

## Worth 191

### Chapter 191: Beyond Reproach!

As soon as the cannon appeared—with its strange appearance, pitch black body, and exuding a foreboding aura—the crowd reeled back, their eyes wide. It had been a very long time since a Numinous Treasure of one's own invention had appeared in an Armament Soldier assessment!

The challenges of inventing a Numinous Treasure were immense. There was nothing one could refer from or base the invention on. Unless one was extremely confident in himself, few dared to present a Numinous Treasure of their own design for assessment.

The past Numinous Treasures presented for all Armament Soldier assessment, be it a large-scale or small-scale assessment, were all treasures listed in the Numinous Treasure Roll. Their level of difficulty was clearly listed in the roll. Those who came to observe the assessment came for the questions posed by the Pavilion Head and his deputies. The questions were the real highlights of the event and were of immeasurable worth.

If they were fortunate enough, they might witness others crafting their treasures personally, which would be an even greater boon to them. However, the Numinous Treasure Wang Baole had presented turned out to be his own invention. The value of such a treasure, and what it represented, was of a completely different level.

"Your own invention? What the... if I recall correctly, there hasn't been new inventions put up for assessment for the past ten years!"

"The Great Mighty Baole... Cannon? That's a weird name. But from the looks of it, this Numinous Treasure is terrifying!"

As the crowd was stirred into a heated debate and excited anticipation, Lin Tianhao and the other disciples also received a shock. They eyed Wang Baole's Numinous Treasure—especially Lin Tianhao; it was as if he was suddenly downed with a bucket of ice water, and a low buzzing rose in his head.

*I can't believe it's not the Dragon's Tooth!* Lin Tianhao gnashed his teeth hatefully. His breathing grew uneven as he glared at Wang Baole's cannon, alarm rising within him.

Wang Baole could feel everyone's gaze on him and felt a great satisfaction over the effect the Baole Cannon had generated. He pushed aside the feelings of satisfaction, cupped his fists towards the Pavilion Head, and pushed the Baole Cannon before him.

The Pavilion Head and the four Deputy Pavilion Heads behind him all had a look of concentration on their faces. When they turned towards Wang Baole, it was with an assessing look. The Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion especially, let his Spirit Qi spread out when he stepped forward and inspected the Baole Cannon. His composure remained calm; however, waves of emotions stirred within him.

With his level of attainment in Dharmic Armaments, he needed only a brief look to recognize how extraordinary and impressive the Numinous Treasure was. If it had been some other occasion, he

wouldn't have entertained further thought. If one considered it from a different angle, the Numinous Treasure could be seen as having transcended the third grade and rivaled a fourth-grade treasure. It vastly surpassed all Numinous Treasures that had appeared in the assessment.

Even the Planetary Bottle couldn't compare. Be it the complexity of the inscription or the inherent creativity involved in its creation; they were no longer competing on the same level. Furthermore, the Baole Cannon was clearly... a composite Numinous Treasure!

Its sheer value would have increased multiple folds because of that. However, things weren't as simple as they appeared, especially considering that Wang Baole was the one who crafted the Numinous Treasure.

*The value of being the top Armament Soldier every year isn't simply earning the right of the first offer of office. It also forms part of the underlying criteria in future evaluations on whether one might advance to the position of Deputy Pavilion Head... This Wang Baole has formed a close relationship with Chen Yutong, and they obviously belong to the lineage under Sun Yifeng. Sun Yifeng is competing for the position of Grand Elder with Elder Li... The Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion narrowed his eyes. He and Sun Yifeng belonged in different lineages; in fact, he could be considered as part of the same lineage as Elder Li.*

Elder Li's successful advancement to the position of Grand Elder was the most advantageous outcome for him. After all, if Sun Yifeng's power grew too strong—especially with his disciple Chen Yutong likely due for a promotion to Deputy Pavilion Head—the threat to himself wouldn't be insignificant.

That was why he could allow Wang Baole to become an Armament Soldier, but he would never allow a top Armament Soldier to appear in Sun Yifeng's faction!

*Especially this Wang Baole. His Armament Soldier assessment results are already extraordinary and his record exemplary. If he is placed first as top Armament Soldier... in the future, as long as his cultivation reaches a certain level and he attains a certain level of proficiency in Dharmic Armament—considering his list of accolades and achievements—he would no doubt be promoted to Deputy Pavilion Head! The consequences of the matter flashed across the middle-aged, purple-robed Pavilion Head's mind. A glint flashed in his eyes. He was going to keep Wang Baole in check.*

The matter lay within his area of jurisdiction. Even if an outsider saw something amiss, he wouldn't be able to interfere. After all, the position of Grand Elder was still vacant.

Furthermore, as a Pavilion Head, he held significant power. Even if someone did mention anything about it in the future, what was done was done. There was nothing more to be done about it.

Once he reached his decision, the Pavilion Head pulled back his Spirit Qi that had been examining the cannon. He didn't say anything and handed the cannon to the four Deputy Pavilion Heads.

One after another, the four Deputy Pavilion Heads conducted their inspections. Amazement and shock took hold of every one of them. They held a fervent discussion with the Pavilion Head, whose eyes very quickly fell on Wang Baole.

“Since this treasure is of your own invention, there's no need for further questions. Wang Baole, recraft it on the spot, now.”

Wang Baole had been observing the Pavilion Head and the Deputy Pavilion Heads all the while but couldn't discern anything from his observations. After hearing the other's request, he remained uncertain about their views.

After all, such a request fell within the boundaries of reason. Wang Baole nodded and began to regulate his breathing. He focused, took out his Spirit Stones, and started refining on the spot. He had prepared himself for something like that to happen. He crafted swiftly, time flew by, and two hours passed. Under the attentive eyes of the crowd, amidst their shouts of surprise and startlement, Wang Baole crafted one Numinous Treasure after another.

Finally, with his own hands, he fitted the Numinous Treasures together to form the second Baole Cannon!

With a loud thud, Wang Baole placed the newly crafted Baole Cannon on the ground. He raised his head and looked at the Pavilion Head and Deputy Pavilion Heads. Gasps of shock resounded all around him. The Pavilion Head gave Wang Baole a deep, long look, then spoke in a low voice.

"You've passed the Armament Soldier assessment. As for your ranking, it'll be determined at the end."

Upon hearing his words, Wang Baole let loose a sigh a relief and stepped back excitedly. He was confident of his securing first place in the assessment.

Lin Tianhao, on the other hand, looked terrible at the moment. His hands were drawn tightly into fists, and he drowned in jealousy and bitterness as he stood there with a dazed look on his face.

Very quickly, one after another, the remaining few examinees presented their Numinous Treasures, which were then inspected by the Pavilion Head and Deputy Pavilion Heads. They finally reached the end of the round of Armament Soldier assessment—the finale, and the highlight of the entire assessment. Everyone's eyes fell on the Pavilion Head as they awaited the announcement.

Wang Baole, Lin Tianhao, and the other examinees looked over nervously as well. Despite being fully confident of his chances, Wang Baole still feared the possibility of his prize slipping through his fingers.

The Pavilion Head spoke in hushed tones with the four Deputy Pavilion Heads while the crowd watched on intently. The crowd couldn't hear their voices, but they could see the elderly Deputy Pavilion Head, upon hearing something being said, show anger. He seemed aggrieved. The other three Deputy Pavilion Heads started murmuring as the Pavilion Head stared at them. A moment later, they nodded, seeming to reach a consensus.

The elderly Deputy Pavilion Head swung his sleeve aside and said frostily. "I reserve my comments on the ranking!" After he was done speaking, he gave Wang Baole a long steady look, as if in apology, then turned around and left.

The scene shocked the crowd, and Wang Baole's heart leapt into his throat. He felt that something wasn't right, especially the look the elder had given him before he left—it seemed to carry a sense of helplessness and apology.

It made his hair stand.

*What's going on?* Wang Baole thought, alarmed. It was then that the Pavilion Head announced, in a deep booming voice that resounded throughout the square, the assessment ranking.

"The Dharmic Armament Pavilion has judged that first place in this assessment ranking goes to Lin Tianhao!"

"The assessment has ended!" the Pavilion Head said coolly. He didn't even spare Wang Baole a look. After he was done speaking, he turned to leave. There was a moment of silence before the crowd burst into chatter.

"It actually went to Lin Tianhao?"

"This isn't right. Wang Baole's Numinous Treasure was his own invention. It should be better!"

As the crowd debated furiously, Lin Tianhao suddenly trembled. A flash of surprise and joy appeared in his eyes. He had given up all hope, but he actually placed first. All of a sudden, it was as if a shiver of electricity was sent coursing through his entire body. The first thought that flashed to his mind was that his father had made a move.

*That must be it!* Mad with happiness, Lin Tianhao's spirits rose. He stepped forward with his fists cupped and shouted.

"Thank you, Pavilion Head!"

After uttering his thanks, Lin Tianhao couldn't help but sneak a look at Wang Baole. He saw Wang Baole's gloomy face and was beyond pleased. He almost laughed out loud.

Wang Baole's face had darkened instantly. He disregarded the self-congratulatory Lin Tianhao and instead stared unblinkingly at the Pavilion Head. A cold glint flashed across his eyes. If it had been someone else, they might have grudgingly accepted the Pavilion Head's final judgment or even attempt to find a resolution after everything had ended; but while Wang Baole had on a cheerful, smiling face on a regular day, in reality, he didn't possess a good temper.

Thinking of the contributions he had made, and the network of friends he had built, didn't help. He glared and, with an air of "so what you're the Pavilion Head? I couldn't care less", stepped forward and spoke in a booming voice.

"Pavilion Head's assessment is unfair!" After saying that, he turned towards the crowd and cupped his fists in a salute.

"My fellow Dharmic Armament comrades, we all love Dharmic artifacts and have our fair share of innovating and designing our own artifacts. We put in endless time and effort. We spend money that could have been used to buy pills and enhance our cultivation on buying materials and ingredients. We use the time that other disciples from other faculties are using to train and cultivate on studying and engineering new Numinous Treasures. We toil, we suffer, we endure and give so much of ourselves. But the Numinous Treasure that we finally create is instead callously brushed aside by the Pavilion Head. I, Wang Baole, will not rest if I don't get a proper explanation today! I'd rather die!"

Wang Baole's words rang out and instantly resonated with the crowd. The earlier small, hushed discussions grew louder.

The Pavilion Head's face darkened. He might have disregarded Wang Baole if the latter only said he didn't accept the results of the assessment, but Wang Baole was clearly well-versed in such matters. He protested the injustice of it all while concurrently inciting public outrage. There was no way the Pavilion Head could retreat from the situation without doing something about it.

The fact that he had risen to the rank of Pavilion Head, of course, meant that he was no foolish person. He had made his decision earlier, and would naturally have grounds for his choice. He tilted his head and spoke calmly.

"There are no past references for us to gauge or examine the inscriptions and structure of this self-invented Numinous Treasure. Furthermore, it has not stood the test of time. It might be an exceptional treasure, or it might contain serious flaws. It is difficult to make an assessment!

"As the Pavilion Head, my actions must be beyond reproach. I can allow you to pass the Armament Soldier assessment, but in terms of the ranking, I still judge Lin Tianhao's Planetary Bottle as the stable treasure and the more secure choice. This is why he has been placed first!

"Wang Baole, as for the Numinous Treasure you have refined, I will send it for trials later. If the Dharmic Armament Pavilion finds it without flaws, you may submit a request to me for a re-assessment."

The Pavilion Head's words sounded reasonable to some. The crowd fell into a hushed discussion once again, and gradually divided into two factions.

Wang Baole, upon hearing what the Pavilion Head said, flipped out. His words stank of bureaucracy-speak. The trials he was speaking of could take days or months or possibly years; it was impossible to determine how long it would take.

"Your actions are beyond reproach? Fine, I'll find someone to test it now, to give you an answer that's beyond reproach! One that is clear for all to see!" Wang Baole laughed furiously. An icy glint flashed across his eyes. As he shouted, he whirled around and ran, under the crowd's gaze, straight for the...

Elder Request Drum!

## **Chapter 192: Sound the Drum, Call for the Elder**

Elder Request Drum!

Formality decreed that only Armament Soldiers could sound the drum. Wang Baole was already an Armament Soldier, so he had the right!

In reality, the reason that only Armament Soldiers could sound the drum was that the drum stick had to be crafted on the spot, and the drum stick was a third-grade Numinous Treasure.

Wang Baole possessed such capabilities as well!

The crowd watched as Wang Baole raced towards the Elder Request Drum. The look on their faces shifted; their eyes widened, and astonishment rose within them.

"The Elder Request Drum! This Wang Baole is so sure of his chances?"

“Every Armament Soldier only has one chance in his entire life to sound it. He’s going for broke!”

“It’s been a few years since someone’s sounded the Elder Request Drum!”

