

Battlefield 251

Chapter 251: Netherworld Ghost Contract, Soul Sealing Seal

Aftermath of the battle

Qin Tian released the Life Domain, aiding everyone in Quick Recovery of strength; meanwhile, he silently absorbed the rewards from slaying the "Ghost," including talents and memories.

First was the talent

The "Ghost" brought him a deep purple Talent Light Sphere.

[Name] Netherworld Ghost Contract (Purple)

[Type] Composite Talent

[Introduction] The supreme authority of the Netherworld Royal Family, using bloodline as the guide to command all souls. The bearer achieves a dual existence in spiritual and physical forms, remaining in the netherworld even if the physical body is obliterated, mastering reincarnation and achieving immortality, possessing the following abilities:

1. Resonance of Ten Thousand Souls: Innately possesses affinity and deterrence towards all soul bodies, can forge Ghost Contracts with soul bodies, instantly grasping their abilities and weaknesses. The loyalty of controlled soul bodies is elevated to 100%, synchronizing to share the host's combat experience and perceptual vision, forming a multidimensional collaborative combat network.
2. Netherworld Ghost Cave: During bloodline awakening, opens an exclusive space "Netherworld Ghost Cave" deep within the Spiritual Sea, drawing contracted soul bodies into it. The time flow within the cave forms a hundredfold difference from reality; soul bodies undergo slow transformation growth here. Infusing mental energy accelerates cultivation progress; devoured soul bodies transform directly into cultivation resources, aiding subordinate ghosts to breakthrough the boundaries of their realms.
3. Soul Shedding Immortal: When the host's physical body suffers fatal damage, the soul will automatically detach from the body, existing as a complete soul form. Retains the control over

Netherworld Ghost Cave, and gains the "Voidification" ability for immunity against physical attacks, while consuming soul energy to temporarily condense a physical form, releasing devastating soul attacks.

"Netherworld Ghost Contract, tsk tsk, this forces me further down the path of the Summoner~"

Qin Tian couldn't help but sigh, realizing he had now mastered several dominator-type talents.

[Spiritual Wisdom Divine Authority] for absolute control over the Insect Race.

[Sovereign of the Verdant Wilds] for advanced mastery of Spirit Plants

[Celestial Guardian Bloodline] for strong affinity with Spirit Beasts

[Netherworld Ghost Contract] for intimidation and leadership over Ghost Souls

Each talent had its unique traits, and the advantages of [Netherworld Ghost Contract] were particularly prominent.

Firstly, the Netherworld Ghost Cave is equivalent to a Personal Beast Taming Space, capable of introducing soul bodies into it, where mental energy acceleration enables the growth of soul bodies.

Secondly, Soul Shedding Immortal allows survival in spirit form when the physical body collapses, akin to an extra half-life.

The "Ghost" examiner did not become a spirit body because the Celestial Punishment Divine Thunder precisely countered various soul bodies, directly shattering the soul; of course, even if he became a spirit body, he couldn't evade eventual demise.

Thinking this way, the limitations of Soul Shedding Immortal were quite significant, given that if the physical body is shattered, how can the soul body easily escape?

Unless—your name is Elder Yao.

But no matter what, the talent of [Netherworld Ghost Contract] is still very formidable, especially when paired with the Soul Sealing Seal from the "Ghost" and the [Ghost King Secret Scripture] from his memories, maximizing the potential of this talent.

The Soul Sealing Seal is the black square seal, a rare Spiritual Artifact capable of suppressing soul bodies, amplifying them, and crushing them into mental energy.

[Ghost King Secret Scripture] is a Silver Level secret scripture, comprising soul capture, ghost cultivation, ghost control, and using ghosts to strengthen oneself among other aspects, essentially customized for the [Netherworld Ghost Contract] cultivation technique.

Apart from the talent light sphere, killing the "Ghost" also yielded 150,000 Evolution Points and parts of the "Ghost's" memories.

From the memories, Qin Tian learned of the "Ghost's" origins and some information about the Blood Demon Cult.

The "Ghost's" real name was Liao Wan'an, who joined the Blood Demon Cult 30 years ago, surviving among various Spiritualist experimentations, successfully inheriting a Silver Level bloodline.

Liao Wan'an was a core member of the Blood Demon Cult in the Azure Wood Star Realm; his task this time was to infiltrate the talent battle, publicly kill contestants, disrupt the talent battle, and bring all the talents' blood back to the Blood Demon Cult.

"The Blood Demon Cult, truly despicable!"

Qin Tian's gaze chilled; from the memories, he "saw" the Blood Demon Cult's myriad atrocities and brutal experiments, which, while outwardly proclaiming to fight the Empire's unfairness and overthrow the bloodline rulers for more rights for ordinary people, in truth, it never treated ordinary people as human.

Unfortunately, although the "Ghost" was a Tier Six Nine Stars powerhouse, he did not manage to enter the core upper echelons of the Blood Demon Cult within the Azure Wood Star Realm, oblivious to the location of the main lair.

But the memories still contained much crucial information that could indeed inflict severe damage on the Blood Demon Cult if used properly.

"Zhuge Yu."

At this moment, Wu Ziyang turned to Zhuge Yu and asked:

"How do we escape this ghostly place now?"

For a moment, everyone turned their gaze towards Zhuge Yu.

Zhuce Yu was silent for a while, then said: "The layer of Purple Crystal Wall above originates from a spell—Purple Crystal Exile, created by the Tier Nine powerhouse Sakre of the Blood Demon Cult. Next, we will be exiled with this city within the void currents, and the exit coordinates have long been set by Sakre."

What!!!

Upon hearing this, everyone's post-crisis relief instantaneously felt like being doused with cold water.

The exit was predetermined by the Blood Demon Cult, implying everyone was heading directly into danger.

"Zhuge Yu, is there any other way for us to leave first?" Yue Shenghe asked.

Zhuce Yu shook his head: "Outside is the void currents; with our strength, stepping into the currents would see us instantly torn to shreds by the Power of Space."

Upon hearing this, everyone felt even heavier, almost despairing.

Having barely killed a formidable enemy, yet now only able to stand and await doom.

Crack crack crack

However, before everyone's emotions began to ferment, there came an odd sound from the Purple Crystal Wall overhead, web-like cracks appeared.

What is happening!!!

Seeing this scene, including Zhuge Yu, everyone showed an expression of shock.

Is the Purple Crystal Wall about to shatter?

Qin Tian's brow twitched; he knew what was happening, Jie La had absorbed the massive energy within the Purple Crystal Wall and continued absorbing, causing the wall to prematurely crumble, unable to maintain its integrity in the void currents.

Once the Purple Crystal Wall can't withstand the void currents, all present will perish, including himself.

He could only gamble now.

Qin Tian's eyes narrowed, mentally communicating with Jie La:

"Jie La, retract your branches first."

Soon, dozens of vines flew from afar, merging into Jie La's main form.

Abundant energy surged within Jie La, conveying a feeling of reluctance.

Qin Tian twitched at the corners of his mouth: you glutton.

Whoosh~

The Black Gate opened; behind it, the violent space currents made Qin Tian immediately close the Black Gate.

This is...

Everyone stunned watched Qin Tian.

The Gate of Space, Black Crow unexpectedly also mastered the Power of Space in the form of the Gate!

Continue!

Qin Tian reopened the Black Gate, still the fierce lethal space currents behind.

He didn't stop, opening the Black Gate again and again.

By this time, everyone realized what Qin Tian intended to do.

"Go for it! Black Crow!"

"Our survival depends entirely on you." "Please, you must succeed."

Everyone stared intently at Qin Tian, eyes filled with anticipation and desire for life.

Crack crack crack

Cracks gradually increased overhead, even small pieces of Purple Crystal falling off.

Everyone grew increasingly tense, as if their hearts were clenched in a fist, their bodies subtly trembling.

Black Crow, we beg of you!

Whoosh~

The Black Gate opened; this time, it wasn't the space currents behind but a pitch-black starry sky.

"Quickly!" Qin Tian yelled, the Black Gate abruptly enlarging.

The geniuses hesitated not even half a second, directly charging into the Black Gate.

The Black Gate shook unstably; Qin Tian swiftly stepped into it.

Boom!!!

Next moment, the Purple Crystal Wall shattered, the entire city instantly engulfed by space currents.

Chapter 252: Space Survival and Reactions from All Sides

In the deep and dark Cosmos,

the Black Gate opens,

and a dozen figures stream out.

The zero gravity and oxygen-deprived environment makes it extremely hard for the geniuses to adapt. Although they narrowly escape danger, if the oxygen issue isn't resolved, they still cannot survive.

Bang!

The Black Gate closes, the last figure flies out, and in the next instant, countless black metals unfold on him as if alive, transforming into a black battle armor full of oppressive aura in less than half a second.

This is... Stellar Armor!

