

Worth 731

Chapter 731: A Sense of Shame? What's That?

Wang Baole was oblivious to the battle taking place between his senior brother Chen Qing and the armored man. It didn't influence the decision he finally settled on. He only took a while before his eyes flashed with determination, and he finally made up his mind.

Over-thinking will just make it difficult for me to decide. Of course, I have to weigh the risks involved in the final decision made, but such excessive wariness... isn't the act of a real man. Senior Brother has helped me so many times. I shouldn't doubt him on this! Wang Baole took a deep breath then pressed his palms together in a series of hand seals. He immediately began learning the mystic technique that Chen Qing had given him.

The mystic technique wasn't meant to improve his level of cultivation. Instead, it was to allow him the ability to change and create an illusion of himself. Wang Baole used the Dark Art to quicken his learning process. A few hours later, he opened his eyes, which had two ghostly spheres of light shimmering within.

His body blurred as he split into multiple forms, and soon, multiple replicas of himself overlaid one another. Upon closer examination, one would count nine replicas in total.

"Avatar, appear!" Wang Baole barked. Then, an avatar separated from him slowly, drifting aside. It was followed by the second, then the third, all the way up to the ninth avatar. They fused together rapidly and finally reappeared as a singular avatar before Wang Baole. It looked no different from Wang Baole's true form.

He was identical in both flesh and blood, as well as in spirit. Wang Baole's Stellar Nascent Soul had split in half as well, with one half entering the avatar. In fact, one could no longer simply call him an avatar. He was Wang Baole's... second Essence Soul!

A person's second Essence Soul shared everything with his true form. That was why he shouldn't resort to self-destructing his second Essence Soul recklessly. The second Essence Soul's level of cultivation and battle capabilities were only slightly weaker than the true form's abilities. For Wang Baole, it meant that his second Essence Soul was at the early-stage Nascent Soul realm.

That didn't detract from how amazing the mystic technique was. It wasn't the same as Wang Baole's previous forms of avatars. This second Nascent Soul realm Essence Soul could train independently. When he returned and fused with Wang Baole's true form, Wang Baole would receive a boost in cultivation as well. The second Essence Soul straddled the realms of reality and illusion, and Wang Baole could switch his true form with his Essence Soul anytime!

These two very important points were why Chen Qing had given this mystic technique to Wang Baole!

After examining the unique traits of his avatar, Wang Baole took a deep breath then shut his eyes. The moment his eyes fell shut... his second Essence Soul opened his eyes!

It's similar to controlling my previous avatars in many ways, and different in some as well... Wang Baole Number Two raised his hand and touched his own face. He stared at Wang Baole Number One next to him. The latter's eyes opened instantly, and they began a staring contest.

"In the past, controlling my avatar was like controlling a part of myself, like moving my arm. With a single thought, I could get it to execute all my orders. This avatar though... it's no longer like an arm. It's like having another me!" Wang Baole Number Two muttered as he stared at Wang Baole Number One. He coughed.

"What do you think?"

"Seems like it. Interesting," Wang Baole Number One said as he rubbed his chin and nodded.

"In that case, you stay here and have a good nap. I'll go outside and check out what's going on. I'll try and look for traces of Senior Brother at the same time as well," Wang Baole Number Two said seriously.

"Alright. Be careful while you're outside. If possible, try to find out how far away we are from the Solar System as well," Wang Baole Number One said with a contemplative look. Then, he stared at Wang Baole Number Two again.

"Does this look lame? Us talking to each other like this? We're clearly one person, but we have to pretend to have a conversation like two separate people... what do you think Senior Brother was thinking when he came up with this mystic technique? He should have a second Essence Soul as well. I think... based on Senior Brother's character, he might have made his second Essence Soul a woman..." After a long while, Wang Baole Number Two blinked and said.

"I think so too! But we, Wang Baoles, are righteous folks. We won't even think about doing something as perverted as that. We do have to get used to talking like this from now on though!" Wang Baole Number One took a deep breath and said in all solemnness.

"Alright... I'm off then. I'll leave you with these parting words. Wang Baole, you're really handsome!"

"Wang Baole, you're incredibly handsome too!"

Wang Baole Number One and Wang Baole Number Two's spirits soared when they heard the other's earnest and so very honest compliments of themselves. Wang Baole Number One handed his storage bag to Wang Baole Number Two. Then, the latter unleashed his Dark Fire and sent it towards the coffin lid. The moment the Dark Fire came into contact with the coffin, Wang Baole Number Two transformed into an illusory sphere of fire that passed straight through the coffin!

When he reappeared again... he was outside the coffin!

The coffin was surrounded by ice that was a mix of black and brown. An intense chill that seemed capable of freezing one's soul attacked Wang Baole Number Two immediately. His eyes flashed, and he extended his Divine Sense to their limits. It turned out that they could only go as far as a hundred feet. Fortunately, he could see his surroundings clearly. He was standing in a layer of ice of an unknown age, and the coffin was buried deep under the ice. However, beyond that, he couldn't sense anything!

The coffin's unique properties might have prevented the ice from caving in after the coffin's abrupt entry. It had seemingly passed through the layer of ice and appeared under it. An overwhelming

suppressive force permeated the icy surrounding and its chilly air. Wang Baole's form was still in an illusory state. Even so, it couldn't withstand the cold. He was sure that if his second Essence Soul had materialized physically, he would very quickly freeze and die.

After a simple survey of the surroundings, Wang Baole decided not to linger on the spot. His illusory form blurred and began racing upwards, towards the surface. It was a painful journey to undertake. The chill in the ice continued to accumulate in his body as he persisted upwards. It began to affect his thoughts.

Fortunately, he had his Stellar Nascent Soul and his Dark Fire. Both continuously pushed back against the creeping cold. Hours later, Wang Baole's illusory form finally dashed out of the ice and appeared inside a cave!

There was no ice in the cave. Nevertheless, it was still chilly. Wang Baole scanned his surroundings, then lifted his head and stared at the frozen ground. Two ghostly lights appeared and lit his illusory form's head from the inside.

Is this a planet? Wang Baole wondered to himself. His senses extended beyond the layer of ice. Nothing stopped him as his senses stretched further outward.

Even so, Wang Baole could sense a certain degree of suppressive energy present in this world. Its Spirit Qi was significantly richer than the Spirit Qi in the Federation. However, absorbing it seemed a slight challenge. There was something stopping him from doing so.

There were clearly different rules at play here. A flicker of light crossed Wang Baole's eyes. He raced towards the skies and activated his cultivation before stretching his Divine Sense to their limits. It didn't take long before his Divine Sense extended beyond the patch of icy land and reached what lay beyond!

The skies weren't a pale blue. They were shades darker. They looked similar to the skies of Earth. The sun stood high in the skies and gave off light and warmth, but the light was cold, and the warmth not enough to melt the ice on the ground!

As for the lands... with a single glance, he saw the rise and fall of mountainous forms. The place looked wild, the plant life frightening. Not all of the land was covered in ice and snow. However, the soil was hard. That, as well as the moisture in the air, were chilly as well. The winds themselves were a piercing cold that seeped into one's bones!

In the distance was a mountain that had caved in. Shattered rocks littered the place, and underneath the piles of rocks was a huge crater that contained four corpses. Beyond the crater was a person running farther into the distance, seemingly injured.

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes and swept them over the person running further away from him. The latter appeared not to have noticed his presence. Then, with a sudden shift, Wang Baole appeared next to the crater. His eyes landed on the four corpses. They had died recently, and their bodies had been searched.

Murder and robbery? Wang Baole rubbed his chin. He then raised his right hand and formed a couple of hand seals, pointing at the corpses.

"Soul, form!"

At that exact moment, beyond the Divine Eye System, within the array formation formed from thousands of Eternal Stars, an intense battle was taking place as well. Chen Qing was exuding a fierce aura, one that was more intense than usual. Wang Baole's choice had made him happy and brought him a measure of comfort as well.

The armored man, on the other hand, didn't look as well. He had thought he had found Chen Qing's weakness. He had intended to exploit that weakness and distract Chen Qing. It didn't matter the degree of distraction, any form of it would give him an opening. What had happened instead had been beyond his expectations. The boy, whom he had viewed as a mere ant, hadn't been affected at all by his baiting.

"I was overly hasty. My plan would have succeeded if I'd simply been patient and waited a while longer!"

Chapter 732: Long Nanzi!

No one knew how long Chen Qing's battle would last. It might end quickly, or it might drag on for much longer. For cultivators in that league, time itself... was a weapon.

Wang Baole wasn't entirely sure what had happened, but he could make his own educated guesses. As he emerged above ground and stared at the world around him, realization dawned upon him. He was possibly going to spend quite some time alone in a foreign civilization.

That was why what he needed to do now was find out what he could about the civilization he was in. He formed a series of hand seals and summoned the souls of the four recently dead corpses with his Dark Art. Four incomplete souls gathered before him in wisps and finally transformed into four spirits invisible to the eyes of others.

Without any hesitation, Wang Baole raised his right hand and clawed through the air. The four souls raced towards him and entered his palm. Their past memories flooded Wang Baole's mind.

After tidying up their memories, Wang Baole finally pieced together what had happened prior to their deaths. The four of them—and the one who had escaped earlier—had sensed a meteor's landing. Since they had been in the area, they had hurried over to check it out.

Wang Baole did some calculations. He was quite sure that the meteor that they had seen had been a result of the coffin's landing. It might have been due to the unique nature of the coffin or something his senior brother had done. During its travel in space, the coffin had attracted certain materials that had clearly been quite valuable. That must have been the cause of the fight amongst the five cultivators.

Four of them had died in the fight, while one had survived with some injuries. The survivor had taken everything and escaped.

That should be the gist of it. Wang Baole continued to go through the new information he had just received. His eyes glowed as he came upon information regarding this world!

The Divine Eye civilization was twice the size of the Solar System and was spread across twenty-three planets. Its cultivation hierarchy was similar to what Wang Baole had come across. Cultivation levels were split into the Planet realm and the Eternal Star realm.

Its society was structured differently from the Federation though. In the past, the civilization had been governed by a royal monarch. However, as time passed, the royalty gradually lost power while the people grew stronger. They came together and set up numerous sects.

Then, resources became more sparse. It became a dog-eat-dog world. The royal family was essentially neutered and powerless to interfere. The Divine Eye civilization underwent another transformation then. It became a society that revolved around pillaging and plunder, a hostile place filled with pirates and robbers!

They robbed their own and those from other civilizations. It was all in the name of one's own survival. In fact, there were no laws fixed in stone in this civilization. Only one law prevailed, and it was that the strong prevailed over the weak. Every sect and institution had gone over to the dark side!

Luck appeared to be on the Divine Eye civilization's side. The civilizations found on the planets and in the star systems around it were not very advanced. The Divine Eye civilization also took care not to attack those stronger than it was. It grew increasingly powerful as the years passed and saw the emergence of three Planet realm cultivators!