The other examinees stood stunned as the crowd fell into a heated discussion. Lin Tianhao gasped in shock. His anxiety began to grow. He knew, deep in his heart, that Wang Baole’s Numinous Treasure was better than his.

He was surprised to find the Pavilion Head unflustered.

The Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion was indeed composed. He remained unruffled as Wang Baole marched towards the Elder Request Drum and scorned him inwardly.

*Childish. Even if this Wang Baole manages to sound the drum, he’ll only get an Elder. The four elders in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion may seemingly be cordial to one another, but in reality, they are all vying for the position of Grand Elder. Someone will naturally use this to their advantage!*

*Unless he manages to invite the Grand Elder, but alas, there is no Grand Elder in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion Head at the moment!* Hands behind his back, the Pavilion Head watched coolly as Wang Baole approached the Elder Request Drum.

Rage burned inside Wang Baole. He was sure of the Pavilion Head’s ill intentions. He knew that they were past the point of civility. He would either walk away without being awarded first place or... call forward someone great who had the final say, who would reverse the final assessment and supersede the Pavilion Head!

The crowd watched as Wang Baole stood before the Elder Request Drum, took a deep breath in and, gritting his teeth, raised his right hand and pressed it onto the drum. ( Boxno vel. co m )

A loud boom sounded, and the Elder Request Drum started to exude an oppressive aura as a spell ripped outwards. Materials started flying out from within the drum and floated before Wang Baole.

There were Spirit Stones, a jade slip documenting the inscriptions and the crafting method, as well as a large quantity of materials.

Wang Baole’s eyes flashed. He grabbed hold of the jade slip and infused it with Spirit Qi, causing the refinement method to appear in his mind instantly. He swept his hand across and caught the Spirit Stones, and started to carve the inscriptions.

The drum stick had a hundred thousand inscriptions. It was a Numinous Treasure, and crafting it wouldn’t be a minor feat. However, it was nothing to Wang Baole. He sent both hands to work, and as he ran the formulaic deductions in his head, he rapidly carved inscription after inscription onto the Spirit Stones.

Waves of spells and Spirit Qi surrounded Wang Baole, and interwoven within seemed to be patches of light and darkness. Translucent inscriptions flashed into being before they were eventually fused within the Spirit Stones.

Everyone was transfixed by the scene before them. The debating voices grew softer, and many people started posting on the Spirit Intranet.

“Wang Baole is crafting the Elder Request Drum drum stick!”

“Quickly, to Middle Peak! Something big’s happening. Wang Baole and the Pavilion Head are at loggerheads. He’s going to sound the Elder Request Drum!”

The news spread like wildfire. Everyone who heard was reeling with disbelief. Chen Yutong, who had been handling some administrative matters at the College Administrative Department, was one of the first to know. He was instantly alarmed and raced towards Middle Peak.

There were many like him who rushed towards Middle Peak from all four corners of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion. They soon reached the Middle Peak and saw Wang Baole standing before the Elder Request Drum. He had completed the inscriptions, and his right hand rose into the air, a flame appearing within his palm.

Wang Baole was going to use Heated Burst mystic technique to fuse the materials and craft the drum stick directly!

There wasn’t one disciple who remained unaffected as they witness the scene before them. Gasps of surprise and sighs of envy rose in the air.

“Heated Burst! That’s the mystic technique the college rewarded Wang Baole with a while ago!”

“Not only is this mystic technique lethal, but it also suits Dharmic Armament cultivators very well. Dharmic Armament cultivators can refine artifacts without a smelting furnace!”

“Goodness, that’s just too cool!”

The entire crafting process went smoothly and without a hitch. It was perfect; there were no mistakes or blunders made. It made the crafting of the drum stick seem like an art performance!

The crowd watched, transfixed. Fierce jealousy flashed across Lin Tianhao’s eyes, and his breathing became uneven. As for the Pavilion Head, his pupils contracted ever so slightly, but his composure remained calm.

As the crowd engaged in hushed discussions, more people came rushing from afar. Time passed steadily. It was an hour later before Wang Baole abruptly waved his right hand. The flames within his palm spread out and vanished in an instant, and a green-colored drum stick appeared before everyone’s eyes.

Crimson tendrils were still wrapped around the drum stick, but they disappeared swiftly. It had clearly been freshly crafted and was still scorching to the touch. Wang Baole disregarded the heat; the Heated Burst mystic technique had increased his tolerance towards high temperatures. He lifted his right hand and grabbed hold of the drum stick, turned around, and gave the Pavilion Head a frosty glare. Wang Baole shifted his eyes, tightened his grip on the drum stick, and hit the Elder Request Drum!

Boom!

The crowd who had been watching the entire process were geared up for that moment. Nevertheless, when the war drum thundered, they were still shaken to their core. The cacophony of noises—the heated debates and discussions—disappeared. A loud buzzing echoed in everyone’s heads.

The sound was so loud, it resonated across Middle Peak, rippling across the entire Dharmic Armament Pavilion and resounding across the heavens!

It seemed to contain within itself Wang Baole's aggrivement and his rage. It was as if he threw his entire fury behind the hit. The entire Dharmic Armament Pavilion was stirred. Those who had no idea what had happened received the shock of their lives.

"What's going on!"

"What's that sound!"

All of a sudden, figures were dashing out and about. After some asking around, they found out that Wang Baole was sounding the Elder Request Drum. Before they could form further thought on the matter, the drum was sounded a second time!

Boom!

The resulting thundering was greater than the first. As it spread out to all corners, Wang Baole's body started shaking, and his breathing had quickened. He finally realized why the Elder Request Drum had never been sounded more than five times at one time in the past, why the most anyone could achieve was three hits.

The Elder Request Drum had a harsh set of requirements on the construction of the Numinous Treasure-grade drum stick. That, however, was not the key challenge. In principle, as long as one could craft the drum stick, he could sound the drum as many times as he wanted. In reality, how many times he could hit the drum depended on his body's resilience!

After the first hit, Wang Baole felt a strong backlash. It flowed from the drum sticks into his body, coursed within his body, and sent quakes throughout. He felt as if his organs had been smashed together. His joints chattered as his body shook. He seemed to feel the toxins in his body shattering as he shook.

The backlash from the second hit intensified. When it lashed back at him, the toxins that had broken down surged out from his pores.

Such a deeply cleansing tremor was a boon to a cultivator. However, the pain that one had to endure was equally great. The counterforce to the hit intensified with each hitting of the drum. Most people wouldn't have been able to withstand it.

At that moment, Wang Baole had just sounded the drum the third time. His body shook fiercely. Dark spots appeared in his vision. His strength seemed to leave him; be it spiritually or physically, he seemed to have reached a peak where his entire body was taken over by the vibrating force.

*With three hits, one can call upon an Elder, but that's not enough. Even if I manage five hits, to call upon the Grand Elder, it would still not suffice. That's because the position of the Grand Elder in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion is currently vacant. I can only continue sounding the drum, and call upon someone higher up!* Wang Baole panted heavily. He let loose a low howl and, with all his might, hit the drum a fourth time!

Boom!



The war drum trembled, and the drum sticks almost slipped from his fingers. Wang Baole's body was contorted into an odd twist as he shook. His face was ashen. The vibrations within his body intensified multiple folds. He felt as if his bones, his meridians, his flesh, and his blood had undergone a baptism by storm. He could hardly stand, his body on the verge of collapse.

The crowd held their breaths. Everyone was overwhelmed and gasping in shock.

"That's the fourth hit. Another hit and that'll be the highest number of hits anyone has ever managed to reach... the fifth hit!"

Lin Tianhao sucked in a nervous breath of cold air. The expressions on the faces of the Pavilion Head and his deputies displayed different degrees of shock. The Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, especially, was frowning. His eyes revealed a hint of amazement.

However, Wang Baole had reached his limits. His quivering arms could barely carry the weight of the drum sticks.

*Is this my limit? How did the person who hit the drums five times do it... I won't lose to him.* Wang Baole gritted his teeth. A fierce glint flashed in his eyes. The devouring seed in his body suddenly exploded into life, and with its suction force, it controlled Wang Baole's body and achieved the impossible. His hand held the drum stick in a stiff, deathly grip, and swung towards the war drum, hitting it again!

It was as if he was a puppet and the devouring seed's suction force invisible strings tugging his entire body. Boom—the fifth hit landed. The invisible strings that were the suction force tugged fiercely again. He felt his vision blurring. He grew dizzy and was on the verge of blacking out. The suction force tugged, struggling, and landed the sixth hit on the drum!

As the cry of the war drum resounded in the heavens, the crowd was sent into a complete shock. Lin Tianhao started hearing white noise in his head. His face was drained of blood, and he stumbled back.

The Pavilion Head's face had never looked so somber.

### **Chapter 193: It Shattered...**

The sixth hit sounded. The vibrating energy that had accumulated within Wang Baole's body had reached an unimaginable peak. He spat out a large mouthful of blood.

The blood was black and seemed to contain the toxins that had been in his body. Wang Baole's body felt like jelly after he spat out blood. The dark spots grew in his vision.

*Am I hitting the drum to the point of blacking out...* Wang Baole's head buzzed; consciousness seemed to be slipping from his grasp. As that thought flashed across his mind, and his legs lost all strength; he fell, kneeling, with a soft thud. It seemed as if he was about to pass out. It was then that he thought he heard the crackling sound of something shattering inside him.

A strong Spirit Qi burst out and surged through his body the instant he heard the sound. As the external vibrations persisted, the Spirit Qi fused with Wang Baole's meridians. His cultivation level shot up drastically in an instant!

The leveling of his cultivation was like a shot of confidence. He shook himself and regained clarity of mind. That was when he realized that the crystal inside his body had absorbed the vibrating energies. Fractures appeared on the crystal, and Spirit Qi escaped from within without stop. Within the span of a few breaths, his cultivation level leaped from the lowest, third level of the True Breath realm in a giant bound.

*Such a move exists!* Wang Baole's breath quickened as he was caught by surprise. The surrounding crowd was in an uproar.

"This Wang Baole is too relentless. He hit the drum until he threw up blood!"

"Six hits—that has never happened before. But why do I feel that Wang Baole's body seemed very unnatural during the last two hits..."

"His eyes were shut, and he almost fell to his knees. What do I feel as if he passed out?" ( Boxno vel. co m )

The heated discussions persisted. With the discovery of Wang Baole's considerable advancement in cultivation level, the debate grew fiercer and more heated, like an uprising storm.

"My god!"

"His cultivation improved? The energy he is giving out isn't right!"

"I can feel it—compared to just before, this Wang Baole's cultivation level is higher now!"

Sounds of discussion, argument, and shock rose and sank. The breathing of Lin Tianhao, the Pavilion Head, and his deputies quickened. As for Wang Baole, the sparkle in his eyes grew brighter. He stood and could feel the leap in his cultivation. His eyes shone fiercely.

*In my whole life, I, Wang Baole, have never hated anything more than cheating. I am counting on my skills to sound the drum...* Wang Baole was inwardly pleased and mused to himself. Five hits could bring forth the Grand Elder; who knew who six hits could call forward. He had to play it safe. Wang Baole sucked in a deep breath. The devouring seed inside him burst into action, controlling his body and raising the drum stick yet again, hitting it against the Elder Request Drum!

The seventh time!

Boom! Nothing seemed to happen after that.

*Seems like that's not enough...* Wang Baole's body, both inside and out, was trembling at that moment. The vibrations were, however, absorbed by the crystal. He remained uncertain and worried, so he hit the drum again!

The eighth time!

*This should be enough, right? If I continue, I think my cultivation might breakthrough...* Wang Baole felt the increasing number of fractures in his crystal. He thought for a bit, and his eyes shone with anticipation. Without further thought on whom he might be calling forward, he hit the drum again.

The ninth time!

The tenth time!

The sounds of the drum being hit resounded. Everyone in the crowd watched, dazed. There were no longer any sounds of discussion. At the moment, the entire square watched on in shock; be it Lin Tianhao, the few Deputy Pavilion Heads, or the Pavilion Head—all were flabbergasted. White noise buzzed in their heads.

The number of times Wang Baole had sounded the drum was unprecedented. The last few hits, especially, were done in one go. His body did look weird and had a strangeness to it. Nevertheless, the sounds of the drum being hit resounded clearly through the air.

What's more... it didn't end there!

The eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth times...

As everyone remained in shock, Wang Baole hit the drum for the seventeenth time. He could still persist, but the drum stick couldn't take it anymore. It shattered.

The scene sent many in the dazed crowd murmuring.

"It shattered? Even the drum stick shattered?"

"This Wang Baole, could he be some monster in disguise..."

