runes!"

A thundering roar rose. At the ten-thousand-foot perimeter surrounding the stronghold, an array formation flashed into being. The array formation cultivators from the four Dao Colleges as well as the array formation masters from the army struck, activating the power of the array formation buried



underground. In an instant, Spirit Qi shot up into the heavens within the ten-thousand-foot perimeter. The light of the array formation dazzled and blinded.

It was as if the force of invisible mountains suddenly descended, transforming into a strong force that cast a shadow over the ten-thousand-foot perimeter!

The beasts that had charged into the ten-thousand-foot perimeter, into the thundering roars and blinding light of the array formation, seemed to sink into a mudslide. Their movements slowed to a crawl, and in their struggles, they cried out in rage to no avail.

As the beasts slowed due to the array formation, a staggering rain of swords flew from within the stronghold. They were the swords belonging to the Flying Sword troops comprised of all Combat cultivators from the colleges as well as cultivators from the army. The flying swords soared straight into the ten-thousand-foot perimeter, tearing everything apart wherever they passed.

The flight of the swords interweaved with one another, forming a net of swords. All of a sudden, shrieks of pain rang out, and the smell of freshly spilled blood hung heavy in the air. The lands outside the stronghold bled red. From afar, it looked like a carpet of flesh and blood.

Blood and violence permeated the air. If it had been any other occasion, one would have thrown up. But, on the battlefield, the smell of blood stirred the beasts into a blood frenzy and pushed the men to kill!

The coordination of the array formation and flying swords turned the ten-thousand-foot perimeter into a no man's land for the beasts. The Fire God Cannons, having undergone a short spurt of repairs, commenced their firing again. Their targets—the beasts beyond the ten-thousand-foot perimeter!

Both the areas within the ten-thousand-foot perimeter and beyond were transformed into a living hell. Multitudes of howling beasts were torn to shreds in large swaths.

The scene of their destruction brought no cheer to the men. When they raised their heads and looked into the distant primordial jungles, they could see the waves of Beast Tides between the heavens and earth, an ocean that spanned across the horizons without end...

The sight was a heavy-weight that sank the hearts of everyone.

Big-bearded commander-in-charge took in the sight, then took a deep breath before his voice resounded throughout the entire stronghold.

“Brothers, and friends from the four Dao Colleges, fear not. I, Old Zhang, have stood guard here for ten years. I’ve seen too many Beast Tides. The size of this one may be big, but my experience tells me that as long as we survive this wave, and stand strong, the Beast Tide will ebb and weaken!”

Big-bearded commander-in-charge was clearly not adept at stirring up the crowds. Regardless, his words during that time were a boost to many and caused hope to glimmer in their eyes.

Wang Baole also took a deep breath. He knew that hope was a precious commodity to many at times like that. He traveled swiftly in silence and continued his work on the Fire God Cannons.

He knew that his contributions on the battlefield were negligible. All that he could do was to ensure that the ten Fire God Cannons under his care maintained their levels of destruction.

The fighting continued. The ground quaked, and the mountains shook. An hour passed, slowly. The time that would have sped past on an ordinary day seemed to crawl by on the battlefield.

The Beast Tide was relentless, their numbers countless. However, under the combined destructive force of the array formation, the torrent of swords, and the Fire God Cannon firings, the two camps seemed to reach a delicate balance!

An avalanche of ferocious beasts continued charging forward despite round after round of massacre, only to be held at bay a ten thousand feet away. Even if the beasts were to successfully dodge the Fire God Cannons, they would be slain by the array formation and flying swords.

*The beast camp will not stand by as this balance continues...* Wang Baole had a grave look on his face. As he continued repairs on a Fire God Cannon, he raised his head and stared at the distant hurricane as well as the seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts that had not yet moved to attack.

The moment his eyes fell on the hurricane, his pupils contracted to pinpricks. He watched as the hurricane expanded and spread out suddenly, rousing waves of clouds. As the clouds rolled outwards, from within the eye of the hurricane, out flew a...

Gigantic bat!

The bat was purple all over, and its eyes glimmered with cold cruelty. It flew from the eye of the hurricane to the edge, and the seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts swiftly gathered around the bat in a protective circle.

The appearance of the bat shook many to their core; even Wang Baole, upon seeing the bat clearly, was affected. His breathing quickened, and buzzing sounded in his mind.

As everyone was knocked off balance, the bat opened its mouth wide with a vicious look on its face. It seemed to be screaming amidst its fearsome posturing, sending a blast of ultrasonic waves towards the stronghold.

Those of the Ancient Martial realm couldn't sense the ultrasonic wave, but its hit landed true on True Breath realm cultivators. It was akin to a sharp blade piercing through one's brains. In an instant, many cultivators let out a pained cry. Tremors shook throughout Wang Baole's body as well. Fortunately, the devouring seed was triggered in the nick of time and blocked the shrill shriek from penetrating his mind. However, that didn't stop blood from seeping out of his nose.

The thundering roar was accompanied by a wave of inscriptions bursting from within the bat. It swept towards the stronghold in a rush and passed into the ten-thousand-foot perimeter in a blink of an eye. Where it passed, the inscriptions on the array formation darkened and were rendered useless!