These three cultivators might only be at the early stage of the Planet realm, but that was still sufficient to overpower everyone in the Divine Eye civilization. They formed three great sects, superseding the royal family's authority and claiming six to seven planets as their own. They were sects in name, a big gang of bandits in reality!

Their missions were generally invasions of extraterrestrial civilizations. They plundered and pillaged, and they killed when they could. When they weren't a match for the enemy, they escaped after stealing whatever they could. The structure of such a civilization, as well as the status of these three great sects, led to numerous smaller sects requesting to be affiliated to them.

The smaller, minor sects presented vast resources as tributes to the three great sects. In exchange, they were allowed to survive. The vast resources had to be acquired somehow. That was why every one of these minor sects maintained their own group of pirates.

They would carry out independent raids in search of resources. When the three greater sects gave their orders, these minor sects would execute them in unison. It was in this manner that the power and influence of the three great sects grew and expanded.

As the three great sects continued to amass resources and groom their disciples, numerous Soul Conduit realm cultivators and even more Nascent Soul realm cultivators began to emerge in their midst. The tensions amongst the three sects never ceased though. They all desired to take over the other two sects so that they could become more powerful. However, they were all equally powerful. The current three-way political structure was too unstable. As a result, while conflict continued to persist amongst them, the three sects tried their best to maintain the current balance of power and prevent tensions from escalating.

As Wang Baole continued digging through the souls' memories for information on the Divine Eye civilization, he caught a glimpse of the transport they had used for raids. Amongst them was a small, yet obviously valuable cruiser that was in the form of a living creature. He stared at it for a very long time, then blinked.

It looked familiar...

It was a black jellyfish. Wang Baole had owned one in the past. Sea Glutton, it had been called. He had handed it over to one of his Artifact Souls. His intention had been to destroy its original seal and use it to travel across space, but his battle with You Ran had forced him to use it for the repair of his Dark Sampan.

He recalled the Sea Glutton's original owners—the three extraterrestrial Nascent Soul realm cultivators who had infiltrated the Federation. As he recalled the series of criminal activities they had committed then, a strange look settled on his face. He fell into a contemplative silence. Finally, his eyes narrowed.

Were they from around here as well?

This should mean that I'm not far from the Solar System... right? Wang Baole's eyes widened. He was quite confident in his assessment. Unfortunately, the souls of the four dead were incomplete, so he couldn't get much information about his current whereabouts from them.

After a long moment of contemplation, Wang Baole decided to transform himself into one of the dead people. He'd infiltrate the Divine Eye civilization, find a star map of this region, and maybe search for other valuable information.

Too old. Not for me.

This one's a girl. Her looks aren't bad. But what a pity, she's not for me.

This one's too thin!

It seems like I'm left with no other choice but this guy. I suppose he'll have to do. After a round of inspection, Wang Baole finally settled on a middle-aged cultivator with relatively good looks.

He had been at the late-stage Core Formation realm prior to his death. Wang Baole found out from his soul's memories that his name was Long Nanzi. Long Nanzi was part of one of the many smaller sects called Holy Crest Sect, which was affiliated to the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect.

The Holy Crest Sect might be a small sect, but it was known for its skills at refining artifacts. That gained it some measure of influence in the civilization. There was an early-stage Soul Conduit realm elder in the sect as well. That gained the sect a seat at the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect's table. It maintained its own group of pirates and occasionally was given the opportunity to join the greater sect in raids.

The Holy Crest Sect seemed to be facing some sort of trouble currently. Many of its disciples were out, using their own means to secure resources for refining artifacts and for their own cultivation.

Having gotten the gist of the situation, Wang Baole raised his right hand and placed it on the corpse. His illusory form began to solidify. Within ten counts, he had transformed into the exact form of the dead cultivator on the ground!

COMMENT

His aura was identical to the dead cultivator's. Even Long Nanzi's closest friends wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

It was impossible to ensure his gestures, expressions, and habits were identical to the original Long Nanzi's. However, based on this man's memories, the hostile Divine Eye civilization ensured that no one truly trusted anyone. Everyone was always on constant alert. Naturally, no one truly knew one another.

Even though he isn't as good looking as I am, I suppose beggars can't be choosers. He'll have to do. Wang Baole touched his own face, sighed, then lifted his right hand and waved. Long Nanzi's corpse turned to dust instantly and dissipated in the wind.

Wang Baole observed his body. He could sense power in the air weighing down on him. His aura began to change. When the suppressive force in the air dissipated, the Spirit Qi in the air finally felt easier on his senses. He could absorb it now, without obstruction, and allow the Spirit Qi to flow smoothly into his body.

Next, let's go check out this Divine Eye civilization and see what special stuff it's got... Wang Baole's eyes flashed. He took a step forward and flew into the air. He kept his cultivation at the perfected Core Formation realm, then headed in the direction of the sect as Long Nanzi had remembered.

Wang Baole observed the alien land beneath his feet and the foreign skies above his head as he made his way through this world. Excitement began to unfurl inside him. He was an outsider in a foreign land and an alien civilization. He had nothing to lose here. He could do anything he wanted, and he looked forward to that!

Chapter 733: The Holy Crest Sect!

The Holy Crest Sect was a minor sect that was affiliated to the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect, one of the three great sects in the Divine Eye civilization. Its influence and clout were insignificant to the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect, and it had fewer than a thousand followers. However, the Holy Crest Sect had a few unique strengths in refining artifacts. The sect's Grand Supreme Elder also possessed great cultivation. He had achieved the Soul Conduit realm many years ago and had always paid proper tribute to the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect.

That was why the missions assigned to the Holy Crest Sect during the occasional large-scale hunt were generally easy ones that weren't very dangerous yet yielded relatively generous rewards.

The Holy Crest Sect would also conduct frequent raids to replenish its inventory. This ensured that their heavy consumption of resources when refining artifacts remained sustainable, that life remained comfortable, and that time in the sect was passed in a rich and relatively meaningful way.

Unfortunately, the Holy Crest Sect's luck had taken a turn for the worse when they had come across some powerful opponents during the last raid a few months ago. As a result of the failed raid, they had not only been unable to gather new resources but had lost their own in the fight. In general, the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect wouldn't provide aid for independent raids conducted by their affiliated sects. Unless the latter presented the former with vast resources beyond their normal tribute, the Divine Sovereign Justice Sect wouldn't interfere. The Holy Crest Sect was left to their own devices.

The Holy Crest Sect had suffered heavy losses from the raid, and the fact that the season for making tribute every year was approaching made things worse. Everyone in the sect was plagued by worry.

They tightened their belts while their hunger for resources—for refining artifacts and cultivation—intensified and reached its climax.

Inner sect disciples often went out and employed all means and ways to resolve their need for resources. Some made their artifact refinement services available to others, while others joined other sects. Some began fighting amongst themselves. Others, like Long Nanzi, wandered the lands in search of opportunity.

Despite the dire situation they were in, the Holy Crest Sect was still a sect that had been standing for two thousand years. It had built a sizable store, and that was evident; its mountain gates were constructed from black-ink soil and were situated on the fifth mountain ring on the Divine Eye planet.

The center of the planet was a basin where the royal residence stood. The residence was closed to the public permanently. The royal grounds were surrounded by eight vast mountain ranges that circled the royal residence like eight huge powerful dragons. Each mountain range was separated by vast stretches of land. Some said that the land between each mountain range could form an entire world. They weren't exaggerating at all!

The inner three rings were occupied by the three great sects. They had colonized part of the mountain range. The exercise appeared to be for the benefit of the planet, so the sects could better defend the planet. But their true objective was to imprison the royal family and exert pressure on the royalty.

The outer fourth to eighth rings were occupied by smaller sects. The nearer one was to the inner rings, the richer the Spirit Qi, and the more ideal their location.

The Holy Crest Sect was located on the fifth ring. Most of their buildings were crafted from black-ink soil, a type of soil that had the ability to absorb Spirit Qi and form Spirit Stones. Both had been a result of the hard work of Holy Crest Sect pioneers.

Outside the sect's gates stood an enormous statue. It towered thousands of feet and was crafted from Spirit Stones that had been compressed to their limits. Wang Baole couldn't help but gasp when he saw the statue. It was beyond anything he had seen in the Solar System.

And this is just a minor sect? Wang Baole blinked. Long Nanzi's memories told him that the Holy Crest Sect wasn't only a small sect, it was currently facing some troubles. The statue before Wang Baole's eyes seemed to tell another story though. He had no idea of its worth, but he was sure that the money earned from selling it would definitely help the sect tide through its current financial crisis.

Questions filled Wang Baole's head as he continued racing towards the Holy Crest Sect. As he approached, he stared at the enormous statue again, then licked his lips. After, he turned towards the sect. Black buildings, palaces big and small, in the thousands, filled his sight.

The sect was the combined size of three Upper Academy Islands of the Ethereal Dao College. Its population was almost pitiful though. He could see a hundred or more people bustling around in the distance. Beyond that, there didn't seem to be many more people. It gave the impression that the entire sect only consisted of those hundred or so people.

Wang Baole watched as they hurried along in their own affairs, a strange look settling on his face. He suddenly understood what Long Nanzi's memories had been describing regarding the sect's current situation.

Because... almost everyone in the sect was tearing down their residences at great speed. They appeared practiced at this and were dismantling the buildings into their basic components without damaging anything in the process...

There were frequent cheers rising in the air, sounding like words of encouragement.

"Come on, guys. Today's the last day. We must dismantle the remaining three hundred houses with the most valuable building materials!"

"Let's work together to overcome this challenge. Let's complete the mission our sect has assigned us!"

"Tomorrow morning, the Grand Supreme Elder will begin the auction. All bidders will have two hours to tear down any building they want!"

"We have to dismantle the most valuable ones now. We can't leave those to the bidders!"

Cheers continued to resound in the air. As they did, Wang Baole stood frozen to the spot, stunned. It took him a while before he understood what was going on. The sect had reached a state of poverty where the Grand Supreme Elder had no choice but to auction off parts of the sect's assets. It wasn't a fixed auction with designated auction items though, it was a timed auction. The number of participants and their levels of cultivation were restricted. They were also forbidden from using their storage bags to store anything. During the predetermined duration, save for certain specified items, these participants were allowed to take away anything that was in the sect!

Tomorrow was the first day of the auction, which was why the Grand Supreme Elder had ordered the disciples to tear down the buildings with the most value before the auction...

What's going on here... Wang Baole rubbed his forehead. He contemplated whether he should switch his current identity for someone else's. It was then that someone noticed his arrival and shouted at him.

"Long Nanzi, you're back? Quick, come and help. The Grand Supreme Elder's handing out rewards. For every building torn down during the time he specified, every participant will be given a superior-grade spirit stone!"

