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However, the imperial examinations were not held by the visible and tangible imperial court, but by a group of super cultivators with extraordinary cultivation levels.

Just as the imperial court needs to select new officials through the imperial examination, super cultivators also need to select new people to replenish the upper echelons with fresh blood.

So they orchestrated a so-called heavenly tribulation and ascension.

It's not that just because you've reached a certain level of cultivation, the Heavenly Dao will actually strike you with heavenly lightning to test your destiny. If there really is such a thing as the Heavenly Dao, it has to manage hundreds of billions of galaxies, hundreds of billions of stars, and even more planets in the entire universe. The Heavenly Dao is too busy to care about some tiny shrimp on a certain planet. Why would it specifically send a lightning bolt at you? Do you really think you're so great?

Wu Bolin felt that the so-called tribulation was actually more like your cultivation level just meeting the minimum requirements for selection. The higher-ups noticed you and gave you a chance to participate in the imperial examination.

The thunderbolt might just be a test, nothing more.

They'll give you a chance to take the exam. If you can pass it, it means you've passed the test from above. Then they'll use their supernatural powers to open a door and teleport you there. That'll be your entry into the court as an official. After that, you'll start working from the bottom up, since there are always higher-ups above you.

Even the imperial examinations require three rounds of testing: the provincial examination, the metropolitan examination, and the palace examination. The tribulation might only be the first round of provincial examinations for cultivators.

In ancient times, even if you passed all three rounds of the imperial examinations and even if you were the top scholar in the final palace examination, you were only qualified to enter the Hanlin Academy, a mere sixth-rank official. Once you entered the Hanlin Academy, you were just a nobody, and you still had to climb up step by step.

Even if you pass the imperial examination with top honors and rise through the ranks to become the prime minister, isn't the imperial family still keeping a tight rein on you?

If you were even more powerful, and you rebelled and succeeded, becoming emperor, wouldn't you be the ruler of a country?

What if your country is a small nation? What if it's surrounded by powerful enemies? What if you're even less lucky and, after enduring round after round of hardship, become the leader of a country like the Dahomey or Zulu kingdoms of 15th-century Africa? When the Portuguese colonists arrived, they seized the entire country and forced it to grow cotton and sugarcane. What could the emperor do? Being exiled was considered a blessing from his ancestors.

Anyway, it's all about enduring hardship, no matter where you are. Once you get through this stage, there's always another one. The biggest difference is that cultivators have a long enough lifespan to endure it little by little. Being able to live for thousands of years or even longer is a huge attraction in itself.

Of course, if you can't withstand the heavenly tribulation and turn into dust or disintegrate into a wandering immortal, that's your own business. The cruelty of ascension compared to the imperial examination is that you don't have a second chance.

It was precisely because Wu Bolin had constructed such a logic in his mind that he was more ambitious than Wu Bowen, Wu Bozhong (Dorwin), and even Sara.

Even Sara never dared to dream of ascension.

Her thinking was very simple: she just wanted to get the Hundred Reincarnation Pill and live for another five hundred years. As for what to do after the second five hundred years, that was a problem to consider in the next stage. Thinking about it now was a waste of energy.

However, Wu Bolin felt that if the legend of Antarctica was true, ascension might no longer be an unattainable dream. Why not broaden our horizons further?

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When the airport staff informed Wu Bozhong (Dorwin) to board again, he stood up, cupped his hands in greeting to Wu Bolin (Bick) and Wu Bowen, and said, "My two senior brothers, I'll go first. See you in a year!"

Wu Bowen said with a smile, "Junior brother, I wish you great success!"

Wu Bolin (Bick) also politely said, "Junior Brother, you have achieved a great success!"

Wu Bozhong (Dorwin) said with a smile, "Thank you, senior brothers. I also wish you both the best in obtaining extraordinary opportunities and achieving your goals as soon as possible!"

After saying that, he turned around and followed the staff out of the VIP room.

After he left, Wu Bowen asked Wu Bolin (Bick), "Senior brother, how long do you plan to stay in Antarctica this time? Where will you go next?"

Wu Bolin (Bick) casually replied, "I don't have any plans. We'll just take it one step at a time."