As the crowd remained in a daze, something mind-blowing happened again. As the drum stick shattered, Wang Baole could feel the extensive fracturing on the outer layer of the crystal inside him. A huge wave of Spirit Qi burst forth and filled his entire body. His cultivation broke through in an instant as the Spirit Qi made its way through his body, shooting straight from the third level of the True Breath realm... into the fourth level!

"What the—his cultivation broke through!"

"How is that possible!"

"I could care less about Wang Baole's breakthrough. What I really want to know is who the—boom boom boom—seventeen deafening hits will call forward! An alien?"

The crowd gradually recovered from their shock. In an instant, the prior silence was broken. A huge uproar exploded, and voices rose like waves into the air. Lin Tianhao's face had turned an extreme shade of white. His vision went black, and it took all he had to not collapse to the ground.

The Pavilion Head and his deputies struggled, slightly, to breathe. Especially the Pavilion Head. It was as if he had seen a ghost as he stared at Wang Baole, dumbstruck. Even in his wildest dreams, he could never have imagined the extreme ends that Wang Baole would go to...

If he could have predicted that would happen, the thought of putting Wang Baole in his rightful place would never have crossed his mind.

"Seventeen times... who will be invited forward?" There was a bitter taste in the Pavilion Head's mouth. He muttered in a daze, uneasily.

As the crowd burst out in gasps of shock, Wang Baole stared at the shattered drum stick regretfully. He could feel the crystal in his body had not disappeared completely. What had shattered was only its outermost layer. The crystal looked as if it had shrunk one size, from the size of a chicken's egg to that of a quail's...

*I hit seventeen times... this should call forward someone super important...* Wang Baole blinked. He watched as the crowd slowly recover from their shocked daze. The anticipation on their faces seemed greater than his own. He also saw Lin Tianhao and the Pavilion Head, who looked as if they had seen a ghost. He grew pleased; his heart brimmed with satisfaction. At the same time, he was also filled with curiosity.

It was then that suddenly, in the skies above the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, the clouds rolled and boiled over. An overwhelming aura descended from the heavens in a blink of an eye.

The aura was intensely strong and shadowed the entire Upper Academy Island. Even though it didn't reach the extremes of transforming the heavens, it still stirred the entire island. The disciples across all the pavilions were all shaken to the core and lifted their heads to look up.

The crowd at Dharmic Armament Pavilion's Middle Peak, especially, sucked in their breath; their eyes honed in instantly at the skies above. Lin Tianhao couldn't help but raise his head as well—he looked lost.

Some in the crowd, like Chen Yutong, had their own guesses. They breathed nervously, their eyes filled with incredulity. Like the Deputy Pavilion Heads, they seemed to have come to some conclusion as they raised their heads. They trembled.

The Pavilion Head clearly knew the identity of the person who had arrived. He was having mixed feelings about it; emotions churned within him, and his face grew pale rapidly. The clouds in the sky gathered instantaneously and, amidst the stunned gasps of the entire Upper Academy Island, formed some semblance of a gigantic face!

The face stretched across half the sky. It conveyed a sense of vastness while exuding an imposing aura, and everyone who caught sight of it was overwhelmed with emotions.

As if surveying the vast lands before it, the giant face turned its eyes towards the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, towards Middle Peak, and towards... Wang Baole!

"Greetings to the Grand Supreme Elder!" The Pavilion Head and his deputies quaked in their boots as they greeted the Grand Supreme Elder with due respect. Chen Yutong and the others struggled to find their composure and presented their greetings as well.

Their voices entered the disciples around them. The look on the disciples, who had only heard of but never seen the Grand Supreme Elder, changed immediately. They extended their greetings with awe and fervor.

Beyond the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, in the other pavilions on the Upper Academy Island, waves of greetings spread out suddenly like an aural tsunami, to the four corners of the island.

Quite a few figures appeared on the Sky Path Island as well. They gazed at the Upper Academy Island. Amongst them was the red-robed Deputy Sect Lord. Standing beside him was someone of his age, who wore a white tunic and had an ethereal air to him. There was a faint smile on his face.

From how the two stood, the middle-aged man in the white tunic was obviously of a higher status.

“Is it that Wang Baole again? He must be hiding some good fortunes. That drop of Spirit Blood must be why he could sound the drum so many times and call forward the Grand Supreme Elder,” the middle-aged man in the white tunic said laughingly. Beside him, the red-robed Deputy Sect Lord nodded. He smiled as well and spoke.

“Sect Lord’s judgment is likely correct. This little fatty is interesting. I quite like him.”

The middle-aged man in a white tunic turned out to be the Sect Lord of the Ethereal Dao College. While the two chatted happily, in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, Wang Baole’s eyes widened as he looked heavenward. He was overwhelmed with awe.

The face in the sky made him feel as if he had come face to face with an imposing, heavenly presence. He was awed and impressed by the kind of spell it would take to form one’s face in the sky, and filled with envy in equal measure.

At the same time, he also felt a sense of uneasiness. He recalled how he had taught the Grand Supreme Elder’s disciple a lesson in the past. As anxiety churned inside him, he took a deep breath and bit the bullet, stepping forward and cupping his fists in greeting. “Your humble disciple greets the Grand Supreme Elder!”

“This is the Baole Cannon that your humble disciple has designed and invented. I drew inspiration from the strongholds’ Fire God Cannon. The Dharmic Armament Pavilion’s Pavilion Head didn’t recognize this Numinous Treasure and even hinted that it’s trash. Your humble disciple doesn’t accept the evaluation...”

“I humbly request that the Grand Supreme Elder examine and assess my cannon personally!” Wang Baole pointed at the Baole Cannon and, without mincing his words, said quickly in a loud voice. After he was done speaking, he cupped his fists once again and bowed deeply!

Regardless of any anxieties he was feeling, to the vengeful Wang Baole, when the right time came, revenge must be served. It was the moment for revenge!

The Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion almost cursed at Wang Baole’s words. When had he ever said that the cannon was trash? Wang Baole was lying with a straight face. He was misrepresenting him!

He was extremely unsettled, beyond anxious, by Wang Baole’s protest. As he was about to bite the bullet and offer an explanation, the face in the sky suddenly sent a sharp look sweeping across the crowd. The words stuck in the Pavilion Head’s throat. The sweeping gaze eventually stopped and rested upon the Baole Cannon that Wang Baole had refined.

A sudden silence fell across the Dharmic Armament Pavilion. Everyone held their breaths and watched on in awe. Amidst the Pavilion Head’s and the Deputy Pavilion Heads’ anxiety and uneasiness, amidst Lin Tianhao’s paling face...

The eyes in the heavens seemed to see through the Baole Cannon, and clearly perceived the cannon's inner structure and its inscriptions. They lit up and seemed to show surprise. After eyeing the cannon and studying it more carefully, the face redrew its gaze from the cannon. A voice, carrying with it the weight of great authority, boomed across the entire Upper Academy Island.

"Excellent work!"

#### **Chapter 194: Who Had Cheats Turned On In Their Life?**

As the two words rang out, they were like the passing of a law, dictating heaven and earth with its utterance!

It was as if all strength fled the Pavilion Head. His face was pale and drained of blood, and he lowered his head hurriedly with due respect. The other Deputy Pavilion Heads followed suit.

Even though the entire affair had nothing to do with them, the crowd had witnessed with their own eyes the entire proceedings of how Wang Baole, as an insignificant character, had fought back and reversed his fortunes. Every single one of them was inspired and even felt as if they were sharing his glory. They bowed to the heavens again.

Lin Tianhao, on the other hand, felt as if all life had been sucked from his body. The bitterness in his heart was vast like the ocean. The surrounding cacophony of noises grew distant. Dazed, he turned towards Wang Baole, and a deep sense of helplessness surfaced within him.

Countless scenes flashed across his eyes. From his first meeting with Wang Baole, his repeated clashes with Wang Baole ended with his failure, time after time. Gradually, a strange thought surfaced in his mind.

*I've always felt as if I've had cheats turned on in my life... but even so, I still can't compete with this Wang Baole. This guy... must have done the same! He can't be offended—can't be offended... Amidst the bitter grief, Lin Tianhao felt overwhelming despair.*

Wang Baole, on the other hand, was besieged by a slew of emotions. He hastily cupped his fists towards the sky and bowed. He said loudly, "Thank you, Grand Supreme Elder! The Grand Supreme Elder is just and fair. He is true to his word, know what's truth, and is beyond reproach!"

As Wang Baole bowed, the face in the sky seemed to glance at Wang Baole. There seemed to be a faint, indiscernible smile on his face. The face grew blurry and gradually morphed back into clouds, which then dispersed.

The imposing aura in the sky also gradually vanished, and the entire Upper Academy Island returned to normal. Wang Baole, brimming with energy, looked towards the Pavilion Head.

"Pavilion Head, let's quickly announce the new ranking!"

Since they had already gone past the point of civility, Wang Baole couldn't be bothered to mend the relations or put on an appearance of being respectful. When the words rang out, the Pavilion Head's face darkened horribly. After a moment's silence, he inhaled deeply, then spoke.

“For this round of the Armament Soldier Assessment, Wang Baole... is placed first!” Done speaking, he turned away with a dark face and left immediately. The Deputy Pavilion Heads looked at one another, then at Wang Baole. They shook their heads, sighed, then nodded their heads. It felt akin to an apology and a display of goodwill. Then, they left.

Upon seeing the Pavilion Head and Deputy Pavilion Heads depart, Chen Yutong marched forward, bringing joyful and congratulatory words. Wang Baole laughed out loud and greeted the people around him, giving his thanks amidst much laughter and talk. He was good with people and soon were laughing and joking with everyone. After a round of polite conversation, he left the square and returned to his cave abode.

He didn't spare even a glance at Lin Tianhao the entire time. It was clear that Lin Tianhao had gotten the message as well. He had left quietly, seemingly resigned to his fate.

Time sped by and days passed. Wang Baole's entitlement to a priority office placement had been recorded in his file. The transfer and placement of the Deputy Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion was then announced.

Out of the four Deputy Pavilion Heads, one was transferred out of the college and would be placed in the Federation. Concurrently, Chen Yutong was promoted and would become a Deputy Pavilion Head!

As for the consequent vacant role of the College Administrative Department Head, many experienced and long-serving soldiers had originally been vying for the spot. There should have been a fierce battle over it. In fact, the position might even have been left vacant for a long period as the competition dragged out. However, because of Wang Baole's exemplary performance and his entitlement to a top priority in office placement, Chen Yutong's master and grandmaster were able to suppress all competition easily. Wang Baole was promoted to the top position in the College Administrative Department with few obstacles!

It was the arrival of twin fortunes for their lineage. Even though the fight for the position of Grand Elder in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion was still ongoing—with the candidates narrowed down to three people—few had the privilege to be privy to such politics in the upper echelons of the college or go about understanding it. Even if Wang Baole had the will, he didn't have the way.

After a round of celebrations with Chen Yutong, Wang Baole was officially initiated into the College Administrative Department.

On the first day of office, Wang Baole tidied up his cave abode. He looked at the mirror and the reflection of himself in a soldier's robes from multiple angles. Finally, he sighed a sigh of regret.

*I'm too perfect...*

Wang Baole continued to immerse himself in a cloud of regret. He left his cave abode and headed for the College Administrative Department, his spirits high. As he neared the department, he saw a dozen pretty female disciples standing in front of the gates of the College Administrative Department. They came with congratulatory messages and a banner printed with congratulatory words for Wang Baole.

The four main team leaders of the College Administrative Department had arrived early to wait at the games. As they saw him appear, Zhou Penghai was the first to approach. The rest followed after, extending their greetings respectfully.

“Greetings, Armament Soldier!”

The four main team leaders were no strangers to Wang Baole. He smiled and nodded, swept his gaze across the group of female disciples and looked up at the banner. He was inwardly pleased, but outwardly, his face straightened into a stern look.

“You guys... no such stunts in the future,” Wang Baole scolded.

Zhou Penghai immediately concurred, and the remaining three main team leaders hastily reflected on their conduct. They gathered around Wang Baole, conversing the entire way to the main hall. Along the way, every disciple of the College Administrative Department who saw Wang Baole greeted him with awe.

Wang Baole arrived at the main hall amidst the respectful welcomes. As soon as he sat down, Zhou Penghai started preparing tea for Wang Baole and brought it before the latter. He stood next to Wang Baole as he reported, in a low voice, what the entire College Administrative Department had been doing.

Wang Baole nodded at times as he listened to Zhou Penghai’s report. At the end of the report, he raised his teacup. Zhou Penghai hurriedly lowered his head and left. Wang Baole placed his teacup down immediately and stood with his eyes shining. He inspected the main hall—a touch here, a feel there—and felt extremely pleased.

*Even though my status has changed, I still have to work harder at cultivation and the refinement of Numinous Treasures.* Satisfied, Wang Baole returned to the comfortable seat, pulled out a bag of snacks, and started munching. While snacking, he mused about his path henceforth.