Wang Baole smiled wryly. It wouldn't be appropriate for him to leave now. He flew over and joined the group dismantling the buildings. He was an expert in refining artifacts and had absorbed Long Nanzi's memories, so it took him only a brief period of observation to learn the ropes quickly. It wasn't his best work, but at least he wasn't lagging behind the others.

Wang Baole couldn't help his surprise during the process of dismantling though. The buildings might appear to be a singular entity, but it had actually been pieced together from different parts. It was like a composite artifact formed from numerous smaller components. They weren't held together by inscriptions but by numerous energy threads. That caught Wang Baole's interest. He began chatting with the cultivators around him, finding out more about the sect and the Divine Eye civilization's current state of affairs while examining the fascinating buildings that resembled artifacts.

They're like the Dharmic Armaments that I found on the three unlucky idiots. There are no inscriptions on them. They don't need a spirit stone to serve as a core component either. They are fueled directly by a stellar source... This civilization is very skilled in refining artifacts. Their approach may be different from the Federation's, but the principles seem to be the same. Wang Baole concluded. Then, he remembered the tri-colored flying sword and ribbon that he had acquired.

The sword had been destroyed, and while he still had the ribbon, it was in a severely damaged state. Wang Baole had thought of repairing it, but there was a problem. He had decoded its core and introduced inscriptions. The inscriptions had then served as strings to a puppet that had allowed him to control the two artifacts. Without prior knowledge of how the artifacts actually functioned, it would be challenging to repair them.

But now, as he continued to dismantle the buildings around him, Wang Baole's eyes began to glow increasingly brighter. He could feel the gates of knowledge swinging wide open before him. He had been considering whether he should switch to another identity, but that thought vanished from his mind completely then.

Wang Baole poured even more effort into the work. They finally completed their mission late into the night. They had dismantled hundreds of buildings with the greatest value and gotten themselves hundreds of spirit stones in return. Relying on the knowledge he had gained from reading the high officials' autobiographies and his experience honed from years of mingling with Federation officials, Wang Baole had a few words with a few people and successfully mapped out his network of friends and enemies. He then made his way to the Holy Crest Sect's library.

There, he exchanged the spirit stones he had earned for volumes of documents regarding the refinement of artifacts and bought himself a star map. It should have cost a fortune, but the sect was in desperate need of money now, so everything was heavily discounted. After paying the required number of spirit stones, Wang Baole grabbed his loot and hurriedly looked for an unoccupied residence. Then, he began studying furiously.

Days went by. During this period, the auction took place. It was like a storm. The sect became emptied of most of its possessions after days of auctioning. Wang Baole had been forced to relocate himself a few times. Nevertheless, it seemed that the Holy Crest Sect managed to survive its current crisis. While not all disciples who had been out during this period returned, there were at least a few hundred of them who did.

The Grand Supreme Elder declared that he would lead the sect to prosperity and power again. It was then that Wang Baole finished flipping through the records and studying the star map. His eyes had grown increasingly brighter during this time. By the end of it all, his breathing had quickened considerably as well.

I was right... I'm not far from the Solar System. As long as I play my cards right, I can definitely send my avatar back to take over the presidential office!

Chapter 734: An Earnest Heart!

What he had to get his hands on in order to leave the Divine Eye Star System and return to the Solar System... was a Divine Eye battleship!

After spending some time going through the records, Wang Baole had gained quite a bit of knowledge about the Divine Eye civilization. He knew that it was a civilization that ran on pillage and robbery. That defining feature of this civilization led to their special regard for battleships.

The civilization's progress depended on how much travel and banditry their people did. It was their culture. It meant that even though solo missions occurred from time to time, most of the time, the people of the Divine Eye civilization gathered in swarms, like bees. They traveled and attacked in a group. This gave rise to the need for battleships that could travel at high speeds and for vast distances. As a result, the research and development of battleships became a primary focus for the Divine Eye civilization.

They may call it a battleship, but it's really a battle fortress that's not only many times more powerful than the fortress I built in the Solar System, but is also many times faster than the Lunar Stronghold! Wang Baole's heart raced with excitement. He thought about how he could also achieve space travel if he activated his Thearch Armor and Stellar Nascent Soul. However, it would take too long for him to get back to the Solar System. He wouldn't be able to take a break during the journey either. In addition, there were bound to be many unexpected obstacles along the way.

A fortress that was fast enough and sturdy enough, and possessed powerful offensive capabilities and navigational power, was exactly what he needed.

Wang Baole took a deep breath at that thought. His eyes shone brightly. No one from the Divine Eye civilization would understand the determination in his eyes, but if Li Xingwen or Duan Muque were here now, they would know exactly what he was feeling.

These feelings... were the strong desire to return to the Solar System and to become the Federation President!

Wang Baole thought about how far he had come from his youthful days and how he still wasn't the Federation President. He couldn't control the emotions stirring inside him.

In the past, I couldn't become the Federation President because I was too good looking, and I also coincidentally didn't have the prerequisite rank!

I've gone through so much trouble to slim down in order to hide my natural good looks. I've also climbed the ranks. The Federation President has been within my reach, but my senior brother has taken me away from it... Now, the only thing stopping me from becoming the Federation President is my not having a battleship! The expression on Wang Baole's face was serious. He raised his right hand, and with a wave, he yanked a pack of chips from his storage bracelet and began munching noisily.

He seemed to be trying to prove the strength of his determination with the strength of his bite. He crunched hard on the chips, transforming his resolute will and his strong bite into one!

I'm going to become the Federation President! Wang Baole bit into his chips and promised himself.

He hadn't completely lost his senses though. He stopped himself from finishing the entire pack and stored the pack still half-filled with chips away. He had prepared for the long journey away from Earth and stored almost a thousand cartons of snacks of all kinds in his storage bag. But who knew how long he was going to be here? Wang Baole thought he should be more cautious and ration his snacks.

I'll have to plan carefully what to do next... Wang Baole rubbed his chin and began to think. Since he had a goal in mind, he should work towards that goal. In his opinion, there were a few ways he could get his hands on a battleship. He could use someone else's or build his own.

If he chose the first option, he could consider commandeering a Sea Glutton. It would be easier for him, he just needed enough money. He might face some difficulty in acquiring some cash, but Wang Baole felt that if he put his mind to it, this was a problem that could be easily resolved.

Wang Baole wasn't confident of how well other people's battleships might work though. He was planning to leave the Divine Eye Star System, after all. He might encounter numerous obstacles during his journey back home. Wang Baole needed to be able to repair the battleship when the situation called for it.

After weighing the pros and cons of each option, Wang Baole came to a decision.

I'm going to learn how to build a battleship and build my own. I'll know the ins and outs of the entire battleship then, and I'll be able to repair it if anything goes wrong.

This might be challenging for others, but not for Wang Baole. He was a Dharmic Armament master who could craft eighth-grade Dharmic Armaments. He was still some way from successfully crafting a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament, but he had no problems repairing one. After gaining an understanding of the Dharmic Armament system in the Divine Eye civilization, he was confident in his success. He just needed to learn how to do it in the first place.

In the days that followed, Wang Baole did what he had been doing, leaning furiously. The Holy Crest Sect didn't have a big disciple population. Even though only six hundred or so of them remained in the sect during this period, they all knew each other rather well. Wang Baole's lessons were often interrupted by visitors.

Wang Baole couldn't turn these people away since they had been Long Nanzi's friends. Besides, he was interested in learning more from them as well. Wang Baole welcomed each visitor with great enthusiasm. As they fretted over the sect's current situation and its uncertain future, Wang Baole tried to find out more about the Holy Crest Sect and the Divine Eye Star System.

"When will the greater sect be visiting? I have no idea. Everyone's trying to decide whether they should remain with the sect now..."

"The Thousand Spirit Sect approached many of our disciples. The perks that they're offering seem quite good. They're asking us to join them..."

The news from these visitors revealed the anxieties these disciples were feeling. There had been two incidents during all these visits, where Long Nanzi's closer friends seemed to suspect something was amiss with him. It was a piece of cake for Wang Baole to deal with such matters though. He had used his powerful cultivation to cast a spell and influence their minds. Life went on without a hitch.

The Grand Supreme Elder had summoned for him once. He had asked some simple questions about his progress with his cultivation. He hadn't paid much attention to Long Nanzi, who had been stuck and hadn't achieved a breakthrough in cultivation for a number of years. As a result, he naturally hadn't

realized that Long Nanzi had been replaced with another person. Other than a few words of encouragement, he had simply left Wang Baole with a few casual words before he sent him away.

“These are difficult times for the sect. We need everyone to chip in. That is the only way the sect can restore itself to its former power and continue to offer protection to all its disciples.”

Those words appeared to mean nothing on the surface. Besides, the Grand Supreme Elder hadn't only summoned Wang Baole, he had summoned every Core Formation realm cultivator who had continued training independently despite the sect's current situation. The Grand Supreme Elder had offered the same words of encouragement, then left them with the same parting words. After all, the sect was in a dire position now. Most of its physical assets had been torn down and taken over by other sects. The sect grounds looked barren. It was a sad sight to bear.

As the elder, encouraging the disciples and easing their worries was the right thing to do.

But... Wang Baole had immersed himself in the high officials' autobiographies since he had been a child. He had climbed the ranks to the top in the Solar System. He continued to ponder the Grand Supreme Elder's words after he left the meeting.

Is this a threat? Wang Baole laughed. He decided to ignore it. He had remained calm throughout the meeting, unworried that he would be exposed. The concealed threat didn't faze him at all. Even if the Grand Supreme Elder were to find out his true identity or decide to cause him trouble, he could simply kill the middle-aged man and take on his identity.

It was then that he realized that if he were to transform into the Grand Supreme Elder, he would have to deal with a new set of problems. There was the Grand Supreme Elder's social network, his dealings with the greater sect, as well as administrative matters within the sect itself. He could search the Grand Supreme Elder's soul for information, but there wasn't that wide a gap between their levels of cultivation. Even if he succeeded in searching the man's soul, he wouldn't be able to acquire complete information. Besides, the Grand Supreme Elder didn't seem to notice anything wrong with Wang Baole. That was why Wang Baole decided to abandon the idea of taking on the Grand Supreme Elder's identity after some thought.

So be it. I'll spare his life. Wang Baole coughed. He returned to his residence and continued his study on the Divine Eye civilization's artifact refinement techniques.

In the blink of an eye, seven days passed.

Wang Baole's continued interaction with the sect disciples was a boon to him. He finally assimilated into the sect. The place was no longer as foreign to him as it had been initially. As he continued asking around, he also found out the reason behind the disaster that had befallen the sect and why it had to auction off its assets.

Everything led back to... the battleship that the Holy Crest Sect had been using for raids and was now trying to repair!