Wu Bowen laughed and said, "If you ask me, you shouldn't bother going to Antarctica. Why don't you come with me to America? Ever since Emperor Guangxu ascended the throne, people have always said that America is a paradise on earth, a place of extravagance and debauchery. Now that we have such a good opportunity, why not go there and experience it for ourselves? Anyway, the wise ruler told us to find our own opportunities and didn't say that we had to bring back anything to report back. What do you think?"

Wu Bolin (Bick) shook his head and said with a smile, "I don't like crowds and noise, so I won't go looking for that kind of discomfort."

Seeing that he refused, Wu Bowen did not insist, but politely said, "Then I wish Senior Brother a fruitful trip to Antarctica."

Just then, an airport staff member approached him and politely said, "Mr. Wu, you can now board your flight to New York."

Wu Bowen nodded, said goodbye to Wu Bolin (Bick), and then followed the staff to board the plane.

At this moment, Charlie Wade's Iliad was still traveling through the devil's westerly wind belt.

Li Yalin sent him a WeChat message that read: "One of the three elders has boarded a plane to Rio de Janeiro. I checked his ticket information and his final destination is Kathmandu, Nepal."

Charlie Wade asked in surprise, "Did these three split up?"

"That seems to be the case," Li Yalin said. "Currently, only one person has boarded the plane."

Immediately afterwards, Li Yalin sent another message: "Mr. Wade, another person has also set off to board the plane. It seems that the three of them have different destinations."

Charlie Wade breathed a sigh of relief.

His biggest worry was that the three of them would go to the same place. If all three of them were going to China, he would probably have to immediately ask the captain to turn back and then rush back to China as quickly as possible.

The fact that the three of them are now acting separately proves that Sara doesn't intend for them to make any big moves.

Soon, Li Yalin found out the second person's flight information and said, "Mr. Wade, the second person is going to New York."

Charlie Wade was somewhat puzzled, unable to understand why these two destinations would be chosen. Fortunately, none of his relatives were in these two cities, so he was almost certain that these two people were not targeting him.

So he asked Li Yalin, "Detective Li, have you figured out the third person's destination?"

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"Not yet," Li Yalin said. "He's currently waiting in the VIP lounge. The complimentary drinks machine we set up in the VIP lounge is constantly monitoring him, but we haven't been able to find out his flight information yet."

charlie wade instructed him, “Then keep a close eye on him, and tell me immediately if anything happens.”

“Okay, Mr. wade.”

Wu Bolin (Bick), who was at the airport, waited alone for forty minutes before finally receiving the boarding notification.

Li Yalin immediately found out which flight the man was on and then promptly informed charlie wade, saying, “Mr. wade, the third person went to Ushuaia, a city in southern Argentina.”

Ushuaia?

charlie wade was immediately puzzled. He wondered why this third elder had come to Ushuaia.

Could it be that he’s tracking me down?

charlie wade thought about it carefully and felt it was unlikely. If the Po Qing Society had really found his clues, they would definitely know that he had brought Lin Wan’er (Alani), Yun Rugo, and Song Ruyu, so many important targets. How could the Po Qing Society only send one elder? It must be that all three of them came together to ensure that nothing went wrong.

So, since we’ve ruled out the possibility that the other party came specifically for us, the only remaining possibility is that he has another purpose in coming to Ushuaia.

charlie wade wasn’t afraid of him going to Ushuaia, as long as his destination wasn’t Antarctica, everything would be fine. If he also came to Antarctica, charlie wade theoretically didn’t need to worry too much, because Antarctica was so vast that the chances of running into him in such a place were extremely small.

Therefore, he instructed Li Yalin to continue to follow up on the three people’s movements and to inform him immediately of any new developments.

Ten minutes later, Wu Bolin (Bick) boarded an Airbus A320 aircraft.

The first-class cabin of the plane only had eight seats. After Wu Bolin (Bick) sat down, several more Argentinian passengers boarded. A few minutes later, a young man with a Chinese face sat in the empty seat next to him. After sitting down, the young man respectfully said to him, “Elder Wu, I am here on the orders of Chief Steward Wu to accompany you to Ushuaia. It is difficult to go to Antarctica this season, and he is worried that your unfamiliarity with the place and the language barrier will affect your trip.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) was not surprised by this. Jadiel was always steady and thorough in his work. He really didn’t know any foreign languages, and it wasn’t the season to go to Antarctica. Finding a way on his own wouldn’t be easy. Having a helper would save him a lot of trouble.