The Sword Rain lost stability in the same instant as well and was drained of all nimbleness. Their owners called the swords back immediately, but the damage had been done, and some swords shattered instantly.

The greatest damage was dealt to the Fire God Cannons. It seemed that the cannons were the bat's true target. The wave of inscriptions surged over, and with a blow, sent a third of the hundred-odd Fire God Cannons convulsing. They seemed to lose all power and were turned into scrapped metal instantaneously!

One of the cannons included a cannon under Wang Baole's charge. Wang Baole wiped away the blood from his nose, studiously ignored his discomfort, and rushed towards the cannon to inspect it. He quickly discovered the inscriptions carved on the inside of the Fire God Cannon had disintegrated into dust!

The Fire God Cannon originally had a self-destruct option, which was no longer possible. Wang Baole's hasty inspection of the remaining cannons found a few of the cannons had fragmented inscriptions. The cannons were a step away from a complete malfunction!

*What kind of beast is that!* Wang Baole was shocked to his core. That was the first time he encountered a beast that could affect inscriptions. It was clear that even big-bearded commander-in-charge had not seen it coming, as anger colored his face.

The attack shattered the earlier balance between the two camps. As everyone in the stronghold stayed frozen in shock, the roars of the beasts resounded in the air. The Beast Tide was like a giant wave crashing forward from a ten thousand feet away, surging towards the stronghold in a frenzied charge.

It was then that four Sword Qi shot into the air from within the stronghold—overpowering Spirit Qi from the four Sword Qi suppressed even that of a True Breath. The aura exuded equaled that of the Foundation Establishment realm beasts on the edge of the hurricane; it was almost identical to the latter, and could even be discerned as slightly stronger!

*Foundation Establishment realm cultivators!* Wang Baole's eyes widened. His heart rose in excitement as he stared at the four Sword Qi soaring in the sky. They were four flying swords, and standing on the four flying swords were three men and a woman!

The four exuded an overwhelming, awe-inspiring aura. It was clear that they had been waiting in hiding for a long time. Their explosive reveal must have been because their target was the bat that appeared from the eye of the hurricane!

Just as they dashed out like bolts of lightning, the seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts surrounding the bat surged forward and held them at bay. A tinge of bloodlust flashed across the beasts' eyes.

The four must have guessed that would happen. They originally planned to wait a little longer, but the bat's attack was too ferocious. If they had continued to lie in wait, the casualties would have been alarming. There was even the possibility of the stronghold falling, so they had no choice but to strike.

It was a tactical blunder. They should have disregarded the losses to the stronghold since their task was to exterminate the bat. Based on their deduction, the bat's death would be a major blow to the Beast Tide.

But they were still cultivators at heart. They had advanced, a step at a time, from an ordinary person to their current position. It was impossible for them to disregard the deaths of so many!

The four cultivators clashed with the seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts and engaged in an aerial battle. It seemed they had staged an ambush, but many in the stronghold could tell that they were launching a proactive attack and drawing the seven beasts—beasts that would unleash a terrible destructive power once they entered the battlefield!

The sight before him sent shivers down Wang Baole's spine yet again, and his breathing quickened. The light in his eyes brightened even more fiercely as he stared at the beasts around him. His body swayed as he sped off to repair the Fire God Cannons with everything that he had. As the Beast Tide on land approached in a thunderous roar, the remaining Fire God Cannons fired again. Fragmented inscriptions spiraled into further magical instability following the round of shots. Some let out a despairing creak, and after that, one shot and broke down completely.

Big-bearded commander-in-charge saw it all. With his eyes red, he roared, "All Dharmic Armament cultivators, direct all efforts to repairing the Fire God Cannons. The Fire God Cannons cannot fail! We will hold them back and give you more time!"

Upon saying that, big-bearded commander-in-charge issued his command. In a blink of an eye, save the few left to stand guard, the entire army rushed out of the stronghold and, alongside the cultivators from the four Dao Colleges, went head to head with the Beast Tide for another round!

### **Chapter 178: Danger Every Step of the Way**

Thundering blasts tore through the heavens without rest. The four Foundation Establishment realm cultivators battled fiercely with the seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts. They fought brutally and without pause, and any misstep could mean life or death!

That was especially so when faced with seven Foundation Establishment realm beasts. The four cultivators were clearly struggling to hold their own, but none retreated. They engaged in battle with all their might. The Foundation Establishment realm beasts relied on their invincible physical bodies, while the cultivators had not only Numinous Treasures but also array formations at their disposal. One of them, a man in his middle age, even possessed a seventh-grade Dharmic Armament!

Just this single Dharmic Armament was enough to strike awe and fear into the opponents' hearts!

A Dharmic Armament was, after all, an item of extreme luxury and rarity to a Foundation Establishment realm cultivator. It was referred to by all as a priceless treasure, and few had their hands on one. Dharmic Armaments were typically wielded by the top-notch warriors in the respective political forces—Core Formation cultivators!

The battle in the sky continued fiercely, while the fight on land was a complete massacre.