This battleship was the sect's most valuable possession. Its construction had taken a few generations to complete. Vast resources had gone into the construction of the battleship, and it was the key to the Holy Crest Sect's continued survival.

That was why the Grand Supreme Elder had auctioned off the sect's assets and bought vast quantities of materials. He had also gathered every cultivator in the sect who was an expert in refining artifacts and sent them to the sect's restricted zone, where they carried out repairs to the battleship without rest.

Wang Baole couldn't help but be tempted upon that discovery. The studies that he had done in seclusion could only bring him theoretical knowledge. As a master in Dharmic Armaments, Wang Baole knew how important getting his hands dirty was. In addition, if he could somehow get himself involved in the repairs of the battleship, it would help him gain a better understanding of how to begin to build his own.

He reorganized the information he had learned about how the Divine Eye civilization refined its artifacts, then he left his residence and headed for the restricted zone. The Grand Supreme Elder was supervising the repair work there, so Wang Baole was going to see the Grand Supreme Elder and volunteer to help with the repairs of the battleship.

"Grand Supreme Elder, as a member of the Holy Crest Sect, I can't just sit by as the sect is suffering. My mind won't let me rest and focus on my cultivation. I want to volunteer to help with the battleship's repairs. I wish to contribute my services to the sect. This is everything I've saved up, I'm willing to hand everything to the sect for its use. I'd like to offer whatever labor I can provide as well. I swear to stand with the sect in both glory and death!"

Wang Baole waited for a long moment before he was finally granted a meeting with the Grand Supreme Elder. When he saw the tired-looking Grand Supreme Elder, Wang Baole immediately pulled out a storage bag and placed it at one side. Then, he began to speak with a loud, excited voice, proclaiming his loyalty to the sect, like it was clear for all to see. Perhaps to make his proclamation more authentic, Wang Baole smacked his chest loudly.

Chapter 735: The Holy Crest Sect's Opportunity?

"Calm down, Long Nanzi..." The Grand Supreme Elder of the Holy Crest Sect narrowed his eyes. He was pleased with what Wang Baole had said. The sect was going through a difficult time, and he himself was under extreme stress as well. Most of the sect disciples' loyalty appeared to be tested. Even if he were to speak to them individually and give them words of encouragement, it wouldn't improve the situation much. Wang Baole was the first to have offered both his services and his resources.

"Grand Supreme Elder!" Wang Baole raised his head suddenly. There was red in his eyes, and he looked like he was in pain as he spoke loudly.

"I can't calm down. I've not been eating or sleeping well for the past few days. When I'm awake, all I can think about is the troubles that are plaguing the sect. When I shut my eyes, all I can see is the sect's uncertain future. I kept telling myself that our great Grand Supreme Elder will lead us out of these difficult times. But... I just can't sit by and continue deceiving myself into inaction while the entire sect is in trouble!"

"Grand Supreme Elder, please allow me to participate in the repair efforts of the battleship. I've bled for the sect in the past, so what's a little sweat and toil now?" Wang Baole said excitedly. He cupped his fists once again and gave the Grand Supreme Elder a deep bow.

The Grand Supreme Elder sucked in a deep breath of air and studied Wang Baole for a long moment. There was praise and comfort in his eyes. Then, the Grand Supreme Elder nodded. Wang Baole watched as the Grand Supreme Elder opened his mouth, about to say something. What came from his lips was a long string of complicated words—a curse!

The halls shuddered violently, and a blinding light that was as bright as an Eternal Star's appeared and enveloped Wang Baole suddenly.

Wang Baole was unfazed. He had thought this through clearly before he had come here, and he knew that what he had said contradicted Long Nanzi's true character to a certain extent. Getting the battleship repaired and restored was extremely important to the sect, so he had expected the Grand Supreme Elder to search him.

This wasn't an issue though. He might be acting out of character, but his actions were still within the realm of possibility. Wang Baole believed that his actions were something the Grand Supreme Elder had wanted to see. There was no other explanation for the latter's earlier concealed threat.

In addition, he was confident in the essence technique that his senior brother had given him. He pretended to look stunned, as if he hadn't yet reacted to the curse. The Grand Supreme Elder pressed his hands together in a series of hand seals, and his eyes shone with an unfathomable light as he unleashed some form of mystic technique and searched Wang Baole.

The inspection didn't take long. After ten seconds, the intense light in the Grand Supreme Elder's eyes faded away. He smiled, then gave Wang Baole permission to enter the restricted zone and help with the repairs.

Wang Baole left excitedly, the look on his face showing his strong desire to do his part for the sect. As he walked out of the hall, the smile on the Grand Supreme Elder's face vanished. In its place was a cold, calculating look. He grabbed Wang Baole's storage bag and began inspecting its contents.

The resources he has given aren't exactly that valuable, but at least he's a smart man who offered his services without me having to force his hand. Besides, he's the first person to approach me. There's potential in grooming him. As for the others, they continue to train independently and show no signs of offering any help to the sect. They pretend not to have heard my words...

An icy glint flashed across the Grand Supreme Elder's eyes. He was prepared to wait a few more days. If these people didn't come forward, he would have no choice but to sell them to another sect that specialized in refining servant puppets in exchange for resources to repair the battleship.

Many Core Formation realm cultivators chose to continue their cultivation in isolation in the sect. While this would have been something Wang Baole would have done in the past, he was now happily making his way from his own residence and towards the restricted zone.

The Holy Crest Sect's restricted zone was a separate space that spanned hundreds of kilometers. There weren't many cultivators inside, only three to four hundred of them. It should have been a vast space, but the presence of the battleship overshadowed everything else.

The battleship floated in the center of the restricted zone and was surrounded by numerous array formations unknown to Wang Baole. They dazzled in an array of colors and appeared to be fueling the battleship with Spirit Qi.

The Holy Crest Sect's battleship was in the shape of a cross, with two long rectangles spanning five-thousand kilometers intersecting perpendicularly in the middle. It was red, alarmingly bright while exuding a dangerous vibe.

It was damaged in multiple locations. Some parts of its interior seemed to have been emptied completely and were left with nothing but a vacant exterior. Regardless, the battleship's sheer size still made it a terrifying sight to behold. Its threatening aura made Wang Baole gasp.

The Holy Crest Sect is only a small sect. To think that the battleship for such a small sect is so powerful... Wang Baole's eyes shone with an intense light as excitement sparked inside him. He immediately joined the team on the battleship's repairs.

His arrival didn't attract much attention at first, as everyone was busy with repairs and had their own tasks to carry out. Some had to break down the raw materials into something usable, while some had to craft new components for the battleship. Some were even tasked to assemble or dismantle parts, and clean up or create more energy threads. There were even those tasked with repairing the offensive Dharmic Artifacts on the battleship. The tasks occupied everyone's time and attention.

Wang Baole's first task was to deal with components that made up the exterior of the battleship and had been reported as damaged beyond repair. He was to inspect every component assigned to his station, identify damaged components, and send them to the respective teams responsible for dismantling these components into potentially reusable parts.

It wasn't a difficult task, simply tedious. He labored like a worker at the factory, moving components from place to place without stopping. Wang Baole didn't find it hard work though. In fact, he enjoyed it. The inspection helped reinforce his earlier lessons on the Divine Eye civilization's Dharmic Armament system. He would gleam whatever practical experience he could from each inspection, then send the components to the relevant teams. He tried to appear enthusiastic, wanting to get to know the team and learn more while secretly observing what they were doing.

Two weeks passed in this manner. Wang Baole had fully mastered his task at this point and no longer needed to send certain components to the relevant teams. Instead, he did the repairs himself. This boosted his efficiency greatly. It also refined his proficiency at refining armaments.

Wang Baole didn't waste the additional time saved from his increased efficiency. He began to help other disciples with their repairs. He had established a cordial relationship at the onset. That, along with the fact that there was simply too much work to be done, meant that everyone welcomed his help. Wang Baole was soon doing the work of two.

As a Dharmic Armament master, the practical experience that Wang Baole continued to gain during the process quickly allowed him to master the Divine Eye civilization's refinement techniques. His proficiency at refining armaments improved rapidly, and it was evident in the speed he was repairing the battleship's armaments. His efficiency got another boost. A few components that should have been sent to teams in charge of more advanced repairs were successfully repaired at Wang Baole's station!

The other disciples in the smaller repair teams were astounded by his performance. Everyone looked at Wang Baole with respect and admiration. With Wang Baole's perfected Core Formation realm cultivation and relatively high rank, he was soon being treated as the leader of the small team of seven to eight people.

During the entire process, Wang Baole's understanding of the inner workings of the Holy Crest Sect battleship deepened.

Battleships in the Divine Eye civilization are categorized by their belts. First-Belt battleships are the least powerful and Sixth-Belt battleships the most powerful. Legends speak of Seventh-Belt and Eighth-Belt battleships too... due to certain reasons, the Holy Crest Sect is allowed to possess battleships at a relatively high level. This battleship appears to be a Fourth-Belt battleship...

Fourth-Belt battleships are typically divided into three hundred sectors, with each sector having a different function. The entire battleship is a finely tuned machine. Every sector is required to perform properly for the battleship to run smoothly. There are more than ten thousand primary Dharmic Artifacts in each sector. Bigger sectors would have more... This complex structure gives the battleship its great traveling speed when it's been activated. It has the capability to cross star systems. It also possesses tremendous offensive capabilities!

The excitement in Wang Baole grew as he learned more about the battleship.

There's also a core sector that acts like both the heart and brain of the battleship. It's the most important sector in the entire battleship!

Wang Baole lifted his head and stared at the center of the battleship as it floated in the air. That... should be where the central sector lay. However, only seven people in the entire Holy Crest Sect had access to it. Everyone else wasn't even allowed to stand anywhere near the sector.

One of them was the early-stage Soul Conduit realm Grand Supreme Elder. The rest were the only six Nascent Soul realm elders in the sect.

If I want to fully understand the complete structure of the battleship, I'll have to get inside and get involved in the interior's repairs. I'll need to find a way into the core sector... maybe I can try killing a Nascent Soul realm cultivator and taking over his identity? Wang Baole narrowed his eyes and began considering the pros and cons of his idea.

He wasn't given the luxury to think it through fully though. His team had performed exceedingly well in their repair work, and the lack of manpower in the sect meant that their exemplary work quickly caught the attention of others. That included the Nascent Soul realm elder in charge of the teams repairing battleship components.

Long Nanzi? I didn't realize he had such talents. A late bloomer, perhaps? The elder didn't give it too much thought. Late bloomers were common when it came to refining armaments. With Wang Baole's relatively high level of cultivation, it didn't take the elder long before he decided to transfer Wang Baole to work on the battleship's interior. He was to join a more advanced team!

Wang Baole blinked upon receiving his assignment. He placed the component in his hands aside and sighed secretly.