So he asked the young man, “Are you from the Left Army Commander-in-Chief’s Office?”

“That’s right.” The young man said truthfully, “My name is Wu Siyuan. I am the prefect of the Left Army Governor’s Office, and I am mainly responsible for all the coordination work in Buenos Aires.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) nodded: “So you’re also a member of the Wu family. Let me ask you, does the Left Army Commander’s Office have any troops stationed in Ushuaia?”

“No,” Wu Siyuan explained. “Ushuaia is a remote place with a small population and an underdeveloped economy, so the Left Army Command did not establish a station there.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) asked, “Isn’t this the only way to Antarctica? Doesn’t your Left Army Command have any presence in Antarctica?”

“Antarctica...” Wu Siyuan said awkwardly, “Antarctica is a rather special place. It doesn’t belong to any country. It’s just that it’s a bit close to Argentina. Many countries have signed an Antarctic Treaty, which only allows national-level scientific research projects and professional polar travel. Moreover, they have very strict requirements for the entry and exit of personnel. Apart from scientific researchers from various countries, only commercial tour groups can go there. In addition, the regulations are strict, so it’s difficult for us to make any reasonable plans there. Therefore, we have almost no involvement in Antarctica.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) nodded slightly in satisfaction. To him, the fewer people there were in Antarctica, the better the signal. This proved that most of Antarctica had not been touched by modern humans, which greatly increased his chances of finding opportunities.

So he asked Wu Siyuan, “What’s the easiest way for me to get into Antarctica now?”

Wu Siyuan said, “The only way now is to take a research vessel, but the management of research vessels is very strict. Forcibly boarding the ship will definitely attract a lot of attention. So, the suggestion I received from you is to find out about the research vessel’s situation and departure time first. Then I will rent a boat in advance to take you out to sea. When the research vessel gets close, you can try to board it at sea. That would be the safest way.”

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Upon hearing Wu Siyuan reveal Jadiel’s arrangements, Wu Bolin (Bick) frowned slightly and asked, “Why can’t we just board the ship at the dock? Why do we have to find a way at sea?”

Wu Siyuan could only patiently explain: “Elder, currently in Ushuaia, only research vessels from various countries are waiting to enter the Antarctic Circle. There are no commercial ships. Moreover, those capable of exploring Antarctica are mostly countries with strong economies and national power. If you rashly board any ship, you may be detected and locked on, which is also a risk for you.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) said calmly, “That’s simple. I’ve already planned it out. I’ll use spiritual energy to control their minds and make them obey my orders.”

Wu Siyuan said, “Controlling their minds is not difficult. What’s difficult is that there are surveillance devices everywhere from the dock to the ships. There is no one to meet you. If you enter the dock, you may leave clues. If someone notices something unusual and traces your itinerary back to Buenos Aires, and if they go a step further, they may be able to pinpoint the location of the Anti-Qing Society near Buenos Aires. This is also a threat to the organization.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) was silent for a moment, then asked him, “So you mean I can avoid trouble by secretly boarding the ship at sea?”

Wu Siyuan nodded and said in a low voice, “What Chief Steward Wu means is that the management of the research vessel is very strict, and the monitoring data at the dock is uploaded to the server in real time. The Argentine police, the Department of Homeland Security, and even hackers with backdoors can obtain the data. The data backup is extensive, the link is long, and it is difficult to destroy. If you board the ship at sea, you will not leave any clues at the dock. After boarding, you can use your spiritual energy to control the crew and have them delete all the surveillance footage on the ship after you land. If you want to be absolutely sure, you can find a suitable time when the ship is destroyed and everyone is killed. At that time, it will be even more foolproof.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) asked him, “What if I leave Antarctica someday? Will I have to board a ship at sea then?”