The hundreds of thousands of stronghold troops clashed with the Beast Tide on land. The violent slaughter was soul-shaking, and deaths occurred every moment. Flesh tore and blood spilled, drenching the earth in blood!

The destructiveness of the behemoths as well as the giants was overwhelming. They could only be taken down by multiple cultivators most of the time, and because of that, the stronghold was placed at a severe disadvantage; they were clearly at the losing end of the battle.

Fortunately, compared with the beasts' simplistic attacks, the cultivators had Array Formation cultivators, Alchemy cultivators, and Beast Taming cultivators amongst them. They were able to force a delicate balance between the two camps.

There was battling high in the skies and on land, and another layer of battle took place between them, one that was equally brutal!

The aerial battle in midair took place on the various Fire God Cannon platforms. The enemies were swarms of flying beasts; they were swift and cruel, fearless of death as they flung themselves forward without rest. Their attacks disrupted the repairs of the cannons and hastened the cannons' malfunction.

The repairs of the Fire God Cannons was slow work. In the midst of that, frequent firings continued to take place in coordination with the fighting in the sky and on land. There wasn't time to spare for their own self-defense, and the thousand-odd warriors stationed on every platform formed the last line of defense for the Fire God Cannons.

Battle cries rose in the air without pause. On the platforms, there were Fire God Cannons with fragmented inscriptions awaiting repairs while being swarmed by beast attacks. They couldn't last until the repairs were made and broke down immediately.

With the collapse of a cannon, the platform it was on was immediately swarmed by hordes of beasts. They surged forward, frenzied with bloodlust, and the casualties skyrocketed. It was a bloodbath.

Be it Chen Yutong, Zhou Penghai, Sun Fang or the Dharmic Armament cultivators from the four Dao Colleges—all were possessed by rage, and red veins lined their eyes. The work was too much. They had to be wary of the winged beasts while hastening their repair work which made them the natural targets of the beasts.

At that moment, Wang Baole had just restored a Fire God Cannon to a barely acceptable working condition, and as he leaped away, he heard a cry of agony. He turned his head and, through the protective glow of the Golden Bell Shield and past the warriors guarding him, saw a Dharmic Armament cultivator from the Holy River Dao College on a distant Fire God Cannon platform. Seven to eight beasts ripped through the protection of his Numinous Treasure and tore him into bits!

Amidst the thickening blood mist, countless beasts rushed onto the platform. The battle that followed left them and the hundreds of warriors on the platform dead...

If it had been another place and time, there would be Combat cultivators around to protect them. However, everyone was fighting for their lives. The only protection the Dharmic Armament cultivators had were their own Numinous Treasures and the thousand warriors on each platform!

Wang Baole had become familiar with the warriors. Every time he approached a Fire God Cannon platform whose care he was charged with, hordes of warriors rushed forward surrounding it and used their bodies as meat shields against the encircling beasts.

His Golden Bell Shield proved its worth during that time, and he flung more than a dozen of them at the platforms he was responsible for.

Other Dharmic Armament cultivators did the same. They pulled out every Dharmic Artifact they could use. Wang Baole even went to the extent of distributing the Dharmic Artifacts he had crafted to the warriors guarding him, enhancing their battle capabilities.

Despite all that being done, casualties couldn't be avoided. The winged beasts in the skies gathered like a dark storm cloud, and their numbers were countless. The True Breath realm beasts within the horde of beasts often struck in groups of ten and more with unimaginable force.

Even though Wang Baole had released the mosquitoes earlier, in the face of innumerable beasts, they were but a drop in the vast ocean. They barely survived.

Danger continued surfacing. Regardless of the repair work by Dharmic Armament cultivators, Fire God Cannons all around repeatedly broke down, and a slew of killings followed each malfunction.

At that moment, Wang Baole had just completed repairs on a Fire God Cannon. The cannon let loose a blast of light that shot into the air and, in sync with the four attacking Foundation Establishment realm cultivators, bombed the Foundation Establishment realm beasts. A violent heave traveled through the cannon before it malfunctioned and broke down!

In mid-air, nine True Breath realm flying beasts saw a window of opportunity with the malfunction. They swooped near at high speed, leading thousands of Ancient Martial realm flying beasts, and smashed straight into the protective Golden Bell Shield.

A thunderous hum resounded through the air, and the flying beasts were flung back, shaking. The Golden Bell Shield trembled as well; however, it was made of superior quality, and there was a great deal of them. As a result, the shield didn't suffer one crack.

"Go!" Wang Baole shouted in haste and retreated quickly with the warriors on the platform. The beasts gave them no chance to escape, though, and charged a second time. An aura of bloodlust exploded from his person, and he roared.

"Wait for me at the next platform!" he said, then rushed out from the protective barrier of the Golden Bell Shield. He stepped onto the cruiser, his gloved right hand tightening into a fist, and punched!

Spirit Qi spiraled in, forming a tidal storm that surged out; where the storm passed, beasts cried out in pain and were ripped into pieces.

Without a pause in his steps, Wang Baole formed hand seals immediately after his first punch. Blades of wind sliced the air, and flying swords formed a river and shot out around him.