This Holy Crest Sect really isn't a bad place at all. I'm going to feel bad about what I'm going to do... so be it. Perhaps my very appearance is the result of the karma the Holy Crest Sect has accumulated over a thousand years!

Chapter 736: Putting Me in My Place?

How envious I am of the Holy Crest Sect, to be able to come across someone as intelligent and amazing as I am! Wang Baole coughed. He left the team with a sense of superiority unfurling within him and headed for the interior of the battleship as the Nascent Soul realm elder had instructed.

The repairs of the battleship were divided into two parts—exterior and interior. The battleship's exterior required quite extensive repairs, but the level of expertise necessary wasn't especially high. The repairs of the battleship's interior was a different matter. Security was more stringent as well. Wang Baole had to go through five array formations before he was let in.

After he had passed all the inspections, he was teleported directly into the battleship. Wang Baole saw the cultivator who was to be his guide.

He was a middle-aged man who appeared to be at the early-stage Core Formation realm. He immediately stepped forward and cupped his fists in greeting when he saw Wang Baole.

"Greetings, Senior Brother Long Nanzi. Many parts of the battleship's interior are still damaged. It can be dangerous walking around if one isn't aware of the parts of the battleship that are still under repair. That's why I've been told to wait here for your arrival and to lead you to Team Seven!"

Long Nanzi was considered a disciple with relatively high status in the Holy Crest Sect. Even though he hadn't reached a breakthrough in cultivation for many years, he was still at the perfected Core Formation realm. Despite his lack of talent in refining armaments, he still garnered some degree of respect from other disciples.

Wang Baole responded to the other cultivator's courteous manner with a smile. Due to Long Nanzi's naturally thin lips, his smile appeared cold and slightly unfriendly. It made the middle-aged cultivator feel slightly uncomfortable. He cautiously led Wang Baole to their destination and did his best to answer Wang Baole's questions.

The answers Wang Baole got from the cultivator gave him a greater understanding of Team Seven. There were forty-one teams working on the battleship, and the repair work was divided up clearly amongst the teams. However, due to the lack of manpower, each team also had to handle other repair work that fell beyond their scope of duties.

These teams were overseen by nine teams. The latter supervised the teams under their purview while taking care of more advanced and important repairs. The team that he was going to join, Team Seven, was responsible for the battleship's defense system.

Their scope of work required a higher level of proficiency in armament refinement. There were nineteen members in the team. Instead of working together like the groups repairing the battleship's exterior, every disciple in Team Seven had their own work station where they completed their tasks independently.

Besides the daily tasks assigned to them, these disciples could also check the list of outstanding repairs during their spare time and perform whatever repairs or refinements were required.

To increase efficiency and autonomy, the Holy Crest Sect would give out credits for work done that could then be exchanged for materials required for cultivation. This proved to be an incentive in such times when resources were scarce.

As they journeyed through the battleship, Wang Baole took note of the interior of the battleship. Inside the vast space were numerous Dharmic Artifacts that formed part of the battleship's structure. In addition, there were also some living organisms that had fused together with the walls of the battleship.

Interesting. Wang Baole's eyes narrowed. The literature he had read hadn't spoken about fusion spells that could fuse living organisms with Dharmic Artifacts. His own experience told him instantly that such fusions could greatly enhance the battleship's capabilities. His interest towards the Divine Eye civilization's Dharmic Armament system intensified.

The middle-aged man led Wang Baole through the battleship. It took an hour for them to reach the sector where Team Seven was located.

The sector resembled a bee's hive, with dozens of small rooms clustered together. The open square that surrounded the rooms was cluttered with piles of damaged components and materials. A young cultivator stood in the square, barking out orders to the other cultivators. They recorded each material in their possession and sent them into the rooms.

"Send this Third-Belt Compass to Senior Brother Chen Luo.

"Tell Junior Brother Li Fang that the Roy Pearl he just repaired isn't up to standard. If he doesn't fix it, he can get out of Team Seven!

"There's still use for this Void Piercing Awl. Send it to Liu Mingfei. He has a day to extract the Void Piercing Stones inside. I want at least seventy percent of the stones out!"

The young cultivator was at the late-stage Core Formation realm. He seemed to be a master at refining armaments. He only needed a single glance at the materials or artifacts in order to identify the problem with the item. He was curt, and his words filled with impatience.

He threw a Dharmic Artifact over to another cultivator and instructed the latter on what to do with it. It was then that he noticed Wang Baole's arrival. He lifted his head, frowning slightly as his eyes fell on Wang Baole.

"Greetings to Senior Brother Li Chen!" The moment the young man's eyes fell on them, the middle-aged cultivator next to Wang Baole trembled and stepped forward. He cupped his fists and gave Li Chen a deep bow. His attitude towards Li Chen was more respectful and deferential than what he had displayed towards Wang Baole.

Wang Baole finally recognized who stood before him. Long Nanzi's memories pinned him as the disciple under the fifth elder's personal guidance. He was gifted at armament refinement and considered a prodigy in the Holy Crest Sect. Their social circles didn't intersect with one another, generally. Now that Wang Baole had seen Li Chen, he couldn't help the sudden idea that popped up in his head. He assessed the feasibility of transforming into this person.

Now wasn't the right time to strike, but the gears in Wang Baole's head spun furiously. He decided to set this idea aside for the moment.

Just as Wang Baole shelved his idea of killing the young man, the latter, who had no idea he had just escaped death, waved his arm. He didn't spare a glance at the middle-aged cultivator who had greeted him. Instead, he glared at Wang Baole impatiently, then said angrily, "You're late, Long Nanzi! Every second is precious as we work to repair the battleship. Don't repeat this mistake!"

"I'll hand this Spirit Illusory Ore to you. Go and find a station that's unoccupied. You have twenty-four hours to distill Spirit Illusory Liquid from the ore. There shouldn't be more than twenty percent wastage!"

The young man waved his hand and flung a stone at Wang Baole. It was the size of one's fist and gave off a purple glow. Li Chen ignored Wang Baole after that and continued to attend to other materials and their treatment. Long Nanzi was of little significance to him. There wasn't a need for him to spend too much time talking to someone like that. If Long Nanzi couldn't complete the task given to him, he'd just have to pack up and leave.

"Hmm?" Wang Baole raised one eyebrow as he caught the Spirit Illusory Ore. It was an ore unique to the Divine Eye civilization. He had read about it in the records before. With certain special treatments, the ore could be melted down into a spirit liquid called Spirit Illusory Liquid. The liquid was generally used to increase the success rate of refinements.

However, wastage would inevitably occur during the process of melting down the ore. The acceptable range of wastage was fifty percent and below. Twenty percent was... going to be a challenge.

Is he trying to put me in my place? Wang Baole glanced at the youth, then laughed suddenly. He had never been the sort of person to take things lying down. Besides, he was in his avatar form now with his true form safely hidden in the coffin. If things went south, he could take on another identity immediately. He wasn't planning to cause trouble if no one caused trouble for him, but should someone offend him, Wang Baole wasn't going to simply let them go. He didn't care who it was, even if it were the Grand Supreme Elder of the Holy Crest Sect.

Wang Baole flipped the hand that was holding the Spirit Illusory Ore, and a blue flame flared inside his palm and enveloped the ore. The technique to melt down the ore appeared in Wang Baole's head. Even though this was his first time doing it, his talent and solid foundation in armament refinement allowed him to master the technique almost instantly. The fire in his palm grew increasingly hotter, and its color began to change rapidly.

The sight caught everyone's attention. Unhappiness flashed across Li Chen's eyes, and he turned around, his eyes cold. However, the look on his face soon shifted to shock.

"Spirit Illusory Ore can be melted down by alchemical fire. Between each count, the fire will undergo six hundred and ninety-six cycles and change colors two hundred and thirty-three times. By ensuring that the rate of burning is apace with one's breathing, we can introduce Spirit Qi and further nourishment to the melting process, ensuring a successful distillation. During the process, we'll have to watch out for any inscriptions that may appear as cracks on the ore and adjust the heat accordingly. Even though zero

wastage cannot be achieved, theoretically speaking, we can reduce wastage to something approaching zero!” Wang Baole explained coolly as he refined the ore.

“Of course, that is beyond my humble means. What I can do is... to reduce wastage to ten percent!” Wang Baole continued casually. Everyone around him, including the middle-aged cultivator, watched with astonishment as he waved his right hand and extinguished the flames. A ball of liquid exuding a strange purple light appeared above his palm!

It was a purple, clear liquid that sparkled like treasure. Everyone was drawn to it subconsciously. This was... Spirit Illusory Liquid!

“My god, this is... supreme-grade Spirit Illusory Liquid!” The middle-aged cultivator standing next to Wang Baole gasped. Shock descended upon the public square.

Chapter 737: Hi, We Meet Again!

The crowd wasn't only shocked by the fact that Wang Baole had just refined supreme-grade Spirit Illusory Liquid, they were also shocked by how short a time it took him to accomplish it... the entire refinement process took but thirty counts!

The latter in itself would have blown anyone's mind. But he hadn't only managed to complete the refinement within a short period, he had managed to refine supreme-grade Spirit Illusory Liquid!

The feat had overthrown everything they had known about refinement. Amidst their incredulity, they had forgotten about Li Chen's presence and gasped aloud in shock.

Li Chen himself was placed in a rough spot of embarrassment. He was equally shocked as well. He too might have been able to refine Spirit Illusory Liquid with only a ten percent wastage, but he would've taken three days.

Long Nanzi, on the other hand, had managed to accomplish the feat within seconds. The level of their foundational abilities was worlds apart!

That was a hard pill to swallow and a burn to his pride. He found it hard to control his rage and humiliation. Before he could say anything though, Wang Baole shook his head.

“I'm still unfamiliar with this since it's my first time doing it. That's why I had ten percent wastage...” He sighed, appearing dissatisfied with his results. With a wave of his right hand, Wang Baole flung the Spirit Illusory Liquid to Li Chen. What others treated as precious, he seemed to treat as mere trash. Then, without sparing Li Chen a glance, he found an unoccupied chamber in a deserted area and went over.

Wang Baole's words were like a divine power, landing a direct hit on Li Chen. It was an attack that inflicted collateral damage, no one around him was spared. The area descended into sudden silence.

People parted as Wang Baole walked towards them. It was as if they were in the presence of a deity. They stepped back with utmost deference and cleared a path for Wang Baole. They had witnessed his refinement and heard his words, and he seemed to exude the aura of a mighty cultivator, a presence that everyone could sense distinctly, one that was immensely powerful.

Wang Baole disappeared as he entered the chamber, but the public square remained steeped in silence. It was a while before the sound of breathing was heard. As for Li Chen... his chest was heaving heavily, his face pale one moment and dark the next. He finally lifted his head and started yelling at everyone around him.

“What are you all doing? Get back to work!”

“Someone, take this Illusory Theft Pillar... to Senior Brother Long Nanzi!”