Everyone looks at Qin Tian's Black Demon Armor, their hearts shock beyond measure.

Did Black Crow anticipate such a situation, bringing Stellar Armor along?

After the shock comes deep envy. With Stellar Armor, at least Black Crow can survive in space for several days, enough to hold out until rescue arrives.

At this moment, the Jie La on Qin Tian's wrist suddenly grows and extends a dozen vine branches.

"Grab it!"

A cold voice rings in everyone's mind.

The geniuses instinctively grab the vines, and then the vines light up with a white glow, condensing into milky energy spheres that envelop each genius.

In an instant, the geniuses feel their bodies lighten as oxygen rushes to their faces.

They are saved!

Their eyes brighten, and they shout joyfully:

"There's oxygen, we can survive now!"

"Black Crow, thank you so much!"

"We owe our survival this time entirely to you. When we get back, I'll give you a great reward."

"Me too!"

No one expected Black Crow's Symbiotic Spirit Plant not only to kill "Ghosts" but also to create a shield in space to fend off cosmic radiation while providing an endless supply of oxygen, giving everyone hope to live on.

This Spirit Plant is too versatile.

"By the way, did you prepare this Stellar Armor beforehand?"

Qin Tian: "No, I stole it a couple of days ago."

Stole... it.

Thinking of Black Crow's previous antics, everyone's mouth twitches, speechless.

Sure enough, it's just like you~

Zhuge Yu opens a smart device, searching for their current location.

"Sagittarius Star Zone, we actually came here."

The Sagittarius Star Zone is at least a week away from Azure Wood Star, and yet they only spent a dozen minutes in spatial turbulence.

"This is the Sagittarius Star Zone? We're at my doorstep!"

At this moment, Wu Ziyang's eyes light up, and she immediately says:

"I'll contact my family right away and send a spaceship as fast as possible to pick us up."

"Great!"

Zhuge Yu nods and says, "Everyone, let's quickly inform our families of our safety."

Hearing this, everyone quickly pulls out their smart devices to contact their families.

At this moment, their families must be worried sick.

...

Sagittarius Star Zone

Mars

In the room, Wu Shouwen paces anxiously, and beside him, a beautiful woman silently weeps, her eyes red.

"Mom, don't worry."

Wu Jianming, Wu Shouwen's eldest son, holds his mother's hand, comforting her:

"The Clan Leader of the Zhuge Clan personally performed a divination, and it's a favorable omen, meaning little sister will return safely."

The beautiful woman says chokingly, "I know, but the Zhuge Clan can only tell us that Ziyang is safe, but they don't know when she'll be back. Is it a day, three days, months, or years later?"

Hearing this, Wu Jianming's face also darkens. The Zhuge Clan can foresee some of the future and judge fortune or misfortune, but they aren't Gods and can't calculate exact times.

"Ziyang."

Wu Shouwen clenches his fists. If anything happens to his precious daughter, he'll fight the Blood Demon Cult to the death, unrelenting.

Beep beep beep

At that moment, the beautiful woman's smart wristwatch suddenly vibrates.

She raises her hand to see, eyes bursting with intense joy, and shouts: "It's Ziyang, it's Ziyang calling!"

What!!!

Wu Shouwen and Wu Jianming rush over, and seeing the name on the smart wristwatch, the two grown men also have tears in their eyes instantly.

"Quick, pick it up!"

Beep~~

The video image projects into the air, and a pretty face appears.

"Dad, mom, brother!!!"

Seeing her parents and brother, Wu Ziyan's previously stable emotions crumble instantly, tears streaming down her face,

"I'm back."

"Ziyan, where are you, where are you now!"

The beautiful woman asks with a trembling voice.

Wu Ziyan: "I'm in the Sagittarius Star Zone, and my coordinates are... We're all floating in space, quickly send a spaceship to pick us up."

"Alright, hang tight, I'll send a ship immediately."

Wu Shouwen quickly makes calls, informing the family to notify all merchant fleets, financial groups, even the military, to see who is closest to Wu Ziyan's coordinates, urgently sending a ship to pick them up.

"Ziyan, I've arranged everything, you all stay put and wait."

Now noticing Wu Ziyan's surroundings, Wu Shouwen hastily asks: "You're in space, how are you managing the oxygen issue, how long can it last?"

Wu Ziyan: "Don't worry about it, someone among us has a Tier Six Symbiotic Spirit Plant that provides us with an Energy Shield against cosmic radiation while supplying oxygen. It'll last a day without issue. By the way, the person is Black Crow, who was an examiner. We owe our survival this time to Zhuge Yu and Black Crow."

Black Crow!

Of course, Wu Shouwen knows this person. Their family watched Wu Ziyán's live broadcast and saw firsthand how Black Crow snatched an elixir from Wu Ziyán, causing her embarrassment in front of billions of viewers.

Back then, the hot-tempered Wu Shouwen cursed Black Crow loudly, who would've thought it would be Black Crow saving his daughter in the end.

"Good, this time we must show our gratitude," Wu Shouwen says seriously.

"Yes, yes, dad, come quickly!"

"Don't worry, I'm making my way there too, I want to personally bring my daughter home."

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Azure Wood Star

"Elders, those children have news!"

A middle-aged man strides into the Elder Council, shouting loudly.

What!!

The elders of the Dongfang Clan brighten their eyes, hastily asking:

"Where are they now, any casualties?"

Middle-aged man: "In the Sagittarius Star Zone, the Wu Family has already sent a spaceship to retrieve them. Except for Lei Yao, no other casualties."

Hearing this result, the elders also breathe a sigh of relief.

Wonderful

No other casualties, this is tremendous news for the Dongfang Clan

Otherwise, they really don't know how to account for it with those bloodline families and the outside world.

Then, Dongfang Ke, sitting at the head, says gravely:

"Inform the Wu Family to send them back to Azure Wood Star after retrieval, the Genius Battle will continue, proceeding directly to the arena battles."

Hearing this, the elders nod slightly.

Yes, this incident cannot just be lightly brushed over.

The outside world must know that the contestants are safe, and the Genius Battle hasn't been too affected, thus preserving the Dongfang Clan's prestige.

However, since the Dongfang Clan's lax supervision caused this incident, resulting in deaths, the Dongfang Clan must pay a greater price to appease these geniuses and their families.

Of course, for the affluent Dongfang Clan, it's not much.

"Oh yes, they also said that the children's safe escape this time was mainly due to one person turning the tide." The middle-aged man adds.

"Who is it?"

Middle-aged man: "Black Crow!"

Black Crow, it's him!

Hearing this name, the elders' eyes flicker with a peculiar expression.

Chapter 253: The Connections Begin to Form

A few hours later

A silver-white spaceship cut through the starry sky, descending like a savior upon this desolate cosmos.

When the guiding beams showered down with soft white light, everyone closed their eyes, letting that warm power envelop them.

"Ding—"

The slight vibration from the metal floor startled everyone back to reality; some stumbled while others fell to their knees, but each greedily savored the solid sensation beneath their feet.

"Safe at last."

"It feels so good to be alive."

Relief and smiles spread across their faces as they realized they had survived.

At this moment, a man in a blue uniform approached with a respectful demeanor:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am the captain of this ship, Yu Juntao. It is an honor to have the top geniuses of the Azure Wood Star Realm aboard our Zelda."

Wu Ziyang stepped forward and said:

"Captain Yu, we also must thank you for your timely rescue. Thank you."

"No, no, it's my duty."

Yu Juntao hurriedly waved his hand, then stepped aside with a welcoming gesture: "Everyone, we have prepared a lounge for you. Please move there for now. Additionally, if you have any requests, feel free to ask me."

The group followed Yu Juntao into the lounge, and as they sat on the sofas, fatigue washed over them like a tide.

In less than half a day, they experienced the most perilous battle of their lives, and almost perished in the spatial turbulences and the vast cosmos's panic and fear.

The entire lounge was eerily silent, as if everyone had been drained of energy; some stared at the ceiling in a daze, others curled into themselves, and some already leaned on their companions and fell into a deep sleep—even the faintest snores seemed like a celebration of life at this moment.

Witnessing this scene, Yu Juntao quietly exited the room.

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A few hours later

The spaceship had prepared a sumptuous dinner

About a dozen people sat around two round tables, which were laden with dishes full of color, aroma, and flavor.

Before dining, everyone simultaneously turned their heads, their gaze fixed on one person.

"Black Crow, dinner is ready. Aren't you going to take off that mask?"

Wu Ziyang's lips curled up. She really wanted to see what face lay beneath the mask.

"Yeah, now that the genius tournament is over, we aren't competitors, and you're not an examiner. You can take it off now, right?"

"Take off the mask!"

"Take off the mask!"

"Take off the mask!"

The crowd began to cheer, their eyes filled with anticipation and mirth.

Amidst the urging, Qin Tian spoke:

"Alright, let's take it off then."