In the span of a moment, blood fell from the skies like crimson rain. Wang Baole's sleeves had long been stained crimson, and he watched as the surrounding beasts retreated. His face darkened suddenly, and his left hand made a hand seal hastily. A mist rose around him immediately, and he whirled around without warning, his left-hand thrust behind his back and gripped tightly.

"Trying to ambush your granddaddy?"

With a thunderous boom, Wang Baole's hand, which had the Cloud Finger channeled, grabbed the throat of the True Breath realm beast that tried to sneak up on him. It exploded upon contact!

Bright crimson blood spurted out. Wang Baole did not linger, and he retreated swiftly and caught up with the warriors who were within the Golden Bell Shield worrying about his safety. Once he caught up, they returned hastily to the stronghold.

The warriors didn't stay for regrouping or rest, hurrying off to some other Fire God Cannon instead. Wang Baole panted heavily, retrieving a pill and swallowing it whole. Without even waiting for the pill to dissolve, his body pashed away, and in moments he was aboard his cruiser and on his way.

The battle in the sky raged on. Midair, winged beasts cast a shadow over the entire land, where beasts roared and bellowed. The primordial jungle battlegrounds spanned as far as the eye could see.

Danger lurked everywhere, and death shadowed every step. Wang Baole gritted his teeth, and a tinge of madness colored his eyes. He hadn't forgotten his mission. It didn't matter that he had lost three Fire God Cannons to malfunction, he still had seven functional and firing.

Every one of them was still holding on and fighting. Not one had cowered or retreated from the fight!

It wasn't that they weren't afraid, but that some things had to be done regardless of fear!

It wasn't that they weren't afraid of dying. Standing in the battlefield, where a single distracting thought was impossible, it would be an exaggeration to proclaim that they didn't harbor such fears. But most of those who harbored such thoughts had already been slain.

The sight before Wang Baole affected him immensely, and fire seemed to course through his veins. The madness in his eyes deepened. He stood in his cruiser, battle worn and scarred by the claws of beasts, and sped towards another Fire God Cannon platform.

It was at that moment, as he sped out, that he felt a prickling on his scalp. He leaped off the cruiser without thinking, and the devouring seed within his body activated instantaneously, pulling towards one side of the stronghold walls with a violent heave. The cruiser dashed off on its own.

As Wang Baole completed the series of actions, more than ten beams of dark light came surging from the distant skies where the four Foundation Establishment realm cultivators were deep in battle with the Foundation Establishment realm beasts.

It was impossible to tell which of the beasts issued the attack, but the dark beams of light sped towards the stronghold, and their targets weren't the Fire God Cannons but the Dharmic Armament cultivators!

The dark light beams were traveling too quickly. They approached in a blink of an eye, and instantly, each one of them shot a True Breath realm cultivator through the forehead, splitting heads instantaneously and decimating both body and spirit of the cultivators!

Chen Yutong barely countered the attack with his peak True Breath realm cultivation level, and only after sacrificing almost ten of his Numinous Treasures—all above third-grade quality. Even then, blood spilled from his mouth.

As for Wang Baole, his cruiser was shot through by a dark beam the moment he jumped off. As the cruiser exploded, the dark beam of light swerved and headed straight for him. The pull of the Wang Baole's devouring seed allowed him to draw back at an impossible angle and land on the stronghold wall—escaping the approaching dark beam a second time.

Amidst the battle explosions, the dark beam brushed past Wang Baole, almost touching him, and landed on the ground below him with a deafening blast. Wang Baole panted heavily and raised his head in shock.

In the skies, where the Foundation Establishment realm beasts fought, a pitch-black beast in a form akin to a unicorn seemed to be staring coldly at him and Chen Yutong.

They were the only two who had escaped the fate of death from the numerous dark beams of light. Wang Baole managed to dodge the attack in the first place, a feat greater than blocking it. The Foundation Establishment realm beast hadn't anticipated that happening.

After all, it should have been impossible for Wang Baole to escape the attack considering the level of his cultivation. However, Wang Baole had the extra sight gifted by his mosquitoes which alerted him to the attack in advance. There was also the devouring seed, which allowed him to emulate flight to a certain extent even though his cultivation level didn't grant him the ability of flight. That was the unexpected factor that allowed his successful escape.

Wang Baole's heart rate soared. As the threat of death grew stronger, beads of sweat appeared on his forehead. He had no time to think. The sounds of explosions and the cries of pain from the fallen rang ceaselessly in his ears.

With the appearance of the dark beams of light and the deaths of the Dharmic Armament cultivators, the repairs on the Fire God Cannons stalled. The Fire God Cannons were barely running in the first place, but after the attack, a massive scale of malfunctions surfaced!

### **Chapter 179: Steely Resolve!**

With the breaking down of the Fire God Cannons, the stronghold camp was obviously at a disadvantage in both aerial and land battles. They were pushed back steadily and at the verge of defeat.

The watchful beasts surged forward as soon as the cannons broke down. They dashed onto the platforms and towards the warriors standing atop, sparking another round of slaughter!