*I’m at the fourth level of the True Breath realm now. From now on, I have to work even harder and strive to reach the peak of True Breath realm... after that, I’ll be able to prepare for the Foundation Establishment realm.* Upon recalling the prowess the Foundation Establishment cultivators displayed during the battle at the stronghold, desire filled Wang Baole’s heart.

*I shouldn’t neglect the area of refining Numinous Treasures either... I’ll have to read up on fourth-grade Numinous Treasures.*

*And that Dragon’s Tooth of mine, I should have accumulated sufficient materials. If it turns out as a fourth-grade treasure after crafting, its power should be considerable... not to mention the Core Formation realm monster’s tooth that General Zhou promised me. It hasn’t reached me yet... could he have forgotten?* Wang Baole was reminded of the matter and straightened his back immediately. He felt torn and couldn’t decide if he should send a friendly reminder.

*Forget it. It doesn’t look good to rush such matters. Let’s wait a bit longer. If nothing reaches me, then, I’ll just have to find some excuse to pay a personal visit to the stronghold.*



Upon deciding the things that were to be done, Wang Baole called for the four main team leaders to gather again. He passed down some simple instructions and left the College Administrative Department. When he returned to the cave abode, he began his cultivation.

Time passed steadily, and things ran smoothly. Wang Baole managed to craft the Dragon's Tooth two weeks later.

He studied the mace-like Numinous Treasure before him. Wang Baole left the college and tested the Numinous Treasure in the wilderness. He examined the Numinous Treasure; paying attention to the spirit force it exuded and the destructive force it displayed when wielded. It was regrettable that he couldn't get his hands on a Beast King's tooth, but Wang Baole was still extremely pleased.

*When the Beast King's tooth arrives, I'll just recraft it slightly. Its power should increase considerably.*

He kept the Dragon's Tooth, happily stepped onto his droplet-shaped cruiser, and made his way back to the Upper Academy Island.

After entering the Upper Academy Island, as he neared the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, nearly everyone who saw Wang Baole paid great attention to his approaching; many even extended their greetings. Wang Baole smiled and nodded, returning their greetings while inwardly moved.

After he had become the Armament Soldier under the College Administrative Department, the change in his status and people's attitudes towards him had him in a constant good mood. Especially the female disciples—he could feel the flirtatious baiting in the eyes of many of them.

*I've regained the feeling that I had on the Lower Academy Island, of constantly being the center of attention. As for those girls... I can understand how they feel. After all, it must be rare to find someone like me, who's so young, and so rich, and so good looking, and who wields such great power in his hands.*

*If it had been anyone else, he'd be strutting around like a flashy peacock by now. He wouldn't be so diligent and modest, and keep his head down like me,* Wang Baole lamented. He felt as if he'd just discovered another one of his merits—modesty.

As he lost himself in his humble thoughts and was about to speed up his journey back to the cave abode, he suddenly heard a familiar thundering roar from the distant sky. It made the look on his face change, and he caught sight of a familiar figure charging towards him from afar.

It was the Diamond Ape.

It seemed that it had been secretly spying on Wang Baole for quite some time. As a result, despite having switched his cruiser, the Diamond Ape was able to recognize Wang Baole immediately. It sent its palm flying towards the cruiser without hesitation.

*Another ambush!* Wang Baole was frightened and at the same time, furious. Fortunately, he had survived a few ambushes by the Diamond Ape and had cultivated an excellent habit of keeping an eye out on his surroundings at all times. With his cultivation reaching the fourth level of the True Breath realm, his reaction had become quicker. Even though the Diamond Ape's outstretched palm managed to brush the side of the cruiser, under Wang Baole's steering, he managed to escape from the fate of being knocked around multiple times. After landing the cruiser with great difficulty, Wang Baole rushed out, looking vexed, and glared furiously at the sky.

In the sky, the Diamond Ape, having witnessed Wang Baole's quick reaction, was extremely dissatisfied. It bared its teeth at Wang Baole, and turned around and jiggled his butt at him. Then, with an air of disdain, it flew towards the Beast Taming Pavilion.

Many Dharmic Armament disciples witnessed what happened. The odd faces they made had a tinge of playful mischief. Nobody went around discussing it openly, but the history between Wang Baole and the Diamond Ape had made a deep impression on many people.

Wang Baole glared at the nasty looks the Diamond Ape gave him, then realized that his embarrassing state had been seen by everyone around him. He felt as if he had received a blow to his reputation. The present humiliation and the past wrongs surfaced in his mind, and his eyes narrowed into a glare.

*That shameless monkey, it's time you have a taste of what I'm truly capable of!*

### **Chapter 195: Say Something!**

The look on Wang Baole's darkened as he watched the Diamond Ape leave and eventually disappear into the Beast Taming Pavilion. He turned and walked towards his cave abode. The gears in his head started spinning, and his mind overflowed with ideas.

*Fling Self-Exploding Beads at the stupid monkey? No, that's too obvious.*

*Get the mosquitoes to bite it? That's a good one. But if it throws a tantrum and triggers an investigation by the Beast Taming Pavilion, I could easily be exposed as the perpetrator...*

*Pit it against someone else? Sow discord between it and the Beast Taming Pavilion Elder? The technicalities of executing that seem rather complex... that's not something someone as smart as I am should do.*

*What should I do...* Wang Baole frowned. He recalled the numerous encounters he had when he was young, discarding each idea that he could think of. As he stepped inside the cave abode, his footsteps stilled.

*( Boxno vel. co m ) Is that Diamond Ape male or female?* Wang Baole wondered. He tried to recall his memories in detail. Disgruntlement gradually unfurled within him. He was sure that the Diamond Ape was a male.

*As a Foundation Establishment realm beast, it knows no shame, doesn't wear any clothes and exposes itself in front of everyone in public. That exhibitionist has gone too far!* Wang Baole snorted. He decided that the sins of the monkey were indeed grave.

*I, Wang Baole, have always been a generous and forgiving man. One who never holds grudges. But that monkey is just too shameless. What's more, it likes to expose itself. How are the female disciples of this college to conduct themselves in the face of such shameless behavior. It's an affront to the public. I have to discipline this moral hazard for the college!*

At that thought, Wang Baole was suddenly seized by a feeling of solemnity; it felt as if he had been imbued with a sense of mission, and a plan quickly surfaced in his mind.

*Since it's a male monkey, there is only one way to go about doing this. I'm going to make a female monkey puppet for it...* Wang Baole turned the idea over and played it out in his head. A sense of certainty grew in his heart. He sniggered as he played out the scenes in his plan. He felt excited and was dizzy with anticipation, and both his eyes started dazzling. He turned and ran straight for the smelting furnace, pulled out the materials, and started crafting.

He also logged on to the Spirit Intranet at the same time and started reading up on all sorts of information.

Time flew by. Three days later, Wang Baole walked out of the smelting furnace room with a smaller Diamond Ape trailing behind him.

The Diamond Ape was pink all around, its eyes huge, mouth small like a cherry, and blessed with great curvatures. The Spirit Qi that rippled off it was incredible. The quality of the Numinous Treasure was that of a perfected third-grade Numinous Treasure.

Especially in terms of its hardiness—Wang Baole had wracked his brain, consolidating almost all of the defensive inscriptions he had learned and pouring them into the Spirit Kernel. He spared no expense on the materials as well. The result was the smaller-sized Diamond Ape that was virtually indestructible.

Within the puppet was a self-destructive mechanism, and Wang Baole was the only person in the Upper Academy Island that could activate it.

As for its physical appearance, it was the outcome of Wang Baole logging onto the Spirit Intranet, searching tens of thousands of images of female monkeys, and merging them all together. He added a few inspired touches as well, and his final creation was a puppet that he believed would look extremely adorable and endearing in the eyes of the Diamond Ape.

*Once this ape puppet appears, that cheap monkey will no doubt be swept off its feet!* Wang Baole was overbrimming with confidence. Thinking about how pleased he was, he laughed out loud. A moment later, he led the ape puppet out of the cave abode in high spirits.

Wang Baole stepped out of the cave abode and, with a snap of his fingers, the ape puppet following closely behind him let out a series of chirping sounds from inside its body. Its body seemed to expand slightly to twice its original size. Standing there, it might not reach the size of a small mountain, but it was still significantly large. Wang Baole judged its size to be fitting when compared with the Diamond Ape.

He strutted around in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion with the puppet. Along the way, those who saw him were all stunned. They made all sorts of odd faces at the sight, and all of them were drawn towards Wang Baole's puppet.

"Is that a... puppet?"

"What's up with Wang Baole. He actually crafted a Diamond Ape puppet?"

"Do you guys feel that this puppet seems a little... slutty?"

Wang Baole heard the surrounding debates and saw the expressions on everyone's faces. He grew even more pleased and assured of his plan.

*This is, without any doubt, a work of art!* Wang Baole turned back and glanced at the ape puppet with great satisfaction. However, as soon as the thought of why it had been created in the first place popped up in his head, he couldn't help but sigh. He felt as if he had strayed from his path of creating unique puppets, and was wandering farther and farther away from that path, into the woods...

*I've sacrificed so much just to punish this cheap monkey who has incurred the public's rage. But it's alright, that's my destiny. My whole life, I was destined to work hard and to help others without holding any grudges,* Wang Baole lamented, then simply retrieved his cruiser and leaped on board with the puppet.

He flew the cruiser into the sky and made a quick round of the Upper Academy Island. When he reached the Beast Taming Pavilion, he slowed down... It was noon. From afar, under the sunlight, the pink puppet looked spectacularly provocative. It was like a rose in a forest of thorns. It drew the attention of many and, at the same time, attracted the eyes of one within a cave abode atop a mountain somewhere in the Beast Taming Pavilion.

Those eyes landed instantly on Wang Baole's cruiser and narrowed slightly. A thundering roar followed. Without hesitation—instead, possibly, with a tinge of excitement—the Diamond Ape charged out of its cave abode and headed straight for Wang Baole.

*It's coming!* Wang Baole became excited as soon as he heard the familiar howling. He hurriedly maneuvered the puppet and flew it out of the cruiser in an attempt to draw the Diamond Ape's attention.

However, when the Diamond Ape approached, howling, it didn't even spare a glance at the ape puppet. Instead, with a slap, the ape sent the puppet flying. The Diamond Ape honed in on Wang Baole and raced towards him. It was as if Wang Baole was the one who had captured his full attention.

*What's the situation? He doesn't like it?*

Wang Baole was shocked by the discovery. He trembled and quickly steered the cruiser out of the way, but it was too late. The Diamond Ape caught up with him and bared its teeth, sending its palm flying towards the cruiser.

There was a loud boom, and Wang Baole cried out—he felt the heavens spinning. With great difficulty, he steered the cruiser into avoiding the Diamond Ape's second attack, landed, and climbed out of the cruiser hastily. He raised his head toward the sky and glared furiously.

In mid-air, the Diamond Ape's face split into a wider grin. It seemed even more contemptuous than before. The ape thudded his chest mockingly before strutting off.

Wang Baole's breathing quickened as he watched the ape depart, and he gnashed his teeth angrily.

*This isn't an error of judgment on my part. It must be because of the cheap monkey's strange preferences. That must be it!* Wang Baole glanced at the ape puppet beside him viciously. He kept the puppet and charged back to his cave abode, into the smelting furnace room, and began a series of modifications to the ape puppet's physical appearance.

A day later, the modifications were completed. That round, Wang Baole had focused his modifications on the puppet's body. He had contemplated the Diamond Ape's physical prowess and guessed that its

taste went towards the more strongly built. As such, the modified ape puppet had an immensely muscular form.

The modification seemed to have an effect. The Diamond Ape clearly spared a few glances at the puppet. However, it eventually still charged towards Wang Baole's cruiser. The force it used to knock the cruiser away though, seemed slightly weaker.

*It's effective!* Wang Baole became excited. He continued the modification. After a few rounds, he finally had a full understanding of the Diamond Ape's taste. He created an ape puppet that had small eyes, thick lips, and a muscular body that was covered in mud-yellow fur.

When the ape puppet appeared, the effect was immediate. The Diamond Ape, which a moment earlier had been racing towards Wang Baole, was instantly captivated. Its body seemed to quiver, and its breathing grew heavier. The Diamond Ape tore its eyes away from Wang Baole in an instant. Wang Baole could feel the fire burning in the ape's eyes as it stared at the ape puppet.

*Hook, line, and sinker!* Wang Baole watched as the Diamond Ape raced towards his ape puppet. He hurriedly sent the puppet away into the distance. However, its speed was too slow, and it was soon caught up by the Diamond Ape. The ape grabbed the puppet with a swipe of its arms and flew hastily back to its cave abode...