To be honest, if not for that incident, he would never have let these geniuses see his face.

After all, among these geniuses, several had been tricked by him severely, and one even threatened to grind his bones to ashes in anger.

However, after saving their lives, those concerns disappeared.

Everyone's a decent person; surely, they wouldn't return kindness with enmity.

Under the gaze of all, Qin Tian slowly removed his mask.

Revealing a stern face—chiselled and sharp as if carved by a knife, with eyebrows like swords, a high-bridged nose, and thin lips pressed into a line. His skin was slightly pale, yet exuded a steadfastness forged in countless battles, and those deep eyes were like calm, icy ponds, yet faintly glinted with an intimidating edge.

Everyone held their breath.

They had speculated about the possible appearance of "Black Crow" in private.

Some, based on his sly and treacherous combat style, imagined a face with a pointed chin and monkey-like features beneath the mask—triangular eyes, thin lips, and a sinister grin that seemed to show three parts cunning and seven parts craftiness, like a predatory rat lurking in the alleys, ready to strike at one's Achilles' heel.

Others, from his decisive and swift actions on the battlefield, deduced that he must have a rugged face, sharp eyes, and a perpetual bloodthirsty smirk that alone sent chills down one's spine.

Yet, in this moment, all speculations crumbled as the mask fell.

Black Crow actually looked their age, and this guy, he was genuinely handsome~

A cool, handsome guy.

"It's you!"

Zhuye Yu raised an eyebrow, his usually squinted eyes surprisingly opening a slit.

No wonder he calculated that Black Crow had interacted with him before.

Sure enough, as soon as the mask came off, he instantly remembered where he had seen Black Crow.

More than half a year ago, he and the young lord went to Alpha 1 Star, and ran into a young man in a quaint little shop. At that time, the young lord immediately judged that this person was talented and tried enthusiastically to pull closer, but ended up with a cold shoulder instead.

Since the young lord was going to enter the Imperial Capital for schooling in a few days, he instructed him to investigate that person and try to recruit him.

Afterwards, he did follow through, yet apart from finding a name "Qin Tian," no other useful information was uncovered.

From this, it was clear that Qin Tian had an extraordinary background, making it too difficult to recruit such a person. After explaining the situation to the young lord, the matter was dropped.

But who would have thought, more than half a year later, they would meet again in this way.

He was the competitor.

Qin Tian was the examiner.

At the same time, Qin Tian also saved his life.

Young lord, your foresight was indeed right; he is an incredibly remarkable person.

"You two know each other?"

The group looked at Zhuge Yu in astonishment.

Zhuce Yu: "We've met once, haven't we, Qin Tian."

Qin Tian

So that was his name.

Qin Tian nodded: "That's right, and I have a vivid memory of your squinty eyes. By the way, when can you open your eyes while speaking to me."

Whoosh!

Hearing this, several couldn't help but chuckle, and someone like Wu Ziyang even burst into a honk of laughter.

"Hehe, Black Crow, no, Qin Tian, you're hilarious."

"Haha, Zhuge Yu, Qin Tian is right, your habit of squinting at people every day—is it because you look down on us?"

"Yeah, if you really can't open them, I can find someone to perform a canthoplasty for you, definitely instant results."

"Hahaha!"

The room was filled with cheerful laughter; seeing the Zhuge family descendant, known for his cunning strategies, being teased was truly amusing.

Zhuce Yu's forehead had a row of black lines, thinking how this Qin Tian just wouldn't quit.

To say such things in front of the camera, and again here, in front of everyone.

He could already imagine how this detail would be used to tease him in the future circles.

The "open eyes" gag is something he couldn't escape.

This celebratory meal was extraordinarily warm; amidst the clinking of glasses, former rivals now toasted each other like old friends.

Having gone through life-and-death battles together, all those overt and covert contests had long vanished—they faced a formidable enemy together, supported each other to escape spatial chaos, and the camaraderie forged with life was stronger than any alliance of interest.

"Qin Tian, remember to contact me next time you come to the Sagittarius Star Zone," Wu Ziyang left Qin Tian her contact information, with a tipsy blush at her eyes.

Others also left their contact details, agreeing to meet again in the future.

Qin Tian raised his glass, looking at the starry reflections swaying in the wine, a rare smile appeared at the corner of his mouth—this crisis, which nearly took his life, indeed, turned into an opportunity for him.

In the Azure Wood Star Realm, he finally had his network of connections.

Chapter 254: Setting Out for the Return

Half a day later, the Wu family's private spaceship successfully docked with the Zeldia.

As soon as the cabin door opened, Wu Ziyang couldn't wait any longer and rushed out—

"Dad! Mom! Brother!"

Like a bird returning to its nest, she dove straight into her family's embrace.

Her mother held her tightly, fingertips trembling slightly, her voice choked with emotion, "It's good you're back... it's good you're back..."

The beautiful woman's eyes were red, tears silently falling, yet she still gently patted her daughter's back, as if confirming her real presence.

At this moment, everyone's gaze instinctively turned to the two men standing behind Wu Ziyan—

Patriarch Wu Shouwen of the Wu family was imposing, standing as steadily as a mountain, his face determined, bushy eyebrows like blades, his sharp tiger-like eyes, and a short beard on his chin adding to his rugged and heroic aura.

Though dressed in luxurious clothing, it couldn't hide the formidable and brave spirit honed through countless battles, like an ununsheathed commanding blade, restrained yet still intimidating.

Standing beside him, the eldest son Wu Jianming was a stark contrast. He was tall and slender, dressed in a simple long robe, with handsome features and a scholarly aura between his eyebrows, his entire being like a clear breeze and bright moon, calm and composed, only the deep eyes akin to Wu Shouwen's occasionally flashed with sharpness, hinting that he wasn't as gentle as he appeared.

Wu Shouwen strode forward, a hearty smile on his rugged face, "Young heroes, it was thanks to you protecting my daughter this time, and I, Wu, extend my gratitude!"

He clasped his hands in salute, his voice loud as a bell, making the cabin walls faintly echo.

Zhuge Yu was the first to return the gesture: "Uncle Wu, you're too kind. This time, we all worked together to overcome the strong enemy, and Ziyan's Starfire Magic also posed a great threat to the enemy."

"Hahaha! Good! As expected of a Zhuge family lad! Ziyang tells me your Eight Trigrams Array is amazingly powerful, truly inheriting Marquis Wu's teachings." Wu Shouwen laughed, patting Zhuge Yu's shoulder. The latter staggered but maintained an elegant smile.

Wu Shouwen glanced around, having familiarized himself with the names of the geniuses present beforehand, with one unfamiliar face standing out.

This person must be the one they call Black Crow, the greatest hero in this crisis.

Wu Shouwen strode over to Qin Tian, a rare gentleness in his tiger-like eyes, "Young Black Crow."

He extended his calloused hand, his voice low yet powerful, "Ziyang has told me, if it weren't for your pivotal intervention, these kids might have..."

At this point, this iron-blooded patriarch's voice briefly halted, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down before he continued, "This kindness, the Wu family will remember it."

His hand lingered in the air, the knuckles bearing scars that were signs of years of war engagements.

At this moment, this hand accustomed to wielding weapons was waiting for Qin Tian's response in an unprecedented serious manner.

Everyone present held their breath, aware of the weight of the words "remember this kindness" coming from the star region overlord Wu Shouwen.

Wu Ziyang widened her eyes; the last time her father had expressed gratitude so solemnly was ten years ago.

Feeling the sincerity in Wu Shouwen's words, Qin Tian stepped forward and without hesitation grasped the calloused hand.

"Crack—"

The faint sound of bones grinding was exceptionally clear in the silent cabin.

The overwhelming force from Wu Shouwen's grip was like hydraulic pliers, instantly draining the color from Qin Tian's hand.

Veins popped at his temple, yet he maintained his composure, increasing his grip force, even smiling calmly:

"The Wu family's way of expressing gratitude is... quite enthusiastic and powerful!"

Their arm muscles simultaneously tensed, the lines visible beneath the fabric revealing the intensity of this silent competition.

The surrounding geniuses involuntarily stepped back half a step, as if invisible sparks were flying in the air.

Wu Ziyang sighed, rubbing her forehead, knowing her father's temperament too well—this was clearly him venting on her behalf.

But watching these two men compete before everyone, she only felt her cheeks flush with heat.

"Dad!" She couldn't help but stomp her foot, "Can't you... mind the occasion a bit?"

The last half of her sentence was almost squeezed through her teeth.

This childish testing was simply lowering the Wu family's status, wasn't it?

Wu Jianming timely cleared his throat, a jade fan snapping open with a "swoosh," perfectly covering the intertwined hands: "Everyone, since you've come a long way, why don't we head to the lounge for some refreshments?"

His gentle voice was like a clear spring, instantly dissolving the tense atmosphere.