Wu Siyuan said, “It depends on when you leave. If you leave in winter, you’ll only have less than a month left to see if any research vessels will be leaving Antarctica by April. If you miss that window, you’ll probably be stuck in Antarctica for the entire winter. If you wait until summer to leave, it will be much easier. There will be many commercial cruise ships coming and going then. Our Left Army Governor’s Office also has a cruise ship operating company, and we happen to have a polar expedition cruise ship that can come and pick you up.”

Wu Bolin (Bick) nodded slightly and said, “In that case, let’s do as Tianlin says.”

After three days of sailing at sea, the research vessel Iliad, carrying Charlie Wade, safely passed through the Roaring Forties, rounded the Antarctic Peninsula, and slowly approached the Antarctic continent.

At this time, the sea surface near the Antarctic continent was covered with a thick layer of ice, and the research vessel could only move forward by breaking through the ice at an extremely slow speed.

The research vessel is approaching the 80°S latitude line. Although it has not yet entered the polar night, the daily sunshine hours have been reduced to less than three hours, and it is the eve of the polar night.

The display screen inside the cabin shows the real-time outside temperature, which was already astonishingly low at -55 degrees Celsius before sunrise. After sunrise, the temperature would rise by about 10 degrees Celsius.

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However, compared to the extreme low temperature, the outside environment was calm and peaceful, with almost no wind, waves, or snow. There was only the sound of ice breaking and the low-frequency noise of the engine running.

After another sunrise, the ice-covered Antarctic continent could be seen outside the window. The captain announced over the loudspeaker that in a few hours, the research vessel would dock at the edge of the Antarctic continent, and everyone should prepare to disembark.

As the journey was nearing its end, Charlie Wade woke up Yun Rugo and Song Ruyu, who had been in seclusion.

The two returned to their room, quickly packed their belongings, and waited to dock.

At this moment, Lin Wan'er (Alani) was pleasantly surprised to find that on the frozen sea, there was a large army of penguins marching towards the mainland in a long line.

Pointing to the dense black dots on the ice, she exclaimed excitedly, "Young master, look! They're emperor penguins!"

Charlie Wade looked around and was surprised to find that these penguins were actually migrating from the frozen sea to the Antarctic interior.

He asked, puzzled, "The Antarctic interior is the coldest place right now, so why are these penguins still heading in there?"

Lin Wan'er (Alani) said with a smile, "Emperor penguins are so strange. Other penguins migrate north in winter, but they come back in winter to breed deep in Antarctica."

Charlie Wade remembered something and said, "I think I saw it on TV before. Emperor penguins would gather together in thousands or tens of thousands to resist the wind and snow. It was quite a spectacular sight."

"Yes," Lin Wan'er (Alani) said. "Their habit is to reproduce in the coldest time of year, gathering in groups to incubate eggs and raise their young. This may be the only animal we can see in the Antarctic interior during winter."

Antarctica is the harshest place on Earth during the winter, and very few animals can survive there, including the emperor penguin.

Because the Antarctic sea surface is now freezing at a rate of several kilometers per day, ice layers several meters thick have formed on the sea surface near the Antarctic continent. At this point, research vessels no longer need docks. When the ice thickness exceeds the icebreaker's capacity limit, the ship simply comes to a slow stop and stops moving forward.

At this moment, several people waiting a kilometer away saw the ship stop and give a signal, so they immediately started driving several ice tractors slowly toward the research vessel.

These ice tractors each tow a trailer, some with cargo holds and others with passenger cabins.

Immediately afterwards, Captain John Torresson came over and told charlie wade, “Mr. wade, you and the three ladies can prepare to disembark. The staff of the research station will pick you up first. You can take your luggage and supplies with you in the truck. If anything is too big or too heavy, you can give it to us. We will use a crane loader to load the supplies and equipment on board into the truck later.”

charlie wade nodded and asked them, “Captain Torresson, when are you returning?”

John Torresson checked the time and said, “It’s still over 100 kilometers from here to the research station. It will take at least four hours by snowmobile. We need to wait for the staff to transport all the goods over and for them to arrange the work at the research station before returning together. From now until we set off, it will probably take about four days.”

charlie wade nodded slightly. In four days, there would probably be very few people left on the Antarctic continent, which would make cultivation much more convenient.