*That shameless monkey. You're going to have a taste of what it feels like to fall from heaven straight into depths of hell!* Wang Baole said spitefully. He returned to his cave abode, did some simple math on the time that had passed, then immediately triggered the self-destructive mechanism.

Moments passed after the mechanism was activated. A bellow, filled with shock and brimming with a rage that came from an unfulfilled satisfaction, rang out from the Beast Taming Pavilion and resounded through the air.

Wang Baole cheered up at hearing that sound.

"You puny shameless monkey, how's that for a thrill? For a surprise? This is only the beginning. You'll soon learn—the greatest suffering is loving something that is beyond one's reach!" At that moment, Wang Baole felt like a great philosopher; every word that fell out of his mouth was deep and philosophical.

His plan was divided into three steps. The first step was to attract the Diamond Ape and bait it successfully. The second step was to allow it to possess the puppet for a brief period of time, and allow it to develop an addiction. The third and final step...

The third step was to take away whatever fleeting moment the Diamond Ape earned!

Such a strategy—"you giveth, then you taketh away"—was what Wang Baole had prepared for the Diamond Ape.

It might not work as well on other people, but against a beast, Wang Baole was confident of its success.

Satisfied and pleased, he immediately went to the smelting furnace room and refined an identical ape puppet. The next day, he brought the puppet out.

The exact thing that had taken place previously happened again. The ape puppet was quickly snatched away by the Diamond Ape. That was swiftly followed by the puppet's self-destruction and the furious and crazed howls of the ape.

Wang Baole considered the reaction from the Beast Taming Pavilion and hence didn't attempt it too many times. After three times, he stopped bringing the ape puppet out. Instead, he waited in his cave abode.

Finally, one morning many days later... a red-eyed Diamond Ape appeared outside Wang Baole's cave abode. It let out a roar at the cave abode.

The feeling of having discovered an extremely fun toy only to have it gone after a few rounds of playing with it left the Diamond Ape feeling an emptiness in its heart. At that moment, it howled outside Wang Baole's cave abode, hitting the stone walls as if shouting for Wang Baole to come out...

Inside the cave abode, Wang Baole lifted his head high proudly. He straightened out his clothes slowly, then opened the door by a tiny slit. Through the slit, one eye looked out and saw the raging Diamond Ape standing outside.

"What are you hollering about? I can't understand a word. If you have something to say, just say it!"

"Roar..." The Diamond Ape saw Wang Baole's eyes through the slit and thundered immediately.

"Can't understand a single thing. Why don't you just say something?" Wang Baole coughed.

"Roar!"

"Holler all you like. Are you going to say a word? If not, I'm going back to sleep!" Wang Baole glared and sealed the narrow opening shut...

### **Chapter 196: Operation Sword Sun!**

"Roar!" The Diamond Ape watched as Wang Baole shut the doors to his cave abode and started to panic. It seemed on the verge of flying into another rage and started howling fiercely again. Its palms smashed against the doors of the cave abode, and the loud slams drew the attention of many in the area.

"The Diamond Ape!"

"Why has it come here?"

"This is... Wang Baole's cave abode? Its doors are shut?"

In the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, disciples who witnessed the scene sucked in a collective, frightened breath. They weren't completely taken over by terror, though; they realized that something interesting seemed to be unfolding before their eyes. However, after seeing the raging mad Diamond Ape, no one dared to venture too near; everyone started observing from afar.

Wang Baole watched as the doors to his cave abode quaked under the ape's slamming, coughed heavily once, and opened up a narrow slit again. He glared.

“What do you want exactly?”

“Roar!”

“I really can’t understand a single thing,” Wang Baole blinked. The Diamond Ape had gone completely mad. It jumped outside the cave abode, thudding its chest heavily, and turned around at the same time. It seemed to be trying very hard.

The scene was like a sudden bolt of lightning exploding in everyone’s minds.

“My god, the killer move!”

“Goodness, quick, let’s make our retreat!”

Wang Baole’s scalp started prickling too. He knew he couldn’t go too far. He spoke hastily.

“Fine, fine. I know what you’re trying to say.”

Once those words were out of his mouth, the Diamond Ape spun around immediately. It stared at Wang Baole through the narrow slit in the cave abode with a look of agitation.

“But there’s no point in you yelling. I don’t have what you want... even if you unleash a powerful attack, I’ll just shut this door. We’ll just have to see who’s quicker.” As Wang Baole spoke, he sneaked a glance at the Diamond Ape.

Upon hearing Wang Baole saying he didn’t have what he was looking for, the Diamond Ape’s body started shaking. It howled again, throwing punches everywhere and sending the ground trembling. The mountain rocks quaked. Its demeanor proclaimed loudly—it would not stop until it got what it came for.

The scene caught the attention of a growing number of people. Wang Baole put on an appearance of exasperation as he watched the relentless Diamond Ape. He sighed, and through a slit in the door, his gaze fell on the Diamond Ape, honing straight in on his teeth.

“Fine, fine. I, Wang Baole, am a soft-hearted fellow. How about this—you give me one of your molars, and I’ll hand over what you came for, how’s that!”

The Diamond Ape’s eyes widened upon hearing Wang Baole’s words. He glared furiously at Wang Baole, seeming to grow angrier, and shook his head vehemently in refusal.

“Then there’s nothing we can do about this. I wanted to let you have a monster puppet that would never be broken by, um, you know what I mean...” Wang Baole coughed, and slowly reeled it in.

When it heard the puppet would never be broken, the Diamond Ape was torn. It let loose a round of howls outside the cave abode and paced about as if it was considering the matter.

Wang Baole’s eyes shone as he saw that the time was almost right. His goal wasn’t to make an enemy of the Diamond Ape or get its tooth. The beast, after all, belonged to the Beast Taming Pavilion Elder. If he plucked its tooth, the Beast Taming Pavilion would likely come knocking.

The goal of every one of Wang Baole’s plans was to teach the other party a lesson. More importantly, he wanted to build a positive relationship between tamer and beast.

He didn't know how the Beast Taming Pavilion tamed beasts, but he had discovered a principle from the high officials' autobiographies—one must giveth, then taketh away, and then giveth again. Through the process, the other party's gratitude would shoot up exponentially.

"Fine, fine, Diamy. I don't want your tooth anymore. I'll let you have this beast puppet. Don't worry, it won't break!" Wang Baole said. He activated his scabbard and let the nine mosquitoes roam around the area without being discovered. Only after that did he open the door to the cave abode decisively, retrieve a completed ape puppet, and place it before the Diamond Ape.

The Diamond Ape heard what Wang Baole said. It looked at the ape puppet and froze. Then, it rushed forward and swept the puppet into an embrace. The ape looked at Wang Baole with suspicion; it was clear it didn't think things would turn out that way. It had been ready to pull its tooth out.

But Wang Baole didn't want his tooth after all. In fact, he even decided to give him the toy. The sentient Diamond Ape, which was capable of thought—albeit barely—was lost.

"But you should stop bullying me. Don't worry, I know you like this toy. I've removed the self-destruct mechanism," Wang Baole said with a sigh. He even stepped forward and patted the Diamond Ape.

The Diamond Ape's body quivered. It instinctively wanted to throw a punch. Besides its owner and a few others whom he was close to, such contact from strangers made him uncomfortable.

But upon thinking that Wang Baole had given him a toy, he hesitated. Without the loss of a tooth as a basis for comparison, his simple mind wouldn't have given the matter so much thought. But with the tooth already in the picture, the ape felt, as he looked at Wang Baole in its stunned daze, that it shouldn't be violent towards Wang Baole.

The entire proceeding was witnessed by the surrounding Dharmic Armament Pavilion disciples. Their eyeballs almost fell out of their eye sockets, and they exploded into a hushed chatter.

"The Diamond Ape's actually treating him so gently?"

"What is going on, giving the Diamond Ape presents can foster its goodwill? Others have done such a thing before, but it's never worked!"

The ones surprised weren't merely the Dharmic Armament Pavilion disciples. Many cruisers currently hovered in mid-air. Aboard them were disciples from the Beast Taming Pavilion. The Diamond Ape had been throwing a tantrum for nearly half a day—they had a duty to track it down and investigate the matter.

As they witnessed what had taken place, the impact shook them and stirred waves of emotions within them even more.

"The Diamond Ape actually allowed him to touch it!"

"Am I actually seeing this?"

Under the crowd's stunned gazes, Wang Baole grew secretly pleased. He patted the Diamond Ape a few more times and said, laughing, "Go home, Diamy. When I have time, I'll craft a few more toys for you. Go home now." Wang Baole smiled with his hands behind his back and looked at the Diamond Ape.



The Diamond Ape was clearly still in a daze. However, when it looked back at Wang Baole, there was a hint of gentleness in its gaze. It clutched the ape puppet tightly, nodded at Wang Baole, and turned away, racing straight back to the Beast Taming Pavilion.

With the ape gone, the surrounding crowd was stirred into an uproar. Many who were quick-thinking realized the trick.

“This tactic is impressive!”

“No wonder he’s an Armament Soldier. This Wang Baole has been conspiring and plotting since he arrived, fighting until he became the head of the College Administrative Department. I’d thought it was sheer luck. Now I know... his ability to strategize is beyond spectacular!”

Every disciple who saw the scene unfold was shaken to the core and harbored feelings of envy. More than a few were tempted to do the same, but the infamy of the Diamond Ape had spread far and wide. No one dared to anger it...

Wang Baole listened to the discussions around him, his mood growing merry. He cupped his fists towards the crowd then returned to his cave abode, humming a tune under his breath. He sat down, cross-legged, and pulled out his snacks. After a few bites, he played out the entire incident in his head and was satisfied with how everything turned out.

He felt that he had executed the entire thing flawlessly. He didn’t incur the wrath of the Beast Taming Pavilion, and he resolved the ill feelings the Diamond Ape had harbored towards him. In the end, he even ensured the Diamond Ape would be more docile towards him in the future.

Furthermore, as long as he continued crafting ape puppets with a few unique features, the Diamond Ape’s feelings towards him would improve. When the time came, whenever he came across anyone he didn’t like, he could simply have a few words with the Diamond Ape. Matters would be easily resolved then.

*But to build such a relationship requires some time*, Wang Baole thought, pleased. Especially so when he stepped out in his cruiser a few days later and came across the Diamond Ape. When the Diamond Ape saw Wang Baole, it grinned and raced towards him.

There was no knocking around. Instead, it stopped beside Wang Baole, bared its teeth in a wide grin, and thudded its chest and hollered as if in greeting.

Wang Baole’s mood lightened tremendously. His life resumed normalcy, and his cultivation and his proficiency in crafting armaments improved steadily. A month passed.

That was when a piece of news was announced. It was like a pebble dropping into a pond, sending thousands of waves rippling out. The attention of very disciple from every pavilion on the Upper Academy Island was ensnared.

Due to the recent Beast Tide, the Federation staged an ambush on the Sea of Beasts and successfully slaughtered numerous Beast Kings. That won them twenty years of stability. Built on that two-decade foundation and with such a grand victory, a proposal that had been intended for a later implementation was brought forward, and was approved!

The name of the proposal... Operation Sword Sun!

The mission of Operation Sword Sun... to land on the ancient green-bronze sword!

After landing on the ancient green-bronze sword—to colonize a portion of the land and transform it into a colony!

The impact of the matter was immense and was felt across all the political forces. The disciples of the Ethereal Dao College were all shaken to the core. That was something that every cultivator dreamed of achieving. It was something that was challenging in the climate of internal conflicts and external threats.

However, with the external threat suppressed for the moment and the Federation seeking a target to distract the internal political entities, Operation Sword Sun became an obvious course of action!

The operation was a huge matter though. True Breath realm cultivators weren't eligible for participation. However, there was a phase within Operation Sword Sun that involved True Breath realm cultivators, and that was the Federation's Hundred Seedling Plan!

From the respective political entities in the Federation, a hundred True Breath realm prodigies were to be chosen as seedlings and specially groomed!

### **Chapter 197: If You Are Up To It, Go Ahead!**

The matter implicated the entire Federation and all the political entities within. As one of the four great Dao Colleges, the Ethereal Dao College had many graduates who gained office in the Federation. The disciples came from a wide range of family backgrounds; their relationships with the Federation were complex and multi-layered.

That was why news of the Operation Sword Sun had appeared on Upper Academy Island almost immediately, even before the operation had been unanimously approved and announced publicly. Heated discussions and excited exchanges also turned up on the college's Spirit Intranet.

"Have you heard about Operation Sword Sun? A mission to land on the ancient green-bronze sword! There must be Divine Armaments up there!"

"Compared to the ancient green-bronze sword's strong Spirit Qi and its countless rare materials and treasures, I'm actually more interested in whether there are any living female ancient sword cultivators, and whether their physiology and psychology are identical to ours. If there's an opportunity, as an academic endeavor, I would like to study whether it's possible to develop a romantic relationship with one!"