“This Fallen Star Compass, and that Phoenix Feather, and that Stone Ink Beast... send them all to Senior Brother Long Nanzi!” Li Chen said with a thunderous look on his face. Exploiting his authority, he chose more than thirty components that were clearly the most challenging to repair and got them all sent over to Wang Baole. He thought viciously, *So, you’re great at this, aren’t you? Fine, let’s see whether you can repair these components then!*

Everyone lowered their heads and went about carrying out the orders given. No one appeared to have any opinions about what was going on. In their view, this was a fight between two powerful cultivators and not something they should be involved in. They followed their orders and took the materials, as well as the Dharmic Artifacts requiring repair, to Wang Baole’s chamber.

Other cultivators would have been extremely unhappy when faced with such bullying. Such repairs were considered part of their work and wouldn’t earn any additional rewards. After all, additional rewards were only given for repairs done for components identified on the list, outside of one’s normal scope of work.

Wang Baole wasn’t displeased though. In fact, he was extremely willing to take on the work. What he lacked was practice. The repairs assigned to him ensured that he didn’t need to worry about a lack of resources or materials for refinement. He welcomed each repair assigned to him and began repairing the parts at a furious pace.

His focus wasn’t on the repairs though, it was on dismantling the components and studying their internal structure. With his rich knowledge and experience in refinement, he became a sponge that soaked up everything he learned swiftly. That continued for the next few days. He also joined a team, which gave him the added benefit of being able to access more knowledge on refining artifacts.

The restoration of the battleship was of the utmost priority to the Holy Crest Sect. However, the sect was constrained by their lack of manpower. In order to increase the speed of repair, certain literature on artifact refinement, which would’ve been restricted to blood relatives in the sect, was now being made partially accessible to the members of the nine repair teams.

Time passed steadily. Three months went by. Wang Baole’s advancement in the area of artifact refinement during this period was astonishing. The merging and amalgamation of two different refinement systems from two different civilizations inspired many great ideas. He immersed himself in the craft, oftentimes forgetting about his intention to return to the Solar System.

The feeling that his proficiency in refining artifacts was improving every day brought Wang Baole a sense of joy that was exhilarating. This sense of bliss was further enhanced when a casual attempt showed that he could now successfully craft a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament. He was no longer as lost when it came to the refinement of Divine Armaments. The revelation made his spirits soar.

He didn't try to hide his improvement. Even if he had thought of doing so, it would have been a challenging feat. Everyone in Team Seven was familiar with his name. In fact... the work that he was churning out was the equivalent of the work the rest of the team was doing. Li Chen had given up on making life difficult for him a week ago.

He had finally realized that Long Nanzi and himself were worlds apart. Long Nanzi had improved vastly. Li Chen's initial bullying might have had some effect, slowing down his speed and accuracy when it came to repairing the battleship's components, but its impact had been temporary. Li Chen had been forced to rack his brains and select even more challenging tasks for Long Nanzi.

These tasks would make Wang Baole's life difficult for the first few days, but after that, they would no longer pose a challenge to him. Li Chen would be driven mad with frustration and would furiously search for something else to make Wang Baole's life harder. He had even gone to the extent of reaching out to other teams with the excuse of helping them out. However, anything that he threw at Wang Baole would only hold Wang Baole's attention for a few days...

In the end, Li Chen had been the one to come away psychologically traumatized by the experience. He stopped making life difficult for Wang Baole, though the latter didn't appear to be pleased with his sudden change of attitude. Wang Baole's impression of Li Chen had grown increasingly more positive as the days went by. Li Chen's antics were a blessing in disguise. If he hadn't searched for challenging repairs across all teams, Wang Baole wouldn't have improved as quickly as he had.

Wang Baole panicked when he realized that Li Chen had abandoned his antics. He approached Li Chen directly and had a serious and heartfelt conversation with the latter. That appeared to spark Li Chen's spirit. Li Chen made a show of his extreme helpfulness and widened the scope of his search, going to extremes to help Wang Baole.

This aid... persisted for two months before Li Chen caved in. No matter how earnestly Wang Baole spoke to Li Chen, it was to no avail. Li Chen seemed on the verge of tears. He approached his master and requested to be transferred out of Team Seven...

Wang Baole was sorry to see Li Chen's departure. When he found out that Li Chen had been transferred to Team Five, he happily went over to Team Five in search of Li Chen the next day. He began work there. He was once again showered with challenging repairs.

Two weeks later... Li Chen transferred to Team Three. Wang Baole happily followed his friend to the team.

Li Chen transferred to Team One a week later. Wang Baole became excited and followed hastily in Li Chen's footsteps. Li Chen was stunned to find Wang Baole standing before him.

"Hi!" Wang Baole blinked and waved excitedly at Li Chen.

Li Chen left that day... this time, he left the battleship's interior altogether. He went to work on repairs on the battleship's exterior. Wang Baole was sad to see him go. If not for the "friendship" that he had developed with Li Chen during this period, he would very much have liked to kill him on the spot and take over the latter's identity.

We're friends. I can't do that to a friend. Wang Baole sighed as he watched Li Chen leave. Then, he turned back and returned to Team One... In the following three months, Wang Baole continued to remain without a designated team. He went from one team to the next, to wherever he was needed!

His stellar performance in refinement had caught the attention of the Holy Crest Sect's Grand Supreme Elder and the sect's six Nascent Soul realm elders. The findings from repeated investigations concluded that nothing was amiss. In the end, they could only explain his sudden advancement in proficiency as the long-awaited growth of a late bloomer. This was a common occurrence in the Divine Eye civilization. However, none had displayed as drastic a change as Wang Baole.

It's a pity that Long Nanzi hasn't been able to reach a breakthrough in his cultivation. The Grand Supreme Elder sighed. He wondered, for the first time, if he should give Long Nanzi a helping hand, pay a small price so that Long Nanzi could forcibly enter the Nascent Soul realm.

The Grand Supreme Elder weighed the pros and cons. At this moment, Wang Baole had spent six months working with numerous teams and had familiarized himself with the internal structure of the battleship. His sights were now set on... the battleship's core sector, the sector that could only be accessed by the sect elders!

Days later, Wang Baole made use of his essence technique and staged his breakthrough to the Nascent Soul realm. His sudden breakthrough caught everyone's attention, and the news of Long Nanzi's advancement to the Nascent Soul realm soon spread across the entire sect!

Chapter 738: The Rules to a Good Robbery!

Wang Baole's breakthrough in cultivation hadn't been particularly impressive in terms of the power displayed during the breakthrough. However, it still managed to create a surge in spirit energy in the restricted zone. Waves of spirit energy flooded the area, sending waves of shock surging through the cultivators working in the battleship.

The Grand Supreme Elder and the sect's six Nascent Soul realm elders were taken aback when they sensed the sudden breakthrough. The Grand Supreme Elder was the first to recover from his shock. He teleported away instantly and appeared in midair, hovering above Team Seven. He lowered his head, ignored the members of Team Seven, who had rushed away from their stations with surprise on their faces, and allowed his senses to sweep across the area. His senses immediately locked onto the chamber that Wang Baole was in!

The Grand Supreme Elder's eyes widened after his closer inspection. Incredulity colored his eyes.

Long Nanzi? He's attained a breakthrough?

The Grand Supreme Elder could clearly sense what was happening inside the chamber. Wang Baole sat inside, his cultivation surging as Nascent Soul realm spirit energy continued to gather. The Grand Supreme Elder could sense Wang Baole's Golden Core cracking and his Nascent Soul forming rapidly.

The sect's six elders arrived one after another. They were equally surprised when they realized that Long Nanzi was the one who was currently in the midst of a breakthrough in cultivation.

Long Nanzi had shown limited potential. Despite the opportunity he had come across in his earlier years, he had only managed to reach the Core Formation realm. The Nascent Soul realm wasn't technically out of reach for him, but the chances of him actually attaining the Nascent Soul realm had been slim.

They had felt incredulous at first. Then, they gave the idea some more thought. Long Nanzi had shown himself to be a late bloomer in the area of artifact refinement. His sudden improvement in that aspect could have been the catalyst that led to his breakthrough. It was a possibility that shouldn't be discounted.

Both the elders and the Grand Supreme Elder had verified Long Nanzi's sudden advancement in artifact refinement. They hadn't managed to find anything amiss with the cultivator. Nothing was out of the ordinary with Long Nanzi. His soul, his physical form, and his aura showed no signs of him being possessed or replaced by someone else.

Long Nanzi's breakthrough might have been unexpected, but it was a happy surprise. The emergence of another Nascent Soul realm cultivator in the sect was a boost to the sect's power and influence. In addition, his skill in artifact refinement was clear for all to see. His skill, his length of service in the sect, and his breakthrough in cultivation would contribute greatly to the repair works of the battleship.

The Grand Supreme Elder's eyes shone intensely at that thought. He immediately ordered for the area to be locked down. Everyone in Team Seven was made to leave. Then, he and the remaining six elders sat down and stood watch over Wang Baole.

Members of Team Seven didn't waste time, immediately spreading the news of Long Nanzi's breakthrough. Everyone in the restricted zone soon knew him to be the source of the sudden surge in spirit energy that signified a breakthrough!

Shocked gasps and heated discussions could be heard throughout the restricted zone. Some people expressed envy, others expressed jealousy, and many sighed with longing and a tinge of bitterness.

The person who was the epitome of bitterness and resentment was Li Chen.

Has the Divine Eye gone blind? Is every Tom, Dick, and Harry going to break through now? Li Chen glared furiously at the battleship floating in the air. He cursed at Wang Baole, wishing fervently that his breakthrough would fail. But his curses were useless. Three days later... Wang Baole ended his cultivation and stepped out of his chamber. The Grand Supreme Elder immediately announced his promotion as the seventh elder of the sect!

Following Wang Baole's promotion, the Grand Supreme Elder's attitude towards him changed. He was no longer as stern to him as he would be to other disciples. He smiled more at Wang Baole, as did the other six elders.

Wang Baole was familiar with such politics. He had climbed the ranks while he had been in the Federation, rising from the bottom to become a high ranking official. So, he was skilled in public relations. He responded in kind and established a cordial relationship with the elders.

In the days that followed, Wang Baole went through a series of ceremonies that saw him officially promoted to the position of sect elder. His access rights were modified accordingly. This was something

he had been looking forward to. Besides gaining access to classified literature and sect techniques, he also gained the right to enter the battleship's core sector.

Wang Baole directed his focus to the battleship's core sector in the days that followed. Besides studying the sect's classified records and learning more about its refinement techniques, he also attempted to repair the Dharmic Artifacts in the battleship's core sector.

His proficiency in artifact refinement advanced rapidly once again. Repeated experimentation and practice deepened his understanding of the battleship and its construction. His confidence in crafting his own battleship grew as well.