Mangled flesh littered the ground while blood stained the earth. The clashing sounds of battle drowned out the screams of agony and raging howls, but they didn't need to travel far; clinging onto the wall, Wang Baole could hear every sound and see everything clearly!

He watched the bloodbath on the platforms; his warrior friends were torn apart one after another.

Some of them were tossed into the sky by the beasts, then ripped into pieces by the beast flock.

Wang Baole watched as it all happened. Red veins appeared in his eyes as he saw another strong, built man caught by a beast. He was about to rescue him when the beast's huge beak cracked and pierced the man's forehead!

The man was the one who had lost to Wang Baole at arm wrestling, ate his snacks, and said he would matchmake him with his sister!

Yet, he was dead; his body ripped into halves by the beast.

Wang Baole let loose a pained howl, and his right hand shot up and swept to one side. In an instant, a blast of Cloud Finger exploded from his hand, snaking forward swiftly and skewering the beast that murdered the muscular man. The beast's body quivered. As it died, Wang Baole looked at the platforms



drenched in blood with rage and agony. He leapt into the air onto one of the sharp spikes outside the stronghold walls, and from that spike jumped onto the next, racing towards the few functioning Fire God Cannons the stronghold still had.

He wanted vengeance!

Beasts flew towards him mid-way and tried to surround him, but Wang Baole's rage was beyond control. He struck brutally, seal after seal exploding. Wang Baole forced his way out, a trail of bodies in his wake, and blood staining his lips. He was swift, and finally, he stepped onto a Fire God Cannon platform.

Following the mass breakdown of Fire God Cannons, only thirteen cannons in the stronghold remained functioning. One of the thirteen was under Wang Baole's care. The cannon sat on the platform he approached and was the only surviving cannon out of the ten he had been charged with!

Beasts approached at that very moment. The number of warriors present was great, and they were all fighting with all they had. Alongside the cannon firings, they managed to hold the attacks at bay for the moment. However, the quaking Fire God Cannon was clearly on the verge of collapse and would break down at any time.

Wang Baole arrived just in the nick of time. The warriors parted for him, and he rushed to the Fire God Cannon and pressed his right hand against it. Spirit Qi surged into the cannon instantly and started the repairs. Despite the tremors traveling through the cannon, it was still able to fire shots. The cannon swerved into position and fired straight at the beasts leaping about—the ones who had slaughtered their way through platform after platform.

"Die!" Wang Baole howled. Four consecutive shots shook the heavens and earth, thunderous booms resounding throughout the battlefield. Four beams of light pierced through the skies, blowing four gigantic holes in the swarming sea of beasts. Pained shrieks rose into the air, and countless beasts were decimated!

The remaining Fire God Cannons fired continuously as well. Under their attacks, thunderous explosions shook the lands. The stronghold began to hold its ground again on the battlefields in the sky and on land.

In the skies, as the beasts fell back, Wang Baole's target for vengeance shifted and locked onto the Foundation Establishment realm unicorn. With rage in his heart, he fired six rounds of shots.

Boom, boom, boom—the six cannon shots didn't land a hit in the aerial battlefield, but they still made an impact. The Divine Armament-wielding cultivator seized the opportunity and beheaded the unicorn with one broad sweep of his sword!

The beast let loose cries of agony and rage as it died, and blood fell to the earth like a torrent of rain.

The Fire God Cannon couldn't hold for too long, though, as every few rounds of shots required repairs. With the dwindling number of targets and only thirteen cannons surviving, the beasts in the air roared and swooped down upon seeing a pause in the cannon firings—intent on destroying every single one of the remaining cannons.

In the moment of crisis, Wang Baole flung out all the Golden Bell Shields he had without thinking. Thunderous booms resounded in the air. The golden shield that had been erected on the platform was

significantly reinforced within the blink of an eye. Together with the thousand-odd warriors on the platform, they held off the attacks from the beasts!

Wang Baole panted as he started repairing the Fire God Cannon. Soon, he fired the cannon again, a grim look on his face.

Explosions rang through the air, and shots of cannon beams rang from where Wang Baole stood. It was his nature to be vengeful. He no longer targeted the beasts on land but the Foundation Establishment realm beasts in the sky.

At that time, with the battle escalating to such a state, there was no longer anyone left in command. Even Big Beard had charged into battle. His clothes stained with blood, he was unrecognizable at first glance. Big Beard pushed forward on land, diving deep into the Beast Tide and moved steadily towards the hurricane.

"I'll wipe you all out!" Wang Baole cursed, yearning to send a blast of cannon beam at the bat in the eye of the hurricane. He could tell that the bat was the key to ending the battle, but it was too far away and protected within the hurricane. Wang Baole tried firing a shot but realized that he couldn't reach his target. After firing a few shots into the air, he turned the cannon on the beasts on land.

He might have been raging and had his eyes on the Foundation Establishment realm beasts in the sky, but he knew that could draw too much attention and bring death to his doorstep. That was why he had a shot made into the air, another towards the land; he kept changing where he fired to keep his enemy from realizing it was being targeted.

The other Fire God Cannons did the same. As a result, the Foundation Establishment realm beasts, engaged fiercely in battle, weren't immediately alerted to what Wang Baole was doing.