"Why the mention of female cultivators only... the poster above is harboring immoral intentions! I demand to be part of the research team!"

"Shameless, you lot of guys. You men have fantasies that show how much of a scum you are!"

Such excitement and playful banter spread like wildfire on the Spirit Intranet. Wang Baole was equally excited. He started fantasizing about the possibility of one day stepping on the ancient green-bronze

sword and holding his presidential inauguration there. Behind him would be an army of guards—ancient sword cultivators. He played out the scenes in his mind, and his eyes lit up.

He couldn't help himself. He posted anonymously on the Spirit Intranet.

"I have no respect for you lot, guys who have no ambition and whose brains are obsessed with female cultivators. How could we as cultivators behave in such a manner! I'm telling all of you, in all seriousness, that if there's any research on romances with aliens, to please give me a holler! I'm an expert on this!"

His post was soon mocked by others. Amidst the lively and rowdy atmosphere, the college disciples started to look forward to the mission. What they had said previously had all been in jest. In reality, every disciple held feelings towards the ancient sword that couldn't be described with mere words. The Dao civilization on Earth had arisen because of the ancient sword's appearance. Its origins inspired all kinds of speculation, and at the same time, people were in awe of the ancient sword.

More and more people started talking about Operation Sword Sun. There were even some mainstream media outlets in the Federation that began broadcasting about the mission. Wang Baole was munching on his snacks and scrolling through the posts on the Spirit Intranet one day, ready to post an article under his anonymous account, when he received a voice transmission message from the seventh primary stronghold's General Zhou Dexi.

"Wang Baole, I've made arrangements for someone to send over the Beast King's tooth that I promised you earlier. You should be able to receive it today!"

General Zhou's low voice was calm and composed as usual, and it traveled slowly into Wang Baole's ear. Wang Baole became alert and filled with energy. He hurriedly set aside his snacks and turned towards the voice transmission device.

"Many thanks to General Zhou!"

A fire burned within Wang Baole. He had been waiting for the tooth for so long. He was confident that once he got hold of the Core Formation realm Beast Emperor's tooth, he would be able to upgrade his Numinous Treasure-grade Dragon's Tooth. With the help of the Core Formation realm-grade beast's tooth, his Dragon's Tooth would let loose an unimaginable power.

Zhou Dexi heard the excitement in Wang Baole's voice. He remained calm. He chatted casually with Wang Baole for a short while more before switching the tone of his voice, saying suddenly, "Wang Baole, you little rascal. You decimated everyone during the Ethereal Dao College's Armament Soldier assessment, sounded the Elder Request Drum and called forth the Grand Supreme Elder in your college to judge the matter of your Numinous Treasure. This entire incident has reached our ears."

"I'm interested in that Baole Cannon of yours. Lend me one. I'll find someone to test its effectiveness in actual battle."

Wang Baole agreed to General Zhou's request without hesitation. The Fire God Cannon had inspired his original creation of the cannon. Furthermore, he had a unique friendship with the seventh primary stronghold. He would be glad if the cannon could be of use to the seventh primary stronghold. In fact, he had already thought of the same idea as General Zhou.

Zhou Dexi was comforted and pleased by Wang Baole's swift and decisive agreement. He spoke a few more words, then ended the conversation. It didn't take long, and by the time the sun began to set, a cruiser that had come from the seventh primary stronghold landed in the Ethereal Dao College.

The person who had arrived was Zhou Lu. After some communication with the Ethereal Dao College, Zhou Lu appeared before Wang Baole. She stood outside the cave abode and watched as Wang Baole came outside. Regardless of the contributions Wang Baole had made towards the seventh primary stronghold, her feelings towards him were slightly complicated. Because of their unpleasant history, she couldn't bring herself to like him. Furthermore, she sensed a certain perversion in Wang Baole's naming of the Numinous Treasure. All the above resulted in her glaring at him and stretching out her right hand impatiently.

"Hand over your Numinous Treasure!"

Wang Baole originally had a smile on his face when he had seen Zhou Lu approach and was about to hand over the Baole Cannon, but upon hearing the tone of her voice, he became displeased. He rolled his eyes and stopped, and instead leaned against the rock wall. He crossed his arms and gave Zhou Lu a sweep once over.

"What're you getting at? You ask for presents whenever you see a cute guy?"

"Stop disgusting me and hand it over, quickly!" Zhou Lu heard Wang Baole call himself a "cute guy" and couldn't help the contempt surging within her. She frowned and snorted.

Wang Baole became angry when he saw Zhou Lu's attitude towards him. All his life, except Du Min, he had never met his match in a spar of wits. He raised an eyebrow.

"I have so many Numinous Treasures. Which is the one you want?"

"You..." Zhou Lu's chest heaved. She had a shapely figure with fine curves and was wearing a black form-fitting uniform. As she grew more agitated, the uniform looked as if it was about to burst at the seams at any moment.

After a second, she finally gritted her teeth and said, one word at a time.

"The. Baole. Cannon!"

"..." Wang Baole coughed and thought himself rather gifted in the area of naming. He would not have treated another person in such a manner, but Zhou Lu's tone was unfriendly; she tried to order him around, and when she looked at him, it was with contempt in her eyes. Wang Baole didn't feel he was in the wrong, no matter how much he pushed her around.

However, Wang Baole considered the possibility of Zhou Lu being General Zhou's concubine. Even if that wasn't the case, they had the same family name; they could be relatives. He felt that there was no need for him to lower himself to her level and continue their fight.

Wang Baole thought his decision showed great consideration to General Zhou. He lifted his right hand and with a wave, threw a Baole Cannon over.

Zhou Lu caught the Numinous Treasure and snorted. She flung a storage bracelet at Wang Baole, turned, and left. Her clothes clung tightly to her body, and as she left with her back towards Wang Baole, he couldn't help but eye her departing form.

*They've turned back to peaches...* He sighed. He couldn't help himself as he yelled at Zhou Lu's retreating back.

"Zhou Lu, speak the truth. Are you secretly in love with me?"

A dozen yards away, Zhou Lu heard what Wang Baole said. She stumbled and almost fell. When she spun around, she was clearly furious and on the verge of explosion. She glared at Wang Baole.

"If that's not the case, why do you wear clothes a size smaller when you come to see me? Zhou Lu, I advise you to just give up. We're... not compatible!" Wang Baole sighed loudly. He didn't wait for Zhou Lu to respond, only turned and quickly returned to his cave abode. The doors shut with a loud slam.

Outside the cave abode, Zhou Lu was on the verge of flying into a mad rage. Her chest heaved, and she stared unblinkingly at the doors of Wang Baole's cave abode. After a moment, she finally clamped down on her temper. With gnashed teeth, she turned around and boarded her cruiser, dashing off.

"Stupid fatty, shameless rat! I, Zhou Lu, would rather fall in love with a beast than fall in love with you!" On the cruiser, a raging Zhou Lu cursed.

After making sure that Zhou Lu had indeed left, Wang Baole, who sat cross-legged in his cave abode, started humming merrily. He opened the storage bracelet happily and retrieved from within a black tooth the length of an arm.

The tooth was sharp and exuded an intense aura of violence. Upon its exposure, the surrounding temperature fell considerably. Wang Baole shivered, and he focused his breath and became serious. He could feel a suppressive force weighing down on him.

An impressive and imposing aura was exuded from the tooth as well, one which tested the stability of Wang Baole's cultivation. It took Wang Baole quite some time before he could get used to it, and with some difficulty. His eyes started to shine.

*This is good stuff. Wang Baole's eyes shone.* He could wait no longer. He rushed into the smelting furnace room with the beast's tooth, pulled out the Dragon's Tooth, and started the refinement.

During that time, Zhou Lu had returned to the seventh primary stronghold and handed the Baole Cannon over to General Zhou. He inspected it briefly and immediately arranged for one of his soldiers to test it on captive monsters.

A thundering shot resounded in the air. The blast from the Baole Cannon pierced straight through the beast and disintegrated half of its body. It was a beast that rivaled a first level True Breath realm cultivator.

The power of the blast didn't surprise the surrounding soldiers observing the trial. After all, it was weaker than the Fire God Cannon. Even though it proved fatal for a True Breath realm beast, similar Numinous Treasures did exist!

“Continue!” General Zhou said coolly. The warrior holding the cannon continued firing. Soon, the number of shots fired reached eighty, a hundred and sixty, three hundred and fifty, five hundred and thirty...

Gradually, the warrior’s breathing quickened with excitement. Those watching couldn’t maintain their composure either. Their eyes widened and slowly revealed their amazement and disbelief.

Zhou Lu, who had been standing at one side, was dazed as well.

General Zhou’s breathing quickened slightly as well.

The Baole Cannon was simply... stable beyond belief. Even though Numinous Treasures with similar destructive force were plenty, the reason that those treasures weren’t as prevalent in usage was that they were firstly, costly to make, and secondly... too unstable!

War was, after all, different from a mere friendly challenge. During a friendly challenge, one could switch their Numinous Treasures countless times. A Numinous Treasure would generally be fired a few times—at most, a few dozen or up to a hundred times. But in war, it was common to fire one Numinous Treasure a few hundred or a few thousand times.

The Baole Cannon was fired a total of a thousand and two hundred times before it showed signs of instability. The test was finally concluded, and there was silence in the air. Everyone held their breath, their eyes wide. When they looked at the Baole Cannon, a battle scene appeared in their mind.

In that scene, the Baole Cannon had been mass produced. After a salvo of Fire God Cannon shots, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands—perhaps even a million—Baole Cannon shots would be fired. Picturing that sent everyone shaking to their core.

“No wonder the Ethereal Dao College didn’t go around spreading news of this, but suppressed the news and contacted the military in secret... I’m afraid even Wang Baole himself is not fully aware of this cannon’s worth and what it truly means...” General Zhou muttered to himself.

Beside him, Zhou Lu remained unconvinced. She said quietly, “I examined it on my way back as well. Even though I don’t fully understand its workings, but I can tell the cannon isn’t that complex a Numinous Treasure. It’s just a matter of a few modified inscriptions. There are plenty of Dharmic Armament cultivators in the Federation, so why was it that no one has come up with this before?”

General Zhou stared calmly at Zhou Lu. When Zhou Lu finally lowered her head in uncertainty, he said in a cool voice, “There were many who thought the same when the Fire God Cannon was created. In fact, many people think like you when anything of any value is first created!”

“It’s just a matter of a few modified inscriptions... you try and modify one. If you are up to it, go ahead!”

## **Chapter 198: Know Not Shame**

The military’s testing of the Baole Cannon would not conclude so soon; time passed steadily in the following days as they did a comprehensive trial.

Operation Sword Sun soon became commonplace news in the Federation as mainstream media spread the news. It stirred a great debate and was the center of much attention. During that period, the Ethereal Dao College also issued an official announcement to all Upper Academy Island disciples regarding the selection of the hundred Federation seedlings!

As part of Operation Sword Sun, the hundred Federation seedlings would be nominated by every city lord and every political entity in the Federation. The nominees would report to the Federation and undergo the first round of selection.

Those who passed the first round of selection were to journey to the capital of the Federation and undergo the second round of selection. The final hundred people would be selected, without any order or ranking, and become the Federation's seedlings. They would be entitled to certain privileges and, at the same time, be given special grooming!

There were three hundred nominations from the Ethereal Dao College, but nobody knew how many would remain to become one of the hundred seedlings after the multiple rounds of elimination.

The three hundred nominations were spread across all pavilions, and the respective pavilions would submit their recommendations to the college for consideration. Out of the dozen or so names submitted by the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, Wang Baole's name stood out.

Regardless of the uneasy relations between the Dharmic Armament Pavilion's Pavilion Head and Wang Baole, and in spite of the position of Grand Elder remaining vacant and its final successor undecided—and the fight for the position growing fiercer—after what had happened, the Pavilion Head could no longer cow or intimidate Wang Baole.

In fact... he could not be intimidated!

Be it due to his contributions to the seventh primary stronghold or his achievements at Spirit Breath Village, Wang Baole's name had spread far and wide. Many knew of him in the four Dao colleges and in the military. For a disciple who hadn't yet been given an official post but whose reputation already preceded him, his existence would be the pride of any political entity.

Furthermore, Wang Baole's talents in Dharmic Armaments were astonishing. His achievements surpassed that of an ordinary Armament Soldier—from his self-created Numinous Treasure that shook the Armament Soldiers, to the miracle he performed before the Elder Request Drum, and finally, to the assessment given by the Grand Supreme Elder!

Excellent work!

Those less shrewd, upon hearing the two words, might think that they were the judgment and affirmation the Grand Supreme Elder had given for Wang Baole's Numinous Treasure. But the highly astute knew that the words "excellent work" did not refer solely to the Numinous Treasure; to a greater degree, they were an affirmation of Wang Baole himself!