Only then did Wu Shouwen laugh heartily, letting go, a clear white handprint left on his hand, yet his eyes flashed with admiration as he patted Qin Tian's slightly reddened right hand, "Nice job, kid! You have to drink with me later!"

Qin Tian cupped his fist, "I would be honored to oblige."

In the lounge

Wu Shouwen first exchanged a few words with everyone, then said:

"Everyone, the Dongfang Clan is already aware of your situation. Their idea is for everyone to return to Azure Wood Star and complete the final arena battle. Of course, due to their negligence, which caused you grievances, the rewards this time will be much more generous than before."

Upon hearing this, the gathered geniuses exchanged glances.

To be honest, having gone through such a life-and-death crisis initially left them with resentment towards the Dongfang Clan and a strong aversion to the talent competition.

However, if the rewards were indeed more generous... well, that changed things.

"What do you all think?"

Yue Shenghe looked at those around him, lingering his gaze on Fu Ning a few seconds longer. He didn't care about the others; he only wanted to best Fu Ning.

He wanted to see if he, the second on the genius list, was truly inferior to the first.

"I want to participate."

Wu Ziyang was the first to speak, "I didn't gain anything from this participation. If we skip the arena battle, missing out on rewards, wouldn't that be letting the Dongfang Clan off too easily?"

"Exactly, we must make the Dongfang Clan pay dearly this time."

"Thinking of it this way makes sense, I agree."

"I agree too."

Everyone voiced their agreement, even the usually aloof and silent Fu Ning expressed willingness to continue the competition.

Rewards are one thing

But battling other geniuses is what a Sword Cultivator truly anticipates.

When everyone nodded in agreement, their gazes naturally settled on one person.

"What are you looking at me for?"

Qin Tian shrugged, "The arena battle is the stage for you geniuses, and I'm just a small C-level examiner. Of course, if the Dongfang Clan agrees to me bringing the Symbiotic Spirit Plant into the fray, I wouldn't refuse."

Everyone chuckled, with that Symbiotic Spirit Plant in tow, why bother battling? They might as well surrender.

"Qin Tian, the Dongfang Clan specifically mentioned they've prepared a generous gift for you." Wu Shouwen said with a smile.

Oh?

Qin Tian's eyes lit up, an intense look of anticipation appearing on his face.

Chapter 255: Dongfang Ancestral Mansion, Bone Marrow Cleansing Fruit (Double-Length)

A week later, when the ship slowly landed at Azure Wood Star's First Space Port, the entire port was already in a frenzy.

The moment the cabin door opened, a tsunami of sound came rushing in, the crowd surging in the port square, various support banners rising and falling like waves, glow signs reflecting blinding light in the sunshine.

The mechanical guards forming a human wall to maintain order were still being hit by the fervent fans shaking them unsteady.

"Fu Ning! Fu Ning!!"

The piercing shouts of young girls almost shattered the sky, while a phalanx of fans dressed in silver support attire waved large flags in unison, emblazoned with the words "Unmatched Attack".

On the other side, Yue Shenghe's supporters banged on specially made golden shields, producing deafening roars: "Yue Shenghe! Unbeatable Bastion!"

The heavy sound waves made the ground tremble slightly.

But most eye-catching were Zhuge Yu's fan group.

Hundreds of followers in azure robes simultaneously unfolded jade fans, forming a massive Eight Trigrams Array. Their chanting sounded like ancient spells: "Divine calculations, flawless tactics — Zhuge Yu!"

These three geniuses from the same team had evidently become the benchmark for the younger generation of the Whole Star Realm:

Fu Ning, dressed in snow-white clothes, with an ancient longsword hanging at his waist, stood there quietly, exuding a sharp Sword Intent as if ready to cut through the sky — truly the best interpretation of "Unmatched Attack".

Yue Shenghe donned heavy brown armor, his burly figure like a moving fortress, and his Panlong Battle Body was deservedly "Unbeatable Defense".

While Zhuge Yu, shaking his jade fan, always carried a mysterious smile, as if those half-open eyes contained the wisdom to calculate all under heaven.

As the three stood side by side, the sound waves in the entire port reached their peak. Flashbulbs illuminated like a storm, eternally capturing this legendary trio.

Of course, there were many other fan groups of the contestants present, although their numbers were as large, their presence clearly paled in comparison to these three popular stars.

At the back of the genius team, Qin Tian mingled among the ship's logistics personnel, quietly observing everything, marveling inwardly at the high-level tactics of the Dongfang Family.

In the days leading up to their arrival at Azure Wood Star, about ten geniuses launched individual or group livestreams as requested by the Dongfang Family, announcing to the world that they were safe while rejuvenating the dropping interest in the talent competition.

Now, the public focus shifted from the Dongfang Family's negligence, concentrating more on the contestants themselves.

Predicting the champion of the arena battle became the most discussed topic in the Whole Star Realm.

Numerous betting organizations opened their books, once again elevating the buzz around the arena battle.

Under the spotlight, sixteen geniuses boarded flying devices, heading for the most luxurious hotel on Azure Wood Star. Tomorrow at 9 am, the draw ceremony for the 16-person arena battle will take place, and the first elimination round will officially commence.

Qin Tian, blending in with the geniuses, entered the hotel and immediately saw a familiar face as he stepped through the door.

"Mingyu!"

"Qin Tian!"

Dongfang Mingyu approached, stood in front of Qin Tian, looked him up and down, and then said with admiration:

"Honestly, recommending you to join the examiner team is the most correct decision I've made in years."

The second day after the geniuses returned, a detailed report was handed to the Dongfang Family.

The elders read through the entire report meticulously and immediately understood that there were two major contributors to this incident.

Zhuge Yu, Qin Tian

Without Zhuge Yu's Wuhou Eight Trigrams Array, the sixteen geniuses would have been picked off one by one by the "Ghost". He was both the commander and the backbone of the geniuses.

However, in terms of contribution, Qin Tian was far ahead of Zhuge Yu.

Qin Tian's Life Domain helped the geniuses quickly recover from their injuries.

Qin Tian's Gate of Space assisted everyone in escaping the Purple Crystal Prison.

Qin Tian's Symbiotic Spirit Plant both resisted the "Ghost's" onslaught and joined forces with others to kill it, while also providing a protective shield and sufficient oxygen in space for the geniuses until rescue forces arrived.

After seeing the report, the elders immediately contacted Qin Tian's recommender, Eastern Cloud Sea.

Through Eastern Cloud Sea, they learned more about Qin Tian's accomplishments:

Colonel Officer of the Seventh Bureau

Close friend of the Elf King

Known as the King of Assassination on Elf Star

Eastern Cloud Sea explained his intention to recommend Qin Tian as an examiner, hoping the elders would recognize Qin Tian's importance and strive to recruit him into the Dongfang Family.

But this idea didn't gain the elders' approval.

Eastern Cloud Sea wasn't standing at a high position; he didn't understand the Seventh Bureau's significance and the significance of Marshal Lin, who leads the Seventh Bureau. Talents like Qin Tian must have been on Marshal Lin's priority list, who would one day work in the Imperial Capital for Marshal Lin.

Even if Qin Tian wished to join the Dongfang Family, Marshal Lin surely wouldn't release him.

However, although recruitment wasn't an option, making a focused investment still seemed feasible.

Investing in Qin Tian was not only to thank him for his outstanding contributions in this event but also to form a deeper connection with Marshal Lin through Qin Tian in the future.

Only those truly in high positions understand the weight of the name Lin Xuanqing.

Considering these aspects, the Elder Council sent Dongfang Mingyu, who had the closest relationship with Qin Tian, to welcome him and handle subsequent affairs.

Qin Tian chuckled and said:

"Mingyu, serving as an examiner for the talent competition, I've gained quite a lot. I must say, the Dongfang Family truly is generous."

Chapter 256: Dongfang Ancestral Mansion, Bone Marrow Cleansing Fruit (Double-Length)

"Haha."

Dongfang Mingyu laughed and said, "You wouldn't believe it, at first, the internet was full of condemnations against you, wishing they could dig up your ancestors from the past eighteen generations. But as time went on, your popularity and support grew higher, and many viewers became your fans. Your fame is even greater than Fu Ning's, leading by a wide margin."

"Do you believe that if you shouted outside right now, 'I'm Black Crow,' and put on that Black Crow mask, I guarantee you would have even more fans going even crazier than the ones outside."

"Forget it, more fans just mean more haters. I don't want to become a target. It's enough to quietly make a fortune." Qin Tian waved his hand.

"Alright then."

Dongfang Mingyu chuckled and said, "Your residence is arranged here, the room is ready, and tonight, an elder wants to meet you."

"This elder holds a very special position. He is the former Clan Leader of the Dongfang Clan, Dongfang Ke, Elder Ke."

Former Clan Leader!

Qin Tian was taken aback, as the Clan Leader of the Dongfang Clan is one of the most powerful figures in the entire Empire. Though he has already passed on the position, he is still a terrifying figure whose slightest move could cause an uproar across the Whole Star Realm.