However, the Fire God Cannon, despite Wang Baole's repairs, grew ever more unstable. A great extent of its inscriptions had been damaged and were in fragments, causing Wang Baole's anxiety to grow. He was deliberating on how to repair the cannon and restore some semblance of stability to it when howls of rage came from the other Fire God Cannon platforms.

Wang Baole shuddered. He looked over and saw the swarms of beasts encircling the other Fire God Cannons. Under the massive attack, some of the cannons broke down, and beasts swarmed others. Injury and death abound, Wang Baole turned his cannon around quickly in a bid to help, but it was all for naught. Where Chen Yutong stood, two cannons collapsed. Amidst the sea of dying Armament Soldiers, with a grim smile on his face and fury heavy in his heart, Chen Yutong fought his way out and raced to where Wang Baole stood.

The entire stronghold was only left with three Fire God Cannons!

Chen Yutong's arrival eased the burden on Wang Baole. The pair had no time for talk, but there was no need for Wang Baole to speak; Chen Yutong, looking ragged and wounded heavily, poured himself straight into repair work. The cannon held strong under their care, firing shot after shot.

It was a mere drop of water in the bucket, but as long as the Fire God Cannon remained standing on the battlefield—even if it was but one cannon—it would serve as a force to instill fear into the beasts' hearts and hold them back!

After firing a few shots, the cannon shook violently. A dark look fell over Wang Baole's face, and bitterness rose in his heart. The bat's ultrasound wave attack had damaged the inscriptions, and their continual fragmentation was inevitable. This cannon was about to break down as well, causing despair to rise in Chen Yutong's eyes. He muttered, "Baole, it's beyond repair... there are two more cannons! Should we go?"

Wang Baole was silent. He turned and looked at the warriors around him.

The warriors within the Golden Bell Shield noticed the expressions on Wang Baole's and Chen Yutong's faces. Their faces grew pale, and they fell into a deathly silence. Their Dharmic Artifacts were damaged, and even those given by Wang Baole were severely fractured and cracked. Wang Baole had gone to the extent of depleting his entire stock of self-exploding beads, and they were at the brink of exhausting their ammunition and weaponry.

All of them knew that they could no longer defend the platform. As soon as the Golden Bell Shield shattered, as soon as the Fire God Cannon broke down, they would be faced with the tragic fate that had met the other Fire God Cannon platforms.

Outside the Golden Bell Shield, swarms of beasts circled. Mad with violence and blood lust, they slammed repeatedly into the Golden Bell Shield. Their numbers were countless, and amongst them were numerous True Breath realm beasts. The force of their attacks was powerful and overwhelming, causing the Golden Bell Shield to start warping under the force of the attacks. At any moment, it was going to shatter.

"Baole, Dharmic Armament Master Chen, go, quickly! We'll hold the beasts back and fight for more time for you!"

"We may not have the aptitude to become cultivators, but we are still warriors. The day we joined the army, we swore to protect the Federation with our lives!"

"Baole, remember to visit my parents on my behalf—I've given you my address!"

"Baole, just go!"

After a brief silence, the warriors spoke almost at the same time, in near unison, raising their voices to Wang Baole. There was a steely resolve in their eyes, one that would only be broken by death. As their words rang out, a few warriors stepped forward, and gathered themselves around Wang Baole and Chen Yutong, ready to escort them away. More stood ready, prepared to use their own flesh and blood bodies as a shield against the beasts.

The sight utterly stunned Chen Yutong. Wang Baole's eyes turned red and teary. The blood in his body seemed to have frozen, and his heart contracted. He stared at everyone around him, then at the approaching Beast Tide. He gazed skyward, at the beasts in the air, and the bloodbath that was the battlefield.

He thought back to when he had first arrived at the stronghold, and the special feeling he had then from being protected by Ancient Martial realm warriors when he was himself a cultivator...

Despite the brief time they had together, despite the suddenness of the Beast Tide and the unimaginable destruction it wrought, the memories they had together—the memories of arm wrestling

with everyone, of sharing snacks with one another, of laughing and talking—surfaced before his eyes, one after another...

The countless scenes of death that had taken place within the span of not even one day on the battlefield were carved deep into his soul, a pain that stabbed deep at his heart...

And the scene of the tragic death of the man who had wanted to introduce his sister to Wang Baole...

Layer upon layer, those moments piled onto one another, transforming into what lay before him—the earnest eyes of those men, bright with anxiety as they prepared to sacrifice themselves for his and Chen Yutong’s escape.

“This might seem foolish, but I don’t wish to leave yet... I believe I can fix this cannon!” Wang Baole took in a deep breath. As he turned his head towards the Fire God Cannon, his eyes shone brightly. There was a fierce light in his eyes, and it burned like a determination that had never before been seen!

### **Chapter 180: Counterattack!**

Wang Baole spoke softly, then raised his right hand and pressed it on the Fire God Cannon. Spirit Qi surged out of his body and flowed into the Fire God Cannon. He inspected inscriptions on each and every one of the Numinous Treasures within and tried his best to stabilize the cannon.