Excellent work!

In such circumstances, the placement of Wang Baole's name at the top of the ranking was no longer that much of a surprise.

A week later, the nominations from every pavilion were finalized. When the list was announced, it stirred up a storm on the Upper Academy Island. The three hundred nominees suddenly became the center of attention belonging to the hundreds of thousands of people on the entire island.

“I see Zhuo Yifan on the list! I was guessing he’d be one of the nominees from the Combat Pavilion. After all, he’s ranked top in the first level True Breath realm during the Combat Pavilion Tournament!”

“There’re so many familiar names listed. There’s even Zhao Yameng from the Array Runes Pavilion. She’s the same batch as Wang Baole. I heard she keeps her head down in the Array Runes Pavilion, but that doesn’t stop the Array Runes Pavilion’s Pavilion Head, who still values her greatly!”

As the disciples engaged in fierce discussion, the Ethereal Dao College issued another notice regarding the Federation’s Hundred Seedling Plan. The notice intensified the focus on the three hundred nominees.

Even the nominees themselves were taken by surprise and overjoyed!

Wang Baole, especially, his eyeballs almost popped out. The college’s notice pertained to an unconditional promotion—all who advanced to become a Federation seedling would not only be rewarded by the college, they would also receive a promotion!

For example, Wang Baole was currently the head of the College Administrative Department. If he successfully became a Federation seedling, he would be promoted directly to the position of Deputy Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion!

Wang Baole couldn’t contain his excitement. He could sense the drastic difference in status and position after he had become the head of the College Administrative Department. If he were to rise to the position of Deputy Pavilion Head...

That would be, to a certain extent, an important figure!

Such an enticement drove the three hundred nominees, including Wang Baole, wild; their eagerness to become a Federation seedling grew more intense. They were to travel to the capital city of the Federation in half a month and report on the designated date, then go through the second round of selection. Amongst True Breath realm cultivators, those three hundred people were the cream of the crop; their cultivation was impressive, and they all had their own cruisers.

As a result, they didn’t depart together, but separately, on their own time. Many had left in their cruisers, heading straight for the Federation capital the next day.

Wang Baole went about his preparations as well. He contacted Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng and asked if they would like to travel together. They had become familiar with one another in Spirit Breath Village; even though they didn’t cross each other’s path often on Upper Academy Island, they regularly communicated via voice transmissions.

That was why Zhuo Yifan agreed immediately after Wang Baole raised the idea. Zhao Yameng, on the other hand, was more refined and reserved. She preferred peace and quiet and had intended to travel alone. However, after receiving Wang Baole’s voice transmission, she thought back to their experiences in Spirit Breath Village and finally agreed to travel together as well.



The three set to depart two days later, then went about preparing for the journey. They had to pass a second round of selection after they reach the capital city. Only after that, when they remain standing after thousands of nominees were eliminated, would they become one of the hundred Federation seedlings.

Wang Baole completed his simple preparations and tidied up. The night before they were leaving, as he inspected his Numinous Treasures to ensure he would go through the selection round that was to be held in the capital city without any obstacles, he received a voice transmission from General Zhou of the seventh primary stronghold.

General Zhou's voice carried a tinge of excitement and friendliness. They had conducted a comprehensive trial of the Baole Cannon, and his regard for the cannon had skyrocketed to an unimaginable extent.

That was why he didn't mince his words during the voice transmission and voiced his request directly.

"Wang Baole, we have a high opinion of the Baole Cannon you have created. We need at least a million of them. It would be nearly impossible for you to refine all of them, so would you be agreeable to selling the blueprints to us?"

"As for the price, due to many reasons, we're unable to pay you so much at one go, but we can pay you in installments. We guarantee you will receive payment every year, and that you'll be paid in full within ten years!"

"There's also the Federation's Hundred Seedling Plan, which is part of Operation Sword Sun... we can guarantee your success. When you reach the capital, just play along a bit. We've reserved a spot for you in the final hundred!"

General Zhou wasn't a businessman. Perhaps he couldn't be bothered to play any tricks where that matter was concerned, so he communicated the price the military was willing to pay without attempting to hide anything from Wang Baole and let him decide.

He valued the cannon, but he valued Wang Baole himself more!

When Wang Baole heard what General Zhou had said, he sucked in his breath, and his eyes widened. The general had listed a long list of conditions in one go. He was dazed for a bit, but then, all of a sudden, he realized his Baole Cannon might have exceeded his expectations in some aspects.

He was overwhelmed with excitement. If it had been somebody else, he might have negotiated the terms and tried to gain more benefits for himself. However, when facing the seventh primary stronghold and General Zhou, who spoke with such openness, he didn't choose to do so. He replied without hesitation.

"I have no problems with that. You can just set a price. In fact, if my cultivation and refining Numinous Treasures didn't cost me a fortune, I wouldn't even mind giving it away for free."

Upon hearing Wang Baole's answer, General Zhou laughed out loud. There was a fierce tone of admiration in his laughter, and it was clear that the general's temperament agreed with Wang Baole's answer. He discussed further details with Wang Baole, then ended the transmission.

Wang Baole's spirits soared as he placed the voice transmission ring down. His eyes shone brightly. He waved his arms around excitedly, stood up, and walked around in circles. Pulling out a large bottle of Ice Spirit Water, he gurgled it down. He was so excited that he could almost break into dance.

*A reserved seedling spot. Haha, the position of Deputy Pavilion Head is mine!* The feeling of being guaranteed a spot made his whole person loosen up. His excitement persisted till daybreak and didn't cease even when the time for him to meet Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng arrived.

With great excitement, and in a joyous mood, Wang Baole left his cave abode for the agreed upon gathering place. It didn't take long before Zhuo Yifan—charming, poised, blessed with unearthly good looks and dressed in robes—and Zhao Yameng—elegant, dignified, gifted with an unworldly beauty, her long silky hair drifting in the breeze and a faint, angelic smile on her lips—appeared!

Zhuo Yifan wasn't alone. Following behind him were two disciples from the Combat Pavilion. Though, in the presence of Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng, they seemed insignificant and dull.

Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng's approach was akin to a golden couple's entrance. It was as if they epitomized the very beauty of the earth, and the surrounding disciples looked on with envy. Many female disciples in the crowd gazed at Zhuo Yifan with adoration while a great many of the male disciples were driven to shame when they stared at Zhao Yameng. In the presence of Zhao Yameng, they almost couldn't control their urge to protect and guard her. They dared not besmirch her in the slightest.

Wang Baole felt nothing of the sort. When he saw the pair, he laughed out loud and walked up to them. After pulling Zhuo Yifan into a hug, without any hesitation, and as the countless male disciples watched on, raging, Wang Baole drew Zhao Yameng into an embrace.

Zhuo Yifan let out a dry cough. A helpless sense of exasperation accompanied his every encounter with Wang Baole. But after the Spirit Breath Village affair, he couldn't help but feel gratitude towards and affection for Wang Baole.

As for Zhao Yameng, the expression on her face remained unchanged. She had a gentle, dignified smile on her face, and her gaze was calm.

"I'm relieved to see you guys. With the three of us together, we'll form the perfect team. After all, in terms of looks, we're all in the same league. Every time I see you guys, it almost feels like I'm looking into the mirror," Wang Baole smacked his tummy and said in a pleased tone.

Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng gave no reaction, but every single person in the crowd had an odd look on their faces. They seemed to be secretly voicing the same question in their hearts...

*Where the hell is his sense of shame?*

## **Chapter 199: Coulomb Basin**

"Baole, these two are my junior brothers whom I befriended in the Combat Pavilion. They are on a mission for the college. Since we're all traveling in the same direction, they thought of traveling together

with me. What say you..." Zhuo Yifan coughed, interrupting Wang Baole as the latter basked in his own glory.

The two disciples behind Zhuo Yifan had ordinary looks, and their cultivation was at the second level of True Breath realm. They stepped forward immediately and cupped their fists, greeting Wang Baole.

"Greetings to Senior Brother Wang!" It was clear that Zhuo Yifan had spoken to them about Wang Baole before arriving there. Furthermore, Wang Baole's name on the Upper Academy Island had spread far and wide. As a result, the pair were very cordial to him.

"No problem, we'll all from the same college. Yifan's friends are my friends too. We'll head off together!" Wang Baole laughed out loud and agreed to their request. Then, he retrieved his droplet-shaped luxury cruiser and hopped on.

"Come on board, let's set off!"

Zhuo Yifan smiled and shook his head. He gestured towards Zhao Yameng, who was standing at one side, to board first.

Zhao Yameng smiled and nodded. With a cool and dignified look, she stepped onto the cruiser and sat down. Zhuo Yifan and his junior brothers from the Combat Pavilion followed suit and boarded the cruiser.

Wang Baole's old cruiser wouldn't have been able to seat so many people. However, his current cruiser was only given to people who were Deputy Pavilion Heads or their equals. Even with five of them on board, it still felt spacious.

Under Wang Baole's steering, the cruiser soon headed straight for the skies. It dashed through the clouds and raced towards the distant heavens. Its speed vastly surpassed that of an ordinary cruiser.

Based on Wang Baole's cruising speed, they needed an estimated twenty hours before they would reach the Federation's capital city. They had departed earlier so that they could check out the city first and had the intention of familiarizing themselves with the place. Be it Wang Baole or Zhuo Yifan, they had never been to the capital city.

As the cruiser flew swiftly along, Wang Baole stopped standing around like an idiot. He sat down and looked at Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng, and emotions stirred in his heart. He had thought the speed he had advanced his cultivation to be really fast; he had not expected that Zhao Yameng was not slow in hers as well. She seemed to be at the fourth level of the True Breath realm.

Zhuo Yifan was slightly slower, but he still peaked at the third level of True Breath realm. He gave the impression that he might break through his current level quickly.

*Everyone has their own secrets. Be it Zhuo Yifan or Zhao Yameng, they must be hiding gifts that others do not know.* Upon realizing that, Wang Baole started chatting with them.

"You've all advanced to become your respective pavilions' Array Rune Soldier and Combat Soldier?"

"Have you heard, the competition for the Federation's upcoming Hundred Seedling Plan is going to be brutal. It's a one in a million chance. You'll need not only capability but incredible luck. The criteria for physical good looks are equally stringent. There are few who will qualify, but I should have no problems.

Are you guys confident of your chances?” Wang Baole said, inwardly pleased. However, he soon sunk into low spirits.

Zhao Yameng was too reserved and quiet, inclined towards listening rather than talking. Zhuo Yifan, on the other hand, having undergone tough cultivation in the college, had cultivated a more restrained character as well. As a result, after having spoken for so long, Wang Baole watched as the two stared at him—one with her large eyes and the other with an expressionless face—and slowly, could not bring himself to continue speaking any further.

Wang Baole slapped his forehead and turned towards the two Combat Pavilion disciples, who had odd looks on their faces. He asked curiously, “Where are you headed?”

It was clear that it was their first time onboard a cruiser with such high flying speeds. It was moving so much more quickly than their own. They were respectful and in awe of Wang Baole, who owned such a cruiser. When they heard his question, one of them answered immediately.

“We’re headed for the Coulomb Basin.”

After he said that, the other junior brother next to him continued, “A student from the Alchemy Faculty on the Lower Academy Island applied for leave to visit his home a week ago. Six hours earlier, he sought help from the Lower Academy Island. He had met with beasts while traveling through the Coulomb Basin. He’s trapped in the basin, but it’s not life-threatening.”

“The Lower Academy Island contacted a few small Dao colleges near the Coulomb Basin and requested they send out rescue during the night. At the same time, the Lower Academy Island also submitted a mission request to the Combat Pavilion. The two of us are heading to support the rescue mission and prevent any accidents from taking place.”

There was no need to protect the confidentiality of such missions, as the Ethereal Dao College received many similar missions. The guards who had been stationed on the cruiser when Wang Baole had first returned home had been Upper Academy Island disciples who had been tasked with a mission.

In general, when students from the Lower Academy Island met with trouble, the Lower Academy Island would assess the severity of the matter before submitting a request to the Upper Academy Island, who would then arrange for students to resolve the problem. The Combat Pavilion disciples formed the main task force that completed those missions.

The pair did not conceal anything from the rest and lay out the details truthfully. Wang Baole recalled how he had been trapped in the Pond Cloud Rainforest. Concerned, he asked a few more questions and found out that the strongest beasts in the Coulomb Basin were only at the True Breath realm. The trapped disciple was also currently hiding in a safe spot. However, his location was surrounded by monsters, and they needed to eliminate the monsters one by one. As such, the rescue effort was still in process. Upon hearing that, he sighed in relief.

He knew that time was of the essence, so he released his Spirit Qi and increased the speed of the cruiser. The cruiser raced towards the location of the Coulomb Basin as shown on the map. It was smacked right in the middle of their way to the capital city.