"No need to be nervous."

Dongfang Mingyu said with a smile, "This meeting is partly because Elder Ke wants to meet you, the meritorious person, and partly to present you with a great gift."

A great gift~

Qin Tian's eyes lit up, eagerly anticipating the meeting tonight.

.....

The night was as dark as ink.

Dongfang Mingyu led Qin Tian through layers of barriers to the Dongfang Ancestral Mansion.

When the rustic wooden door slowly opened, even someone as knowledgeable as Qin Tian couldn't help but hold his breath—

Before him lay a sprawling complex of buildings stretching beyond vision, all constructed from ten-thousand-year Spirit Wood, glowing softly under the moonlight. Ancient Array patterns flowed around the eaves and brackets, and every beam and pillar exuded a heartbeat-like pulse of Spiritual Power.

"Truly magnificent," Qin Tian murmured to himself.

Dongfang Mingyu smiled silently, leading him along a path paved with Azure Jade. On both sides, Spirit Plants thrived, emitting a refreshing fragrance:

There was the Nine Core Jadenflower with emerald-like translucent leaves, each petal autonomously inhaling Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi;

The Seven Treasures Wondrous Tree with twisted, dragon-like branches, its crown adorned with multicolored glow;

And the legendary Spirit Linked Vermilion Fruit with features faintly visible on its surface, curiously "glancing" at Qin Tian as he passed by...

Qin Tian's pupils narrowed—every single one of these Spirit Plants' auras was no weaker than Jie La's.

This meant that along this single path alone, there were no fewer than a hundred top-grade Spirit Plants of Tier Six or above, and frighteningly, they all seemed to possess intelligence, murmuring in whispers.

"Watch your step," Dongfang Mingyu suddenly cautioned.

Qin Tian looked down to see a pitch-black vine wrapping quietly around his ankle. Upon being discovered, it cleverly "retracted," its leaves making a rustling sound akin to children giggling.

In the distance, the crown of a towering ancient tree began to sway without wind, a vibrant green branch slowly descending, with two crystalline Spirit Fruits dangling from its tip, glistening under the moonlight with an enticing glow.

"Qin Tian, this time, I'm benefiting because of you," Dongfang Mingyu said with a delighted expression. "These are Bone Marrow Cleansing Spirit Fruits from the Immortal Platform Spirit Tree, maturing only once every three hundred years; they are a gift to us."

With that, Dongfang Mingyu bowed respectfully, then with both hands, presented one of the Spirit Fruits into his palm.

Qin Tian also received one of the Spirit Fruits with both hands.

The fruit felt warm and smooth to the touch, like top-quality jade, its surface interwoven with mysterious patterns.

He took a gentle bite—

"Crunch."

With the crisp sound, sweet juice instantly filled his mouth. The taste was indescribable, as if it concentrated the purest Spiritual Qi of Heaven and Earth, mixed with the aged rich aroma of millennia. The fruit's flesh dissolved in his mouth, becoming a warm stream that coursed through all his limbs.

Qin Tian's eyes sparkled with energy, and in just a few bites, he consumed the entire fruit. Immediately, he clearly felt the astounding changes occurring inside his body—his meridians, with torrents of Spiritual Power, seemed to grow denser, more refined, as if tempered over from numerous rigors; all three hundred sixty acupuncture points gleamed like polished Spirit Jade, projecting a lustrous glow. Every pore greedily absorbed the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi, doubling his absorption efficiency over before!

He knew full well what these changes signified—this wasn't merely a temporary boost in Cultivation but a fundamental optimization of his cultivation physique.

From now on, every cycle, his cultivation effects would surpass those of the past.

"Thank you."

Qin Tian clasped his fists in gratitude.

The ancient tree's branches and leaves gently swayed, producing a rustling sound, as if responding to his gratitude.

Even before meeting the elder, a gift had already been received.

To this, Qin Tian could only say—

The Dongfang Clan, how generous!

Dongfang Mingyu did not immediately consume the fruit but put it in his pocket and continued leading Qin Tian deeper into the ancestral mansion.

Soon, the two stopped in front of a wooden house.

"Elder Ke, I've brought Qin Tian here."

Dongfang Mingyu said respectfully in front of the house.

"Alright, come in."

A slightly aged voice came from inside.

"Yes!"

Dongfang Mingyu gently pushed open the door and led Qin Tian inside.

The wooden door creaked softly as Qin Tian followed Dongfang Mingyu into the house.

Inside, the light was soft, with the faint fragrance of grass and wood filling the air. By the window, an elder dressed in a simple long robe was attentively watering a pot of spirit plant on the table with a jade pot.

The spirit plant was wholly verdant, its leaves sparkling like emeralds. As water droplets fell, it gently swayed, as if enjoying the elder's care.

Hearing the sound, the elder looked up, and only then did Qin Tian see his appearance—a head of jet-black long hair casually tied at the back, not a trace of gray, yet his face bore the marks of time, with wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and forehead etched deeply like carvings.

However, the most striking were his eyes.

Aged, profound, yet clear as an ancient well, as if they had endured millennia of storms, seen through the rise and fall of worldly affairs, yet distilled the purest wisdom.

When his gaze fell on Qin Tian, Qin Tian felt completely seen through, as if all secrets were laid bare before those eyes.

"Qin Tian, sit." Dongfang Ke put down the jade pot, his voice gentle.

Dongfang Mingyu respectfully exited the room, and Qin Tian quietly saluted before sitting cross-legged on the cushion opposite the elder.

The room fell silent, save for the spirit plant gently swaying in the breeze, its leaves rustling as if whispering.

Dongfang Ke looked at Qin Tian, a slight smile on his face:

"Indeed, heroes emerge from the young. I reckon your age is about the same as that group of children."

"Yes... not too different."

Qin Tian silently added in his heart, only a twenty-year difference or so.

After all, I'm not even a year old yet.

Dongfang Ke chuckled and then his gaze fell on the green vine on Qin Tian's wrist, saying:

"If I'm not mistaken, your symbiotic spirit plant should be the long-lost Soul-Devouring Demon Vine."

Qin Tian nodded. With the Dongfang Clan's research on spirit plants, recognizing the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine was no surprise to him.

He also wasn't worried that the Dongfang Clan would covet the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine, as its most glorious feat was resisting ten Tier Eight Beastmen single-handedly, whereas in the Dongfang Clan, Tier Nine spirit plants definitely existed and possibly were not uncommon.

Dongfang Ke slowly said, "In the past, the Dongfang Clan tried to trade with Dugu Feng for a segment of the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine, but unfortunately, the trade hadn't been finalized when Dugu Feng died in battle, and the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine disappeared. Who would have thought it would reappear after a millennium?"

"Qin Tian, I'd like to trade three Silver Level Cultivation Techniques or Martial Techniques for a segment of the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine. Would you be interested in this deal?"

"I am willing!"

Qin Tian agreed without hesitation. Jie La's segments were plentiful, and trading a mere segment for three Silver Level Cultivation Techniques or Martial Techniques was like a gift from the heavens for him.

Who would refuse such an offer?

Of course, three Silver Level Cultivation Techniques or Martial Techniques meant nothing to the Dongfang Clan, and they had the ability to cultivate Jie La's offshoot into a complete Spirit-Devouring Demon Vine, making the deal entirely worthwhile.

Seeing Qin Tian's decisive agreement, a smile appeared on Dongfang Ke's face. After chatting casually with Qin Tian for a few minutes, he pushed two boxes toward Qin Tian.

"Qin Tian, this time you've turned the tide, helped those children escape danger, and preserved the Dongfang Clan's reputation. As a reward, the clan has prepared two gifts for you. Open them and see."

Upon hearing this, a hint of anticipation appeared in Qin Tian's eyes as he opened the first box.

Chapter 257: Center of Wood Marrow, Void Dragon Essence Blood

Qin Tian gently lifted the lid of the first box, and instantly, a rich life essence like a spring breeze rushed towards him, causing all the pores on his body to involuntarily relax.

Inside the box quietly lay a crystal about the size of a fist, emerald green and translucent, with liquid green light slowly flowing within. The surface of the crystal was covered with naturally formed mysterious patterns, each pattern seeming to contain the true essence of life.

Most astonishingly, the crystal seemed to pulse rhythmically like a living entity, each rhythm emanating a refreshing aura that soothed the soul.

At this moment, the Jie La on Qin Tian's wrist became extremely excited and restless, yearning to pounce on the green crystal and devour it. Qin Tian hurriedly stopped Jie La, calming her down.

"It's called the Center of Wood Marrow."

Dongfang Ke's voice suddenly grew solemn, "This comes from the heart essence of one of the Dongfang Clan's five sacred trees, the 'Taiyi Qingxuan Tree.' Only one condenses every thousand years. Even in our Dongfang Family, the inventory is merely three."