Standing beside Wang Baole, Chen Yutong looked at him and was moved. He remained quiet for a few moments, then laughed. There was resolve in his eyes as he stepped forward and, together with Wang Baole, gave his all to repair the inscriptions.

Wang Baole saw what Chen Yutong was doing. He looked over, and when their eyes met, they laughed. Amidst the swarming beasts, against a sky shaking with the thunderous roars of beasts, that moment was immortalized in the hearts of the warriors around them.

Everyone could see reason, and everyone was afraid of death, but sometimes the value of action triumphed that of thought!

Less deliberation and more action didn’t mean one was rash; it spoke of a genuine pure-heartedness!

“Senior Brother Chen, let me handle the inscriptions. I’ll hand over the repairs and replacement of materials to you!” Wang Baole’s eyes shone brightly. He spoke calmly as they continued their repairs.

Chen Yutong nodded and didn’t question further. He immediately withdrew his Spirit Qi from the inscriptions and poured his energies into inspecting damaged materials, dismantling them from the cannon and replacing them swiftly.

As for Wang Baole, he stilled his breath and focused his mind. His brain ran the simulations from the formula at top speed. His grasp of the internal machinery and workings of the Fire God Cannon had been refined to perfection during the period when he conducted repairs on the cannons. He knew that the Fire God Cannon was composed of hundreds of Numinous Treasures and that every Numinous Treasure acted like a component of the composite machine, making the Fire God Cannon a weapon of immense intricacy.

Each Numinous Treasure contained one to a few hundreds of thousands of inscriptions. The combined number of inscriptions found in the Fire God Cannon was incredible.

The bat's ultrasound wave attack sent an aural quake through the Numinous Treasures within the Fire God Cannon, inflicting fractures on their inscriptions. As the Fire God Cannon continued operating, the inscriptions, no longer able to withstand the activity, would shatter in great numbers and lead to a breakdown in the cannon.

Their previous approach to repairing the cannon was akin to sketching—Spirit Qi was used to ink over the fragmented inscriptions so that the inscriptions could continue to support the Fire God Cannon. But as more and more inscriptions suffered fragmentation, the effect of this traditional approach weakened. The fractures were too numerous and were found on a quarter of all inscriptions.

That was why Chen Yutong had concluded bitterly earlier that the cannon was beyond repair.

Chen Yutong was right. If they had applied the traditional method, the cannon would indeed be irreparable. The only way left for Wang Baole to repair the Fire God Cannon... was to refashion the inscriptions!

Not to restore, but to apply different inscriptions and refashion the fragmented inscriptions within the Fire God Cannon—to a certain extent, it could be seen as a reform!

To reform the Fire God Cannon was something that was beyond even the ability of a Dharmic Armament Soldier; it would be an unimaginable feat for a Dharmic Armament Disciple.

Even if they had complete knowledge of the inner workings of the Fire God Cannon, they weren't the original creator and didn't have the core recipes for crafting the cannon. They might be able to attempt an imitation, but modifying the inscriptions inside would prove too great a challenge. Had it been another time and place, the military would have forbidden them from trying, as any failure might result in instability and the collapse of the Fire God Cannon.

However, there was no one around to stop them. What's more, the inscriptions within the Fire God Cannon were largely shattered. Even if Wang Baole failed in his modification, it wouldn't trigger an explosion. The worst that could happen was a complete breakdown.

Regardless, he was left with no other choice!

Wang Baole steadied his breathing, and determination shone in his eyes. Based on his grasp of inscriptions and inscription system he had, in order to modify the damaged inscriptions and refashion them, he would need to choose amongst the numerous inscriptions available.

For example, Wang Baole had to replace a damaged segment containing extremely complex inscriptions with a series of simple inscriptions to allow the part to carry on running.

There were also shattered inscriptions that were no longer functioning and couldn't be used; Wang Baole had to add in a few inscriptions so that the part could be activated again to some extent. Such adjustments couldn't be done in isolation, because the Fire God Cannon was an elaborate and intricate piece of machinery—a tweak to a single part could affect the whole!

The deductions he would have to run were too immense and completely unprecedented!

Chen Yutong seemed to realize what was going on the moment Wang Baole started modifying the Fire God Cannon. His pupils contracted, and he gave Wang Baole a deep, long stare, deciding to place his faith in Wang Baole. He left Wang Baole undisturbed, took out various materials, and started replacing and repairing them furiously.

The pair combined their efforts as the surrounding Armament Soldiers stood guard amidst anxiety and steely-eyed determination. Thunderous roars resounded throughout the battlefield, and beasts threw themselves upon the Golden Bell Shield ceaselessly; the Golden Bell Shield was on the verge of collapse... Wang Baole and Chen Yutong threw all that they had into the cannon.

They worked free from distraction and immersed fully in the repairs on the cannon. It was at that moment, wrought with anxiety, that the Golden Bell Shield shattered with a blast. It created an explosive force that swept outward, decimating great hordes of beasts in a blink of an eye. As the warriors howled in rage and held off the beasts that came charging...

The Fire God Cannon thundered. Wang Baole shouted and slapped the cannon, and a gigantic blast of light shot out from within, directly at the swarm of beasts approaching from ahead.