The journey was neither long nor brief. Six hours passed quickly as Wang Baole kept talking. Once in a while, Zhuo Yifan would reply a few words. The two Combat Pavilion disciples would also join in, pulling out their voice transmission rings and communicating with the trapped Lower Academy Island student from time to time in order to confirm his location and safety.

One hour passed. A journey that should have taken much longer ended earlier due to Wang Baole's unique cruiser and him increasing its speed.

Beneath the cruiser was a vast expanse of green. It was a huge basin and was overgrown with vegetation, making the entire recessed area look like a swamp.

Such a geographical landscape occupied a great portion of the lands within the Federation.

It was at that moment that the two disciples received a voice transmission. There was joy on their faces, and they lifted their heads and said, "The guy's been rescued. He's safe—he just got a fright."

"We'll not pose further inconvenience on senior brothers and senior sister. We'll be leaving on our cruisers here and heading to our destination." The pair stood and cupped their fists at Wang Baole, Zhuo Yifan, and Zhao Yameng.

The cruiser stopped, and the pair bade farewell and left.

Wang Baole gazed at their retreating backs; he was slightly moved. He steered the cruiser away from the basin and looked at Zhuo Yifan.

"Your Combat Pavilion must receive quite a number of similar missions?"

"The Combat Pavilion receives hundreds, even up to a thousand, missions daily. These missions have to be completed by the disciples. Sometimes, there would be more missions than usual. That's why in general, there aren't many Combat Pavilion disciples on the Upper Academy Island."

"How about you, how many have you completed?" Wang Baole was curious.

"To date, I've completed seventy-three missions since enrolling on the Upper Academy Island." If it had been anyone else, Zhuo Yifan wouldn't have given such a detailed answer, but Wang Baole had asked, and he instinctively replied honestly.

"What about the casualty rate? I heard that except for certain special missions that could only be completed by a single person, the college would apply the twin standard for other missions outside the college. I also heard the resources sent would be three levels above the required cultivation level?" Zhao Yameng, who had been sitting at one side without uttering more than a few words, suddenly asked, after hearing what Zhuo Yifan said.

Wang Baole hadn't tried to find out more about missions outside the college. He got curious when he heard that.

"Twin standard? Three levels above the required cultivation level?"

"The three-level leap, simply put, is this: for example, if a Physical Seal realm disciple meets with trouble, a second level True Breath realm cultivator would be sent to support. If a third level True Breath realm disciple meets with trouble, a Foundation Establishment realm cultivator would be sent! As for

the twin standard—based on the difficulty of the mission, instead of sending one person who was capable of completing it, we would send two of the same caliber!”

“Such arrangements would greatly reduce the number of accidents and casualties. But even with that in place, nearly a tenth of the disciples continue to be injured or killed every year,” Zhuo Yifan explained.

Zhao Yameng frowned and looked deep in thought. Wang Baole was about to continue asking more questions after hearing Zhuo Yifan’s explanation.

It was then that Zhao Yameng suddenly stood up, and the frown on her brow deepened. She stood in the cruiser, her head lowered and gazing towards the distant Coulomb Basin. She said, softly, “Do you feel... that this basin is a little too quiet? Since our approach, up until when we left, I did not see a single beast—not even an avian creature!”

There was a gleam in Wang Baole’s eyes, and he stopped the cruiser in mid-air abruptly. Zhuo Yifan froze for a moment before a solemn look appeared on his face. The two looked towards the distant basin. However, it was too far away and indiscernible to their eyes.

“Yifan, send a voice transmission to your two junior brothers and ask if they’re safe!” Wang Baole said immediately.

Zhuo Yifan pulled out his voice transmission ring almost as soon as Wang Baole spoke. He quickly contacted the two Combat Pavilion disciples, even turning on the video call function. He saw the two disciples and the student they had found; all three of them looked fine. The transmission ended, but a moment later, the normal expression on Zhuo Yifan’s face was replaced by one of extreme solemnity. Zhuo Yifan looked at Zhao Yameng and Wang Baole.

“They look normal and have intercepted the student from the Lower Academy Island. They will relocate to a safe spot and return tomorrow. There’s nothing out of the ordinary with their tone, but they didn’t use the secret code word we of the Combat Pavilion are supposed to use during missions... such a blunder is considered a serious oversight to the Combat Pavilion!”

Upon hearing Zhuo Yifan’s words, the expressions on Wang Baole’s and Zhao Yameng’s faces changed.

“Something’s wrong!” Zhuo Yifan sucked in a deep breath. He gazed at Coulomb Basin, a frosty glint flashing across his eyes.

## **Chapter 200: An Upheaval!**

“Such matters have to be reported to the college immediately. We’re not allowed to take action unilaterally. We have to do whatever the college commands!” Zhuo Yifan sucked in a deep breath. As a disciple of the Combat Pavilion who had carried out dozens of missions, he was more experienced in handling such unexpected happenings. As he spoke, he was already turning on his voice transmission ring and sending a message to the college.

Wang Baole’s expression was grave, and Zhao Yameng looked equally serious. However, the instant Zhuo Yifan started his transmission, a thunderous sound rang out suddenly from the distant sky.

Boom, the sound transformed into aural waves that swept outward in all directions, stirring invisible waves that shook the cruiser. For a moment, Wang Baole's and the others' breathing stilled. A bolt of lightning dashed across the sky, lighting up the sky, and split the heavens into two. At the same instant, it seemed to disrupt the transmission signal. In the same breath, Zhuo Yifan's voice transmission ring exploded into pieces!

The voice transmission ring broke into pieces. It was as if the lightning bolt had not only disrupted the signal, but the force of its aural waves had traveled through the voice transmission ring as well. The voice transmission ring, unable to withstand the shockwaves, shattered instantly.

The sight sent their heads buzzing with white noise!

Everything happened too quickly. From Zhuo Yifan's voice transmission to the roaring thunder, then the sudden lightning, followed by the shattering of Zhuo Yifan's voice transmission ring—it all took place within the snap of the fingers!

The expression on Zhao Yameng's face shifted, and Zhuo Yifan was stunned beyond belief. Wang Baole's breath quickened, the look on his face severe. Waves of emotions rolled and boiled within him. However, he was the quickest to react. He immediately steered the cruiser and raced at full speed towards the distance where the loud thunderous explosion occurred.

Zhao Yameng and Zhuo Yifan weren't ordinary people. Despite their shock, they quickly sent their Spirit Qi into the cruiser. The cruiser's speed surged, and it bolted forward like the long arc of a rainbow.

Zhao Yameng turned her voice transmission ring on and tried to contact the college again, but her face soon turned pale. The voice transmission ring had malfunctioned!

As the cruiser charged forward, clouds began rolling and boiling over in the sky. It darkened all of a sudden, and a vast spread of thunder clouds appeared in the heavens. It spread rapidly outwards, the speed of which surpassed that of the cruiser, and it caught up in an instant and blanketed the cruiser!

From afar, the sight looked terrifying and awesome. The cruiser flew in mid-air, and above it, dark clouds rolled and rapidly took over the blue sky—even spreading past the cruiser and blanketing everything under the heavens!

The shadow it cast was so large it blanketed not only the whole of the Coulomb Basin but the vast surrounding lands as well. A dark mist started rising from the ground, and the clouds in the sky and the mist on land moved swiftly to meet in the middle!

It was like a seal closing off the land, transforming it into no man's land!

The no man's land was like hell, concealing the heavens and the Sword Sun, and bolts of lightning dashed from the skies and exploded thunderously!

Wang Baole and the rest had no time for fear, or to wonder the cause of such a horrifying event. They fused their entire cultivation into the cruiser and pushed its speed to the maximum, breaking the sound barrier and racing forward amid the clashing thunder and lightning on their heels!

Before them, the clouds descending from the sky and the mist rising from the land met rapidly. The space separating the two shrunk until only a narrow opening remained. That was the only way out!

“We need to go faster!” Wang Baole shouted, the veins in his forehead pulsing. Zhao Yameng’s face was deathly pale, and Zhuo Yifan’s forehead was beaded with perspiration. The three of them had released their full cultivation. The cruiser itself was of an extraordinary make, and with the full power of the three unleashed into it, it moved faster and faster.

From afar, one could see the dark clouds surrounding Wang Baole’s cruiser, and before them, a singular narrow opening that was shrinking quickly.

From the opening, one could see the white clouds and blue skies beyond!

At that instant, when it seemed as if the clouds and mist were about to seal the opening shut completely, the cruiser finally neared with full speed. It approached the rapidly closing opening and was about to dash out.

It was then... something suddenly happened again!

Sounds of chattering exploded from the ground, and the Coulomb Basin surged dozens of meters into the air. It was as if there was a giant snake roaring as it traveling swiftly underground in a straight line, then struck suddenly from below!

The three were shaken to the core by the speed of the attack. As the cruiser was about to dash out through the opening and escape the jaws of death... a deafening sound, louder than the roaring thunderbolts, rose from the earth.

As the sound rang out, the earth collapsed, and a gigantic creature appeared. It was not a giant snake, but a huge, awesome hand formed from a tree.

The tree-hand was like a towering, heaven-piercing tree. There were hundreds of cocoons protruding from it, and as the giant hand reached out, huge quantities of mud and earth splattered. Countless stones large and small as well as grass and trees were torn from the earth and sent flying through the air, crashing down.

The giant hand moved without pausing and, with an earth-shattering force, reached for the cruiser in the air where Wang Baole and the others were in—grabbing them in a single swipe!

It was too fast. Despite the cruiser traveling at maximum speed, it was unable to escape. It didn’t even have time to react. Wang Baole and his friends quaked in fear and shock as the giant tree-hand captured their cruiser!

The cruiser shook fiercely, and blood started dripping from their mouths. They were struck dumb.

“Evacuate!” Wang Baole thundered before leaping out of the cruiser without hesitation. Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng dashed out almost at the same time as Wang Baole. They were all men and women of decisiveness, and they chose to immediately evacuate the cruiser at the critical moment. Zhuo Yifan and Zhao Yameng summoned their own cruisers in mid-air, while Wang Baole quickly pulled out the standard cruiser the college had given him after he had risen to Armament Soldier.

They threw in all they had. There was no time to communicate with one another, but everyone immediately dashed towards the opening before them.



However, in the span of the minor disruption, the narrow opening before them had closed before their eyes. The clouds and mist rolled over in waves, merged as one, and sealed the land shut!

There was an eeriness to the dimension. The dark mist seemed to cast out threads that looked like tentacles. They were frightening to look at. One could imagine the dangers that would befall him if he should approach them!

As the expressions on the three's faces shifted, the giant tree-hand that had risen from the earth and caught the droplet-shaped cruiser suddenly let loose a chattering sound. The hundreds of cocoons protruding from its skin suddenly split open.

Exposed within... were human bodies!

There were not many cultivators amongst them. Most were of the Ancient Martial realm and dressed in different attires. There was a large group of them who wore the same uniforms and were obviously from a prominent establishment. As for the rest, they were all dressed differently. Amongst them was one who had on the student robes of the Lower Academy Island!

Another two... were the Combat Pavilion disciples who had traveled together with Wang Baole and the others!

They had their eyes shut, and their chests rose and fell; they were clearly not corpses. The aura exuding from them seemed normal, and one couldn't find anything wrong with them. It was as if they had fallen into a deep sleep!

Wang Baole was once again shaken by the scene before him. The expression on his face was grave beyond measure as he stared at the cultivators with disbelief.

"They're..." Zhuo Yifan was taken aback as well. Zhao Yameng's breathing quickened, and her eyes revealed her shock. They realized immediately without having to think for too long...

The voice and video transmission with the two Combat Pavilion students had been fake. It had been created from some spell they weren't aware of. Even the transmission the two Combat Pavilion disciples had received on the cruiser from the student reporting the latter's secure status had been fake!

After knowing that, and after studying the contents of the voice transmissions, it wasn't hard to conclude that the mastermind behind that didn't intend to blow things up—perhaps he hadn't originally intended to strike at them.

However, Zhuo Yifan's voice transmission to the college would expose what he had been trying to keep under wraps. That was why he had decided to reveal himself and attack them... to silence them!

As the three of them stood stunned, the people within the cocoons who had their eyes shut suddenly opened their eyes. Their gazes were calm, and there was no sign of their mind being stolen from them. They were silent, but murderous intent shone in their eyes. They dashed out and charged straight at Wang Baole and his friends!

As they charged, the people who were originally at the Ancient Martial realm suddenly unleashed energy waves of True Breath realm from their bodies!

What was even more shocking was that they could actually fly here. There seemed to be a power that was in their sole possession, that gave them enhanced cultivation and, at the same time, allowed them to float in mid-air!

“An assimilation?” Zhao Yameng’s face was pale, and there was uncertainty in her voice.