Qin Tian's pupils abruptly contracted, and his hands clutching the wooden box involuntarily tightened. He could clearly feel that the life energy contained within the box was a hundred times purer than any Heavenly Material and Earthly Treasure he had seen!

"When the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine breaks through Tier Seven, it will encounter the 'Celestial Plant Tribulation.'" Dongfang Ke observed the vine on Qin Tian's wrist, "At that time, feeding it with this, will help it safely pass the tribulation, and its origin and foundation will undergo earth-shattering changes. Previously, the racial limit for the Soul-Devouring Demon Vine was Tier Eight, but after consuming the Center of Wood Marrow, breaking through Tier Nine is no longer a dream."

Celestial Plant Tribulation~

Qin Tian's eyes flashed. He saw on the Star Net that when a Tier Six Spiritualist breaks through to Tier Seven, they will face an unprecedented challenge—Celestial Human Three Tribulations

Celestial Thunder Tribulation, Body Burning Tribulation, Heart Demon Tribulation

Legend says that this is the Cosmos's will, designed to limit the number of powerful individuals, hence the tribulation.

Every time a Spiritualist passes a tribulation, their power will noticeably increase.

One must pass all three tribulations to truly become a Tier Seven Spiritualist, but statistics show that about seventy percent of people fall at the third tribulation, with death rates extremely high.

Therefore, many Tier Six Nine Stars Spiritualists deliberately suppress their power for safety, never touching the Celestial Human Three Tribulations.

And like Jie La, such spirit plants or spirit beasts also have the same tier seven challenges.

The Center of Wood Marrow can help Jie La smoothly pass the Celestial Plant Tribulation.

So, are there also methods to help Tier Six Spiritualists pass the Celestial Human Three Tribulations?

Qin Tian thought silently.

To the point

The value of the Center of Wood Marrow is self-evident; besides aiding in passing the Celestial Plant Tribulation, it can also raise Jie La's racial limit, which for Qin Tian means,

He currently does not lack any elixirs or spiritual artifacts, as these can be exchanged for with military merit points, but the Center of Wood Marrow from the Dongfang Clan's sacred Taiyi Qingxuan Tree is simply impossible to circulate outside, highlighting the gift's preciousness.

"Open the second box and take a look," Dongfang Ke said.

Qin Tian took a deep breath and slowly lifted the lid of the second box.

Inside the box lay a crystal bottle, exquisitely transparent, with its surface flowing with faint silver patterns, seemingly sealing some ancient power.

Inside the bottle was a liquid as deep as the starry sky—not purely red but an enigmatic dark silver, with countless tiny starlights flickering within, sometimes coalescing into a dragon shape, sometimes scattering like a galaxy, appearing to have its own life.

Just staring at it, Qin Tian felt the surrounding air slightly distort, as if space was faintly trembling. More perplexing was when he attempted to probe with spiritual power, he found his perception engulfed, quietly absorbed by the liquid.

"This is..." Qin Tian's voice unconsciously lowered, fearing to disturb the contents of the bottle.

Dongfang Ke's gaze became deep, and on his aged face appeared a hint of reminiscing: "Void Dragon Essence Blood of a Tier Nine Void Dragon."

He slowly explained, "Three hundred years ago, three supreme elders of the Dongfang Family joined forces to besiege a Void Dragon wreaking havoc in the Star Realm, eventually slaying it at the cost of one death and two severe injuries."

His fingers gently stroked the crystal bottle. The liquid inside seemed to sense something, suddenly roiling violently, vaguely emitting a dragon-like humming.

Dongfang Ke looked at Qin Tian meaningfully: "This essence blood should benefit you greatly."

Upon hearing this, Qin Tian's eyes flashed, it seemed the Dongfang Clan was already aware of his Night Demon Bloodline.

In response, he wasn't particularly surprised.

The Night Demon Bloodline was known by Yan Qing, Li Qi, and members of the Hurricane Mercenary Corps. With the Dongfang Clan's intelligence capability, it was only natural to uncover his Night Demon Bloodline.

In fact, the Night Demon Bloodline was his card on the table because it's an unprecedented bloodline, and nobody knows exactly what its bloodline abilities are. In the future, any peculiar aspects he manifests can be attributed to the Night Demon Bloodline.

The essence blood of the Tier Nine Void Dragon not only contains the majestic life force of a tier nine dragon but also possesses powerful space force.

After consumption, the colors of the talent light spheres [Night Demon King][Desolate Battle Body][Gate of the Black Void] will certainly deepen.

[Gate of the Black Void] is very likely to reach the purple limit in one go.

However, he did not intend to keep all this essence blood for himself, preparing to keep half for Kazik.

Now that Jie La has already broken through Tier Six, as long as she absorbs enough energy, upon reaching the peak of Tier Six, she can devour the Center of Wood Marrow and smoothly ascend to Tier Seven.

In contrast, Kazik, only at a mere Tier Four, was undeniably falling behind.

Kazik's talent is actually quite promising, able to extract power from blood and awaken corresponding abilities; he hoped Kazik would develop in the direction of Void Creatures after absorbing the Void Dragon Essence Blood.

Future ambitions to become a true "Void Raider."

"Elder Dongfang Ke, thank you to the Dongfang Clan for preparing these two great gifts for me."

Qin Tian saluted with a fist, sincerely expressing gratitude.

Dongfang Ke smiled and said, "No need to thank, this is what you deserve."

Had Qin Tian not turned the tide, aiding sixteen talents in defeating formidable enemies and safely escaping, the Dongfang Clan would have been unable to account to those bloodline families, and the family's credibility and prestige would have suffered a severe blow.

The subsequent series of chain reactions would lead the Dongfang Clan to bear unforeseeable consequences, with losses far surpassing the combined value of the Center of Wood Marrow and Void Dragon Essence Blood.

Therefore, in this matter, it is Qin Tian who the Dongfang Clan owes.

It is precisely for this reason that he let the Immortal Platform Spirit Tree grant Qin Tian a Bone Marrow Cleansing Fruit and is willing to exchange three Silver Technique manuals for a branch of the Spirit-Devouring Demon Vine.

These are all considered additional compensations to Qin Tian and a form of preliminary investment in him.

Should Qin Tian truly shine in Marshal Lin's entourage in the future, the Dongfang Family will surely continue to raise the stakes.

This is the way of survival and development for great families.

Chapter 258: Void Dominator (Orange): The Genius Battle Ends (2-in-1)

After leaving the Dongfang Ancestral Mansion, Qin Tian returned to his hotel—the most prestigious "Celestial Spirit Haven" on Azure Wood Star.

This hotel is not an ordinary building, but is constructed around a thousand-meter-high "Celestial Spirit Ancient Tree."

The entire tree trunk has a diameter of over a hundred meters, its whole body dark golden, with naturally formed spirit patterns on the bark circulating like an array, emitting a gentle glow. The tree crown spreads out like a lavish canopy, obscuring the sky and sun, with crystalline spirit dew hanging from the branches, refracting colorful glows in the moonlight.

And at the top level of the tree crown, the cultivation area is equipped with thirty-six top-tier cultivation rooms.

Each cultivation room hangs like an independent tree knot from the main trunk, appearing simple and unadorned from the outside, but with a hidden world within: the floor is laid with "Cold Jade Spirit Sandalwood" that calms the mind, ancient spirit gathering runes are carved on all four walls, and spirit grass hanging from the ceiling automatically adjusts the spiritual qi concentration in the room.

The most precious aspect is that these cultivation rooms are completely insulated from external interference; even a Divine Sense probe from a Tier Eight expert would be blocked by the tree's innate spirit pattern barrier.

The Dongfang Clan reserved the supreme VIP room for Qin Tian, which allows unlimited use of the cultivation room, free of charge, until checkout.

Qin Tian pushed open the ancient wooden door of the cultivation room, and a rich surge of spiritual qi immediately rushed to meet him like a tidal wave, extremely pure, carrying the unique fresh wood scent of the ancient tree, transforming into a gentle warm current flowing through his entire body as he inhaled it.

He took a deep breath, feeling the stirring of spiritual power within him; the spiritual qi concentration in this cultivation room was at least ten times that of the outside world.

The Cold Jade Spirit Sandalwood laid on the ground exuded a trace of coolness, forming a mystical balance with the warm current in the air, calming one's mind involuntarily.

However, today he was not here to cultivate but to find a quiet place to consume half a bottle of Void Dragon essence blood.

He took out the flask containing the essence blood of a Tier Nine Void Dragon, the crystal bottle exuding a fantastical silver light under the reflection of spiritual qi.

As the bottle cap opened, an ancient and vast aura instantly filled the entire cultivation room. The spirit grass hanging from the ceiling swayed violently, seemingly saluting this primordial force.