The heavens shook, and the earth quaked. The blast seemed to punch a hole in the sky, and waves of inscriptions rippled outwards. Where the light passed, beasts were torn apart by an invisible giant hand—wiped out.

That wasn't the end. Chen Yutong continued his replacement of materials, and Wang Baole refashioned more inscriptions before firing the Fire God Cannon again!

Boom, boom, boom!

Three consecutive shots shook the heavens and earth, and the hordes of surrounding beasts kept falling back. Despite having suffered some casualties from the brief onslaught of beasts, with their retreat, the surrounding Armament Soldiers finally could catch their breath. The looks directed at Wang Baole and Chen Yutong were filled with gratitude and utmost respect!

One had to know that, at that time, in the stronghold, theirs was the only working Fire God Cannon!

The other Fire God Cannons had either been torn apart by beasts or had broken down...

As a result, their sole Fire God Cannon became a presence that drew everyone's attention on the battlefield. Be it the warriors and cultivators on land, or the beasts, their eyes were all drawn to the sole working Fire God Cannon.

That was the case for the aerial battle as well, which had grown in intensity, and where the scales of life and death could tip anytime for either side.

Even the bat in the eye of the hurricane narrowed its eyes and directed an icy glare at the Fire God Cannon where Wang Baole and the rest stood.

"Continue!" Wang Baole roared as he ignored the stares and continued modifying the inscriptions. His energies were spent. Such modifications required substantial deductions; it was beyond what he could cope with, but Wang Baole persevered. He would modify a few inscriptions, then activate the cannon and fire another beam of light.

Every cannon shot shook and fractured the inscriptions. As a result, despite Wang Baole's unceasing repairs, the Fire God Cannon struggled to keep firing.

The cannon blasts aided the fights in the sky and on land, but its efforts were limited. The psychological impact of its presence, and its symbolism, however, were boundless!

As long as even one Fire God Cannon remained standing, its thundering blasts would resound throughout the battlefield. The will to fight would never die!

However, they soon reached the end of their ropes. Despite Wang Baole's and Chen Yutong's combined talents and the modification attempts—unless the cannon ceased its firing—with every third of it repaired, a cannon shot would destroy it by nearly half!

Gradually, despite the repeated modification of the inscriptions in the cannon, the inscriptions fragmented further. At that moment, two-thirds of the inscriptions had shattered. The cannon would stop working at any moment!

“What do we do!” Wang Baole was frantic beyond measure, his hair disheveled; he was driven to madness, and was powerless. Misfortune had to rear its ugly head then and add fuel to fire!

In the skies, the battle between the two Foundation Establishment realm camps finally drew to an end!

Two Foundation Establishment realm beasts let out cries of agony, followed by an explosive boom. Their bodies were torn apart in an instant, and another three were wounded grievously; jets of blood spurted from their bodies. They seemed to be injured badly!

The price of those injuries and death... was the death of two of the Foundation Establishment realm cultivators, and the serious injury of the remaining two!

At that moment, following the deaths of two Foundation Establishment realm beasts, the surviving cultivators—the man who possessed the Divine Armament and the female cultivator—spat blood out. Their bodies shook, and they struggled to grab hold of their Dharmic Artifacts. They retreated rapidly, heading straight for the stronghold.

Left behind them were the beasts. Out of the original seven, three had been killed consecutively; the surviving four, while injured greatly, remained ferocious and savage. They howled and chased after the two cultivators, relentless in their pursuit!

Upon seeing that, Wang Baole maneuvered the Fire God Cannon in a bid to help the cultivators. It was then—as the four beasts pursued the two Foundation Establishment realm cultivators, speeding through the battlefields—that a rainbow burst out from the earth!

Big-bearded commander-in-charge's silhouette leaped into the air with inconceivable speed. He stood atop a flying disc-shaped Numinous Treasure and held a long sword the color of blood; as he charged in mid-air, he let loose a startling battle cry and, and with a single blade sliced through the heavens!

From afar, the blood-colored blade seemed to transform into a destructive blade of heaven-shattering proportions. The four beasts howled furiously, shock frozen on their faces as the crimson blade descended and swept past—cleaving the two Foundation Establishment realm beasts, that had previously been injured severely and couldn't escape in time, in half!

As bright red blood continued spurting out, the remaining two Foundation Establishment realm beasts retreated in alarm. Big-bearded commander-in-charge lifted his face to the heavens and laughed, and madness colored his eyes. He bellowed, "Brothers, for the Federation, counterattack!"

Roaring, he raced towards the two retreating Foundation Establishment realm beasts. Not too far away, the two heavily wounded Foundation Establishment realm cultivators gritted their teeth before turning and charging as well!

Back on land, following the deaths of four Foundation Establishment realm beasts, the Beast Tide stilled momentarily, and signs of its dispersal seemed to surface. Every single one of the Armament Soldiers, eyes red and battle-crazed, retaliated in a mad counterattack!

"There's hope!" Wang Baole went mad with glee. He was astounded by big-bearded commander-in-charge's ambush and assault, and a rush of hot blood surged through his body.