In his spare time, Wang Baole began mentally drafting the blueprints for his battleship. The construction had to be logically sound and had to adhere to the laws governing composite Dharmic Artifacts. It was going to be a complex blueprint. Despite his skill in the area, it still took him months to come up with a complete blueprint in his head.

With the first draft of his blueprint complete, a new problem arose... resources!

The Holy Crest Sect had to auction off nearly half of its buildings in order to repair its battleship. Wang Baole, on the other hand, was starting the construction of his battleship with nothing. The resources required to build a battleship from scratch would be immense. In fact, it might be so expensive that it was impossible to put a price tag on the venture.

I have to think of a way... Wang Baole studied the blueprints he had drafted in his head and did a rough calculation of the resources he required. The final figure was a heavy weight on his chest. The stress was immense.

If only I could use my good looks to get me the resources I need. This would hardly be a problem... What should I do now? Should I make use of my identity to steal resources? Wang Baole sighed at the vast amount of resources he was going to need. The gears in his head began moving.

The Grand Supreme Elder and the other elders had long acknowledged his new position as one of the sect's elders. He could sense their concealed wariness against him waning.

After understanding the nature of the Divine Eye civilization and how it centered around plunder and pillage, Wang Baole came to another realization. Even though the Grand Supreme Elder and the sect elders appeared friendly, their cordial appearances were just that—appearances. Good men were rare in this civilization. Those who wanted to advance further in their cultivation had to venture out and become bandits. Killing became second nature for them.

Wang Baole might have passed multiple rounds of inspections, but his drastic transformation still incited suspicion. During this period, he had sensed eyes constantly watching him. He had no intention of ruining the sect though. That was why the Grand Supreme Elder and the other elders couldn't find anything wrong with him.

If Wang Baole wanted to, he could secretly divert resources to himself for his own use. His position would make that a convenient solution, but the sect was too poor and lacked sufficient resources. After some thought, Wang Baole concluded that he would have to drain the sect dry and rob it of its battleship in order for this to work. Anything less wouldn't work.

A grown man shouldn't be so fixated on the small stuff. I'll either go big or go home. I shouldn't waste my time with small fry. Wang Baole coughed and narrowed his eyes. There was a glint in his eyes.

The Divine Eye civilization is a big place. There are plenty of rich sects around... Wang Baole licked his lips. He thought for a bit and made up his mind, he was going to avoid the spying that was still occasionally being done on him over the next few days. He would begin emptying his storage bags and start buying resources secretly.

He did exactly what he planned to. Then, one moonless night, Wang Baole sneaked out from his residence without anyone's notice and appeared... in the sky outside the Holy Crest Sect.

There may be many sects in the fifth ring, but most of them will have hidden their resources carefully. Even if I infiltrate a sect, I'll have to take on someone's identity in order to search the place. Then, I'll have to rely on luck to find anything valuable. That's not efficient at all. It's a waste of time and troublesome as well...

The best way is to get the sects to get their resources organized of their own accord. It'll make things easier for me when I come for the resources.

That's why... if I want to conduct a robbery, the ideal target... is a battleship that has just returned from a successful raid and is filled with loot. Not only am I guaranteed a bountiful harvest, but I can also take the battleship apart and harvest it for parts! Wang Baole's eyes shone intensely. The feeling of being in a foreign civilization, unbound by obligation, excited him. He concealed his presence and headed for the stars.

The main star of the Divine Eye Star System housed numerous sects. That meant that there were plenty of battleships around. Some of those battleships were capable of long-distance travel, while others were only capable of travel within the star system. Numerous battleships arrived and departed the star system. The number might not be astoundingly high, but it was still considerable.

That was the sight that greeted Wang Baole when he appeared outside the outer atmosphere of the Divine Eye civilization. His eyes swept across the numerous battleships, he rubbed his chin, and his appearance began to shift rapidly as he transformed from Long Nanzi to... Zhuo Yixian.

He coughed, then raised his right hand in a wave. In his storage bag, the donkey, which had been sleeping soundly just a moment earlier, stirred awake.

"My dear son, it's time for you to prove yourself. Come, tell your daddy. Based on your vast experience of munching on everything in sight, which battleship do you think has the most resources hidden inside?"

Chapter 739: Freeze!

The main Divine Eye planet's atmosphere resembled that of Earth in some ways and differed in others. The environment or the nature of the abyss surrounding the star system might have contributed to that. The main star's atmosphere was thicker than Earth's. Unless one was at the Soul Conduit realm, the extent that one's senses could reach out was limited.

That was why the battleships entering and departing the planet shared a vulnerability—they couldn't sense what was going on outside the battleship. The Divine Eye civilization might be one that centered on banditry—with a fine tradition of killing and stealing from their own—but such acts were always done secretly, and most happened between individual cultivators. Malicious acts that involved the robbery of entire battleships did occur, but they were often followed by swift retaliation in the form of vicious acts of vengeance and warrants. As a result, they occurred more infrequently.

Wang Baole was currently hidden within the planet's atmosphere. It was difficult for him to assess which of those numerous battleships before him was the target with the highest value. Each sect's battleship was different from the rest. A veil of concealment hid the actual contents. Unless one took a battleship apart or scanned the battleship with their senses, it was difficult to discern what the battleship housed or what it was built from.

That made Wang Baole's task more challenging. He might be a powerful fighter, but his senses weren't precise enough for him to scan the entire region with a single sweep. Besides, he had to ensure that his presence remained hidden while he conducted such a sweep. It appeared that his attempt at robbery was going to rely heavily on luck.

He had a feeling that the donkey was going to be of help here. The creature had eaten all manners of things and had survived until today. It had gotten its fill of different kinds of resources as well. That should have honed its instinct and increased its chances of identifying a battleship filled with a bountiful harvest.

In principle, the chances of battleships returning to the planet being filled to the brim with loot were high. Luck might play a huge part in Wang Baole's current endeavor, but one couldn't discount the technique that was involved in selecting a target.

"Both luck and technique are on our side. Son, it's all up to you now. Quick, find a battleship!" Wang Baole coughed and patted the donkey. It had just tumbled out of the storage space and was still in a daze.

There was a lost look on the donkey's face. It looked at Wang Baole, then gazed into the distance at the battleships entering and departing the planet's atmosphere. Finally, it turned and looked at Wang Baole again. There was a pitiful look on its face, and it opened its mouth, ready to bray.

"I'll split a portion with you if you manage to find one. If you don't... then you can go back into the storage bag and starve!" Wang Baole glared. The donkey sucked in a frightened gasp upon hearing those words, its huge eyes glistening with tears. After a long moment, it turned its head away, a fierce look flashing in its eyes. As it stared unblinkingly at the battleships before it, its nose twitched.

It was as if the battleships before it were plates of food. What it had to do now was find the most delicious one.

"It can smell them even when they're so far away?" Wang Baole said curiously. Just as his curiosity was piqued, the donkey began to bray in agitation.

"Son, son!" It cried out as it lifted its hooves and pointed towards a battleship that had just returned from space. It appeared worried that its actions weren't clear enough. The donkey sneezed and exhaled a cloud of smoke, which shifted and transformed into the shape of the battleship it had pointed at.

Wang Baole lifted his head hastily. Doubt flashed across his eyes instantly. The battleship that the donkey had identified looked extremely ordinary. There didn't appear to be anything exceptional about it. Its size couldn't even compare to that of the Holy Crest Sect's battleship, with it being half the size of the latter.

It didn't appear to be an extremely fast battleship either. It trudged alongside seven to eight other battleships, looking completely ordinary. Parts of it even appeared damaged, and it didn't seem to be the result of battle but of overuse. It was merely the natural outcome of wear and tear. Perhaps a lack of funding had led to the lack of repairs.

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As Wang Baole studied the battleship from afar, somewhere inside the battleship were dozens of cultivators. Only five or six of them were at the Nascent Soul realm, while the weakest of them was at the late-stage Core Formation realm. They appeared relaxed, their eyes shining with unbridled excitement. A few kept pulling out black, fist-sized rocks from their storage bags. They touched the rocks tenderly, as if they were holding precious gems in their hands.

"We're going to be rich this time. Who knew that the vast Weeping Vein Star System was hiding a small civilization with such great stores of Star Illusory Stones!"

"Star Illusory Stones! These stones are essential for crafting a Fifth-Belt battleship. A single stone the size of a man's fist can be traded for a Level Eight Soldier!"

"Such a precious resource, and to think that the civilization's strongest cultivator is only at the Core Formation realm. They don't deserve these resources, yet they still dared to fight back. They deserve to be wiped out. It's a pity that their biophysical structure is so different from ours. Otherwise, we could've captured them and used them as vessels for refinement."

The mention of the civilization's strongest cultivator sent the group laughing out loud. They relaxed further as they approached their home planet and their sect.

"Everyone, be on your guard. We have quite a bountiful haul this time around. We won't be able to shoulder the consequences if anything happens to it. Yun Linzi, control the extent of the Spirit Qi source being released. Let's keep our heads down. It's not the right time to unleash the full speed of the battleship. We'll do that when we enter the atmosphere!" The cultivators' leader, an elder at the perfected Nascent Soul realm, frowned and barked amidst all the laughter.

"Elder, we've returned to the home planet. What accident can befall us now? You should rest. The resources we got this time around should be sufficient for you to advance to the next cultivation realm. Let's extend an early congratulation to our elder!"

"That's right, Elder. Stop worrying. Our concealment is flawless. Our battleship looks ordinary and shows signs of wear and tear. It's completely unexceptional. No one will think of targeting us. Besides, it's been years since someone has done something as terrible as robbing a battleship. The sect should be sending someone to receive us soon. Don't worry, relax."

The elder gave those words some thought and relaxed slightly. The thought of having sufficient resources for his next breakthrough in cultivation made his insides burn with anticipation.

Of course... these cultivators, who had just returned fresh from a massacre with their battleship filled to the brim with treasures, had no idea that two intense stares had locked onto their battleship. Two entities, one larger, one smaller, hid in the clouds, their sights locked firmly onto the battleship.

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes as he stood amidst the clouds. He studied the seemingly ordinary battleship, then quietly asked the donkey.

“Son, you sure it’s tasty?”

“Son!” The donkey looked certain. Its hooves trembled with seemingly uncontrollable hunger. It looked as if it was about to dash out at any moment.

“Fine, I’ll trust you this once. Let’s go get it!” Wang Baole’s eyes flashed. He discarded any consideration for other battleships and hid himself. They shadowed the battleship quietly.

It didn’t take long for the seemingly worn down battleship that reeked of poverty to slowly stray from the other battleships around it. It drifted away and entered the planet’s atmosphere. Upon entry, the battleship became hidden amidst thick clouds.