Qin Tian gazed at the dark silver dragon blood swirling in the crystal bottle; the liquid slithered along the bottle wall like a living creature, occasionally forming miniature dragon shapes. He took a deep breath and drank half the bottle in one gulp.

"Gulp—"

The moment the dragon blood entered his throat, Qin Tian's entire body trembled violently. The blood seemed to have a life of its own, rushing into his veins and surging toward his entire body with astonishing speed. He could clearly feel every drop of dragon blood unleashing ancient and wild energy, which, thanks to the Night Demon King's physique, was completely absorbed.

"Hiss—"

Fine silver dragon scales suddenly appeared on the surface of Qin Tian's skin, but strangely, these scales didn't maintain their original form; instead, they flowed like mercury and gradually merged with his skin. His muscle fibers were continuously torn apart and reorganized under the effect of the dragon blood, and his bones emitted a teeth-grinding "crack" sound as their density visibly increased.

"Ah!"

A low growl burst from deep within his throat; Qin Tian could feel pure power surging within him—not through spiritual power augmentation, but the most primitive physical strength.

With a casual squeeze, the air burst into a sonic boom, this pure sense of violence astonishing even him.

The transformation continued.

The energy of the dragon blood began to penetrate into deeper layers of tissue, enveloping his internal organs in a layer of silver glow. The sound of his heartbeat was like a drum, with each pump lighting up dragon patterns all over his body. Most astonishingly, his blood was gradually tinting with a silver hue, producing a gurgling sound akin to a stream as it flowed.

Just as his physical enhancement reached its peak, a sudden mutation occurred.

The world before Qin Tian's eyes suddenly "shattered"—not truly broken, but he could suddenly see countless silver threads making up space. These threads of laws wove into a network, with bright points of light at certain special intersections.

"Space nodes..."

He instinctively reached out to touch the nearest light point, and his fingertip actually penetrated the real space, reaching into a void. More incredibly, he found himself able to "perceive" the spatial structure within several thousand kilometers, as if a three-dimensional space map had automatically formed in his mind.

"Is this the perspective of the Void Dragon..."

Qin Tian murmured to himself. As he attempted to focus his consciousness on a particular node, the surrounding air suddenly twisted—a miniature space channel was forming.

Though he couldn't truly traverse yet, this absolute control over space far exceeded the understanding scope of ordinary cultivators.

Finally, when all the anomalies subsided, Qin Tian stood in the center of the cultivation room, feeling the transformative changes.

Spiritual Energy broke through once more, reaching Tier Four Six Stars.

The surging spiritual power roared through his meridians, and the newly acquired Void Perception made the entire world feel different.

He gently clenched his fist, air bursting into a mass of silver light in his palm—a perfect fusion of physical strength and space talent.

Checking the system panel, as he expected, the colors of the [Night Demon King] and [Desolate Battle Body] Talent Light Spheres have deepened significantly; [Night Demon King] reached medium orange, nearing deep orange, while [Desolate Battle Body] was strengthened to deep orange.

The values in each aspect of his talent saw some increase.

However, the most significant change was in [Gate of the Black Void], which had now turned into a deep purple Void Class talent. Without hesitation, Qin Tian invested 2,000,000 Evolution Points, allowing this talent to complete its final evolution.

Chapter 259: Void Dominator (Orange): The Genius Battle Ends (2-in-1)

[Name]Void Dominator (Orange)

[Type]Active Talent

[Introduction]You are the master of the void, able to easily perceive the mysteries of space. Your abilities are as follows:

1. Void Walking: Freely traverse between the void and reality
2. Void Passage: Open stable spatial passages
3. Spatial Force Field: Create a spatial domain where attack trajectories are altered, and enemies within can be restrained or torn apart.
4. Void Exile: Banish targets into chaotic void currents

Qin Tian felt the awakened talent, silvery light flowing in his eyes. As he gently raised his hand, the air before him rippled like water, revealing a dazzling starry river—this was not an illusion, but a real void fissure.

Even more terrifying was that he felt he could merge into this void at any moment, as naturally as returning home.

"Is this...what it feels like to truly master space?"

With a mere thought, his figure vanished from the cultivation room, appearing the next second on a terrace a hundred meters away, the entire process not causing any spatial fluctuation, as if he had always existed there.

Void Dominator, truly worthy of its name!

Qin Tian smirked, and compared to the previously purely supportive Black Gate, [Void Dominator] boasted multiple functions including teleportation, blinking, attack, and control.

Especially the short-distance void walking, silent and stealthy, made his combat and escape capabilities reach a new height.

With the talent evolution complete, he achieved his goal for the day, and now it was Kazik's turn.

With a flash of white light, Kazik appeared beside him.

Swish swish swish~

Kazik swung its blade arms, making a sharp sound from its mandibles, complaining every time it appeared, as its owner was always running around.

Supposedly, it was promised ample hunting opportunities, but most of the time it was left idle in the Beast Taming Space, leaving it extremely frustrated.

Qin Tian felt a bit embarrassed, scratched his nose, and said:

"Kazik, how about I find you a female mantis? You know, when you're bored..."

"Sss sss sss~"

Kazik seemed both angry and embarrassed, its eyes glowing with purple light, while steam shot from the pores on its back.

"Alright, alright, just forget it, didn't expect you to be such an innocent little mantis."

Qin Tian waved his hand, turns out, even insects know that to become strong, one must avoid distractions from romance.

Romance is a bone-scraping knife, the source of all downfall.

Therefore - when will I get to experience the "pain" of bone-scraping.

Although, I'm still just a baby.

"The Essence of the Void Dragon will be entrusted to you in the future."

Qin Tian willed it, first extracting a drop from the remaining half bottle of blood.

Kazik didn't have his robust constitution; a direct consumption of half a bottle would make Kazik explode in less than two seconds.

"Catch it!"

The dark silvery blood drop floated in the air, and Kazik's compound eyes locked onto it instantly, as a top hunter, it instinctively felt the terrifying power contained within this drop of blood.

Kazik eagerly opened its sharp mandibles, absorbing the dark silver Dragon Blood Essence into its body. In that instant, its compound eyes suddenly contracted, and its entire body trembled violently as if struck by lightning.

"Crack.. crack crack..."

A chilling sound of carapace cracking echoed continually, and countless fine silver cracks appeared on the layer of its hard chitin outer shell. These cracks spread like living things, rapidly covering its entire body. What's more astonishing was, an unfathomable void light emanated from these cracks, as if a miniature cosmos was being nurtured within its body.

"Hiss—"

Following a painful hiss, Kazik suddenly stiffened on the spot. Its body twitched unconsciously, the shine in its compound eyes quickly dimmed, a layer of silvery light cocoon seeped from its body, soon enveloping it entirely.

Qin Tian's expression tensed: "This is...forced evolution?"

The surface of the light cocoon fluctuated with mysterious spatial patterns, expanding and contracting, as if breathing.

Through the semi-transparent cocoon wall, one could vaguely see the astonishing changes happening to Kazik's body—its back armor restructuring, blade arms elongating, even its entire physique was slowly stretching.

The strangest thing was that the space inside the cocoon seemed self-contained.

Qin Tian attempted to probe, but found his Divine Sense completely blocked out, the Void Law contained within this dragon blood was performing a full-scale transformation on Kazik.

"Seems like it'll need some time to awaken..."

Qin Tian carefully put the light cocoon into the Beast Taming Space, he could feel that when Kazik breaks out of the cocoon, it would be altogether transformed, becoming a true Void Species.

Having completed all this, Qin Tian looked out the window, at that moment, the sky took on a fish-belly white hue, the morning sun just beginning to rise.

The much-anticipated Talent Battles were about to commence.

...

The battle tournament of the Talent Battles isn't literally about dueling on stage.

For Tier Five experts, a stage would limit many people's performance, especially detrimental for some mages.

And for this tournament, the location was an island, both the island's land and the surrounding sea fell within the venue range.

There were no spatial limitations.

Just one rule, use all means necessary to defeat the opponent.

At nine in the morning, the draw ceremony began.

Among the 16 contestants, five were seeded and wouldn't meet in the first round, Fu Ning, Yue Shenghe, and Wu Ziyang were prominently among them. But to many people's surprise, the popular Zhuge Yu was not a seeded contestant.

Of course, online professionals also provided explanations.

Zhuce Yu's role is that of a commander, a master controller, but one-on-one duels are not his strong suit.

Qin Tian sat in the VIP area, where he could clearly see the contestants' every move through several split screens.

Very soon, the first round draw results came out.

Coincidentally, Zhuce Yu's first-round opponent happened to be his former teammate, Zhong Liying.

Seeing this result, Zhuce Yu and Zhong Liying exchanged a glance, Zhuce Yu's squinting eyes revealed nothing, while Zhong Liying first smiled at him, followed by a look of calm acceptance.

No choice, as a Four Star Genius not considered among the top, making it this far was already very difficult.

No matter who she encountered, the odds of winning this battle were slim.

Losing to others was worse than losing to her teammate.

The first-round knockout had sixteen opponents and eight duels, one after another, each fight was extremely exciting, and the Talent Battle's popularity exploded, dominating the top ten headlines in the Star Realm.

Fu Ning, Yue Shenghe, Zhuge Yu, Wu Ziyang, Shangguang Lei... all the star contestants advanced to the next round.

The quarterfinals to semifinals will take place at the same time tomorrow.

Quarterfinals, semifinals, finals

Three rounds of matches to be completed within a week.

To no one's surprise, the final match indeed was Fu Ning VS Yue Shenghe.

One was the extreme of attack, the other the invincible defense.

The strongest spear, against, the strongest shield.

This duel directly set a new record for Talent Battles, becoming the most watched duel ever.

Many who hadn't been following the Talent Battles were drawn in by the previous incidents and waves, watched the rest of the Talent Battles to the end.

In the end, Fu Ning narrowly won with a Celestial Sword Slash that pierced Yue Shenghe's Dragon Immortal Panlong, thus claiming the championship of this year's Talent Battles.

Countless flowers, honors, endorsements poured towards Fu Ning like a tide, yet this pure Sword Cultivator didn't care for such things, apart from accepting the Dongfang Clan's interview and award ceremony, he no longer appeared in the public eye.

Not only Fu Ning, after experiencing a life-and-death crisis, every talent washed away impetuosity, focusing more attention on improving their strength.

Strength is the fundamental of a Spiritualist.

A week after the Talent Battles ended, all official arrangements concluded, and it was time for everyone's journey home.

Qin Tian too must leave Azure Wood Star, returning to his destined place.

Chapter 260: Post-Battle Inventory

"Everyone, no need to see me off."

At the VIP terminal entrance of the Star Port, Qin Tian picked up his luggage, facing the friends behind him.

Dongfang Mingyu, Fu Ning, Yue Shenghe, Zhuge Yu...

There were seven of them in total. They hadn't left Azure Wood Star yet, so they arranged to send him off on his spaceship today.

"Qin Tian, visit me in the Chaotic Star Zone when you have time," Dongfang Mingyu said with a smile.

"Sure, maybe my business will soon reach the Chaotic Star Zone, and I'll need your help by then," Qin Tian replied with a smile.

Dongfang Mingyu nodded, "No problem, contact me anytime."

Yue Shenghe laughed heartily:

"Qin Tian, you still have business. If you expand to the Azure Star Zone in the future, come find me. I guarantee a smooth journey for you."

"Alright, looks like I need to expand my business there soon."

Qin Tian smiled and then waved his hand, bidding farewell to his friends.

"Goodbye, everyone!"

"Goodbye!"

Watching Qin Tian's silhouette in the distance, Zhuge Yu smiled slightly, thinking that it might not be long before they meet again in the Imperial Capital.

...

Qin Tian had booked the top-level Supreme VIP room on the spaceship, with the cost covered by the Dongfang Clan. However, as the spaceship and even the shipping company behind it belonged to the Dongfang Clan, it was merely reserving a room for him.

Pushing open the gilded cabin door, Qin Tian was astounded — this was no ordinary spaceship cabin, but a luxurious palace floating in space.

The entire room employed holographic projection technology to directly project the vast cosmos onto the smart glass walls surrounding him. At this moment, countless stars seemed within reach, and beneath his feet was a nano-alloy floor that automatically adjusted temperature, creating a nebula-like blue glow with every step.

In the center of the room floated a bed supported by anti-gravity devices, with a body made of memory liquid metal that automatically reshaped according to the user's physique.

Embedded at the head of the bed was a Spirit Crystal the size of a fist, emitting a gentle glow that calmed the mind.

Qin Tian adjusted the room from starry mode to normal mode, and instantly, the holographic cosmos inside receded like a tide. The transparency of the smart glass walls slowly adjusted, changing from the vast cosmos to an elegant interior.

Soft warm light spilled from the ceiling, and delicate wooden textures appeared on the walls. The floor transitioned from a cold technological blue to a warm dark brown wood texture.

Even the air seemed to change — the previously chilly feel unique to space cabins was now filled with the faint scent of sandalwood.

"Much more comfortable like this."

Qin Tian nodded. Although the starry mode was awe-inspiring, looking at it for too long inevitably brought a sense of drifting and loneliness. In contrast, the ordinary mode gave him a sense of grounded reassurance.

Lying on the bed, Qin Tian habitually conducted an after-action review.

This journey to Azure Wood Star lasted nearly a month. Though not long, the gains were exceptionally rich.

First, in terms of talents.

Two orange and one purple talents

[Purple Sky Thunder Body] evolved into [Celestial Punishment Divine Thunder]

[Gate of the Black Void] evolved into [Void Dominator]

New talent [Netherworld Ghost Contract]

[Celestial Punishment Divine Thunder] raised his attack ceiling, [Void Dominator] enhanced mobility and survival, and [Netherworld Ghost Contract] allowed him to cultivate a terrifying army of ghost souls.

In terms of Spiritual Artifacts, he acquired the Windwalker Boots, Stellar Armor, Soul Sealing Seal, a dagger, and a longsword.

In terms of elixirs and treasures, the harvest was even more delightful.

From the genius battle, he obtained All Things Essence Enhancing Pill, Celestial Thunder Body Refining Pill, Five Dragons Transformation Pill, and four other elixirs. In the later championship bouts, the families of sixteen geniuses came to watch and brought him gifts. Various elixirs and treasures were enough for him up to Tier Six.

Of course, the most precious were the Center of Wood Marrow and Void Dragon Blood given by the Dongfang Clan.

Regarding cultivation techniques, besides the Silver Level Martial Technique [Gale Eighteen Hammers] acquired from the genius battle, he also traded with the Dongfang Clan using a tendril from Jie La for three Silver Level Dark Element cultivation techniques and martial techniques.

Cultivation Technique [Infinite Shadow Prison Scripture]

Swordsmanship [Dark Moon Nine Kills]

Body Technique [Night Ghost Thousand Illusions]

These were the series of techniques tailored for the Night Demon Apostles.

[Infinite Shadow Prison Scripture] was a dark cultivation technique specializing in stealth and lurking, allowing cultivators to perfectly conceal their aura and merge with darkness, complementing the Night Demon's abilities.

[Dark Moon Nine Kills] pursued ultimate assassination efficiency, with each move aimed at taking lives. The techniques were plain yet hidden with lethal intent, executed silently. The most terrifying was its attached "Dark Moon Eclipse" effect, which caused wounds to fester continuously, slowly being consumed by the Power of Darkness even if not immediately fatal.

[Night Ghost Thousand Illusions] maximized the path of deception in body technique. When displayed, the user's form was as elusive as a ghost. A master could disappear from an enemy's sight in a mere instant of distraction, reappearing at the most unexpected angle.

Currently, the first-generation Night Demons, Li Qi and Feng Mochuan, could cultivate this set of techniques, especially Feng Mochuan. With the [Infinite Shadow Prison Scripture], breaking through to Tier Six was a certainty.

As for the second-generation Night Demons, they would need to contribute in order to train with these techniques.

Rewards and punishments balanced is the foundation for the long-term development of an organization.

Finally, of course, there was the growth of Jie La, Kazik, and himself.

Jie La broke through to Tier Six, absorbed large amounts of Wood Crystals and Purple Crystal Wall energy. After the breakthrough, her strength grew significantly, and her high natural talent made her stand out even in Tier Six.

Moreover, Jie La had already cleared the path to Tier Seven. By absorbing sufficient energy and reaching Peak Tier Six, she could ingest the Center of Wood Marrow to successfully advance to Tier Seven.

Kazik's current strength lagged behind Jie La's by quite a lot, but after absorbing half a bottle of Void Dragon Blood, breaking through to Tier Five was no problem. His species would also align more with the Void Species, likely awakening Void Class abilities.

If so, Kazik would achieve a species-level evolutionary leap, becoming a terrifying Spirit Beast no less than Jie La.

As for himself, he had progressed from Tier Four Four Stars to Tier Four Six Stars, with a huge increase in physique after absorbing dragon blood. The [Night Demon King] orb's color reached Medium Orange, nearing Deep Orange, while [Desolate Battle Body] achieved Deep Orange. Among the same level, besides the Holy Blood Descendants, other Spiritualists with golden bloodlines hardly surpassed him in terms of physical strength.

In terms of the diversity of combat methods, he could confidently say that he was the strongest in his generation; no one could be stronger than him, this "cheat" character.

The only thing somewhat weakened was the reserve of Evolution Points.

Evolving [Void Dominator] consumed 200W Evolution Points, and currently, only about 30W Evolution Points remained.

Azure Wood Star was not a place to harvest Evolution Points.

He hoped the next destination would provide ample opportunities for him to hunt.

He still had many talents waiting to breach the orange color.