It sank further into the atmosphere. A flash of light flickered in Wang Baole’s eyes—they never left the battleship. He unleashed his full speed and allowed his perfected Nascent Soul realm cultivation to fill his body. He allowed his Stellar Nascent Soul to boost his speed beyond what his current level of cultivation was capable of, giving him the speed of a Soul Conduit realm cultivator. He was like a shooting star as he raced after the battleship!

The battleship unleashed its full speed at the same moment as well. With a speed that was at least triple its original speed, it sped away.

Hmm? Did it sense my presence? Wang Baole froze. There wasn’t time to think though. He stopped trying to hide his presence, unleashing another sudden burst of speed and extending his senses outward. He was like an invisible hurricane that instantly surrounded the battleship. His senses bypassed the battleship’s defenses. Instantly, he saw the dozens of cultivators on board!

A piercing alarm erupted in the battleship with Wang Baole’s scan. A moment ago, the cultivators on board had been laughing and resting. In the next moment, alarm flashed across their faces. The few Nascent Soul realm cultivators appeared shocked, and they gasped.

“A Soul Conduit realm cultivator?”

“Hurry up, something’s not right!”

They had just heard the battleship’s alarm bells and had also sensed the foreign scan. The only cultivators who could extend their senses and see into the inside of a battleship while in the planet’s outer atmosphere... were those at the Soul Conduit realm. To do it so brazenly was a clear indication of this cultivator’s intent. At least, it was clear to the cultivators on the battleship!

There’s no Soul Conduit realm cultivator on board? Does that mean they didn’t speed up because they noticed my presence? Wang Baole’s heart rate picked up when he saw the expressions shift on the cultivators’ faces. He realized something then. He might have just struck the jackpot this time. A fat juicy lamb had landed on his lap, ready for slaughter!

An excited Wang Baole intentionally changed his voice as he began to laugh maniacally. With a sudden shift, he turned invisible, like a spirit, and threw himself at the battleship that was trying to make its escape. He passed through the battleship's hull as his voice thundered in the cultivators' heads like a sudden, aural explosion.

"Freeze, this is a robbery!"

Chapter 740: A Bountiful Harvest!

The voice that Wang Baole took on sounded slightly raspy and was filled with untamed violence. He was trying to mimic the voice of the giant tree. His voice filled the battleship, and the sound of thunder exploded in the heads of every cultivator on board. They appeared deafened, alarm flashing across their faces.

The Core Formation realm cultivators were unable to withstand his voice. Blood flowed from every orifice on their faces, their minds were overwhelmed, and their cultivation was suppressed. The slightly more powerful Nascent Soul realm cultivators didn't escape unscathed. Their minds buzzed as they spat out huge mouthfuls of blood. They swayed and would have fallen if they hadn't grabbed for the wall next to him.

Only the elder, who had the highest level of cultivation amongst them all, managed to withstand Wang Baole's voice. Even so, blood still seeped from his lips. His face turned pale, and terror flickered in his eyes.

Everything happened before Wang Baole even showed himself. He was still in his immaterial, illusory form and had pounced upon everyone like the devil, leading to their near mental breakdown with only his voice. The series of events had happened in an instant!

In the next moment, before anyone could react, black Qi began to seep in from the walls and floors of the battleship. The entire battleship was filled with black smoke, which was permeated with a terrifying power. It had a corrosive quality that ate into everything it managed to touch.

Within the blink of an eye, the black Qi entered the battleship and headed for the cultivators on board. The cultivators appeared powerless against the smoke. It entered their bodies, curled around their storage bags and their Dharmic treasures, and left immediately.

Some Dharmic treasures were pendants hung around necks, while others were unique treasures kept within the cultivators' bodies, which were continuously nourished. None escaped. They were all snatched away by the black Qi. The black Qi carried the piles of storage bags and Dharmic treasures and gathered in the air before everyone, transforming into an indistinct silhouette!

The silhouette had an indistinct face, with indistinct facial features, and was surrounded by tufts of smoke that kept expanding and then shrinking. It was a terrifying sight to behold. Two spheres of crimson light lit up the entity's face. They turned towards the cultivators who had just been robbed of their belongings.

Those illusory eyes almost seemed to take on a physical form when they turned themselves onto the cultivators. Everyone's minds began to buzz loudly, in alarm, under the stare.

Cold winds began to stir, and a terrible frosty cold invaded the battleship. It chilled one's physical form while inflaming one's soul. The cultivators felt as if their souls were on fire. The two vastly different sensations assailed every cultivator on board. They were strange and terrifying sensations. The cultivators at the Core Formation realm couldn't take it anymore and passed out instantly.

A few of the Nascent Soul realm cultivators were struggling as well. They had to unleash and activate their cultivation to the fullest in order to resist the pain being inflicted on their spirits and their bodies. The elder spat out another huge mouthful of blood as he grabbed onto the chair next to him. Then, with a voice laced with terror, he struggled to speak.

"We are disciples of the Thousand Spirit Sect. Our Grand Supreme Elder is Gongsun Hou. Esteemed elder..."

"Silence!" The entity formed from black smoke snorted before the elder could finish speaking. The sound was like a bolt of lightning assaulting everyone's minds. The Nascent Soul realm elder could no longer take it and spat out another few mouthfuls of blood. The mysterious entity raised its right hand and swept it across the air.

A strong force suddenly appeared, and a vortex materialized inside the battleship. It led to the outside. The vortex began to draw everything towards it with an overpowering force, yanking at everyone on board with the intention to swallow them whole.

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The cultivators reappeared outside the battleship, in the planet's atmosphere. Fierce winds whipped at them, and thunder roared next to their ears. They trembled feebly, terrified but relieved at their still being alive. They watched as their battleship unleashed a sudden burst of speed and raced off into the distance!

The entire robbery had taken place in a flash. The victims of the crime were currently shivering in the icy winds, most of them looking lost. They couldn't seem to believe what had just happened to them. They were supposed to be galactic pirates. They had just returned from a bountiful hunt. But just as they had entered their home planet, they had been pirated by someone else in turn!

The elder who had been in charge of leading the team stood immobile for a dozen seconds before letting loose a pained howl. His eyes had turned red. He ignored his fellow sect members, unleashed his full speed, and raced downwards, heading for land!

As he charged out, he lifted his right hand and smacked his chest violently where no one could see him do it. His actions exacerbated his injuries. He looked a mess with blood continuing to spill from his lips as he raced across the planet's atmosphere. He was heading for the location where they were supposed to meet the sect.

He emerged from the atmosphere and arrived at the designated location. A dozen cultivators from his sect who had arrived to receive his team came into view. He immediately let out a pained scream.

"Sect Lord, I have failed in my duty. I tried my best and fought with everything I had. Despite sustaining heavy injuries, I failed to ensure the safety of our battleship... our battleship... has been stolen!"

The elder forced those words from his lips, then spat out a mouthful of blood in mid-air. He appeared to have succumbed to the severity of his injuries and to have lost the ability to fly, falling from the sky. His fellow sect cultivators, who had traveled a long way to receive his team, were all alarmed by the sight. They caught his falling body, and as they began to heal his injuries, they started to ask in detail what had happened. Amongst them was a middle-aged cultivator. Shock flashed across his face as he listened to the elder's recounting of what had happened. He immediately pulled out a jade slip and sent out a voice transmission.

The next moment was marked by changing skies. Winds howled, and clouds rolled back. A figure emerged in the distance. His appearance was marked by roaring hurricanes all around him. Awe filled the cultivators who witnessed the figure's arrival. In the next moment, the new arrival appeared before Elder Sun. He was a tall man—much taller than a regular man—with an overpowering early-stage Soul Conduit realm cultivation. He was the Grand Supreme Elder of the Thousand Spirit Sect, Gongsun Hou!

“What happened?” the towering man asked solemnly. His eyes were intense and held a look of authority.

Elder Sun trembled in the face of his own Grand Supreme Elder and frantically recounted the robbery. A flash of murder appeared in Gongsun Hou's eyes after he was done. The Grand Supreme Elder's hair shifted in the still air. It was clear that he was deeply enraged.

“Who dares to rob the battleship of the Thousand Spirit Sect? Is he tired of living?” Gongsun Hou raised his right hand and clenched his fist. A bolt of lightning descended from the heavens and gathered inside his fist, transforming into a sphere of electricity that hissed dangerously. He flung his fist outward, and the sphere of electricity flew into the atmosphere and exploded. In its wake was a passageway.

The furious Gongsun Hou stepped into the passageway, and his Divine Sense stretched out. With a series of hand seals, he located the position of their sect's battleship and immediately began pursuit!

As the Grand Supreme Elder of the Thousand Spirit Sect began a furious pursuit, Wang Baole stood inside the battleship of the Thousand Spirit Sect, which was located quite some distance away from the Grand Supreme Elder. Wang Baole had materialized and taken on the appearance of Zhuo Yixian. He stared at the storage bags before him that he had opened earlier, his eyes wide and shining with excitement.

“Star Illusory Stones!”

“I'm rich!” Wang Baole said excitedly. He ignored the donkey next to him, which was licking its lips in anticipation. With a wave of his hand, he stored the storage bags. His eyes landed on the battleship next. He had managed to take control of the battleship quite easily.

There must be some kind of tracker hidden on this battleship... but I can't just give it up. That'd be too much of a waste... Wang Baole narrowed his eyes before beginning to work.

His proficiency in Dharmic Armaments and the practical experience he had gained over the past months came in useful as he began to dismantle the battleship. He hadn't had the time to craft more puppets during the past few months. So, to help with the dismantling process, he made use of his essence technique and conjured a few less powerful avatars so that he had a few additional pairs of hands.

The first component to be dismantled was the Dharmic Artifact in the battleship's core sector. Next came the stellar source that was fueling the battleship. Then came the battleship's defensive and offensive capabilities. With the help of his avatars, Wang Baole was able to break the battleship apart in quick order. His goal was to dismantle as many components as he could. His priorities were components that were easily taken apart and those that were of the most value.

"Soul Guiding Ring? I'll take that!

"An engine set? That's good stuff. It's mine now!

"Parts made from Shackled Mist Stone? That's rare. I'll have that as well!"

Wang Baole grew increasingly excited as he continued taking the battleship apart. The donkey was affected as well. Damage to parts during the disassembly process was unavoidable. These damaged components became the best sort of snack for the donkey. It happily munched on bits of components at the side...

An hour passed. During this hour, Gongsun Hou continued to race madly across the planet. Meanwhile, the battleship was reduced to two-thirds of its original form after Wang Baole's dismantling and the donkey's snacking!

Wang Baole finally managed to rein in his greed at the last moment. He filled the storage bags that he had stolen, then, with much regret, stopped taking the battleship apart. He held onto the donkey and turned invisible again. They passed through the battleship and left immediately. Having lost a third of its components, as well as its source of fuel, the battleship began to slow down. It left the planet's atmosphere and began... to plunge downwards, towards land, like a meteor about to crash!