

## Battlefield 461

### Chapter 461: The Divided Barbarians

On the morning of the next day, before the sky fully brightened, the thin mist of Silver Gray Star still lingered around the wooden huts in the Barbarian's camp, and the cool wind carried the scent of pine from the rain over the frost-covered grass leaves.

Mu Ya pushed open the wooden door of the hut, and the chilly air surged into his lungs. He instinctively moved his shoulder, causing a slight crackle in his bones.

Immediately after, a set of vigorous and powerful fist techniques slowly unfolded—this was the "Ice Field Battle Fist" passed down for hundreds of years in the Winter Tribe, with each move carrying the ferocity of battling the Ice Giant Beast.

Even though he had practiced it thousands of times, he still trained unfalteringly every day, to engrave each movement into his bones, making it a bodily instinct.

Between his fists and feet dancing, abundant qi and blood slowly spread from his body, like an invisible heat wave dispelling the chill of the morning.

The fist technique had just reached its midpoint when a figure emerged from the nearby woods—the person wasn't quite imposing but was lean like a drawn hunting knife, with ice-blue battle patterns spreading from his neck to his chest, and a hint of unwavering gloom in his eyes.

Mu Ya glanced at him but didn't pause at all, continuing until the last move when he withdrew his fists and stood still, then turned his head and spoke calmly, "Saqi, I know what you're thinking, but it won't work."

Saqi approached slowly, his voice hoarse as if abraded by sandpaper, "Mu Ya, are you really going to work alongside the Royal Personnel? Have you forgotten who destroyed our tribe? Forgotten how our people were slaughtered by them?"

"I haven't forgotten!" Mu Ya clenched his fists tightly, his knuckles whitening, intense hatred flashing in his eyes, "I'll remember those blood debts for the rest of my life! But Terreda said that the Royal

Personnel would help us return home and reclaim the land taken from us. It's the only chance we have for our people to survive and take revenge."

"Chance? You actually believe in the Royal Personnel's 'chance'!" Saqi's gaze suddenly became fierce, "Why would he help us? What's in it for him? I'm telling you, he just wants to use us as tools! Once he exhausts our strength, he'll discard us like trash!"

He stepped forward, voice lowered further with a hint of persuasion, "This is the best time to escape—we've just taken the potion, our power has surged, as long as we seize a few Royal Personnel and snatch their spacecraft, we can return home directly!"

Mu Ya slowly shook his head, his tone carrying a weight, "Saqi, you're oversimplifying the situation. Do you think Terreda is living with us just for show? If we really act, the first challenge is Terreda—whether we can win is one thing, but how many of our people will die even if we do?"

"So what!" Saqi's voice suddenly rose, eyes filled with obsession, "As long as we can return home and avenge, what's a little sacrifice!"

Mu Ya looked at him, softly sighed internally; Saqi wasn't like this before. He was then the calmest hunter of the Winter Tribe, capable of lurking in an ice cave for three days and nights just to wait for an Ice Bear; he dared to fight a pack of wolves solo to protect his people.

But since his parents, wife, and children were killed by the Royal Personnel's slaughter, he completely changed, with only the flames of revenge in his eyes, unable to accommodate anything else.

Mu Ya understood this pain, but as a leader, he couldn't focus solely on hatred—firstly, the Barbarian Race always valued emotions and kept promises. Upon coming here, they weren't mistreated at all; instead, there were hot meals, warm huts, and potions that transformed their bodies. This goodwill was evident, and if a rebellion were shouted, how many people would follow?

Secondly, the weapons in Terreda's hands were indeed Divine Weapons, treasures that only chiefs of large tribes deserved.

And all they had were stone axes and spears; if a fight erupted, no matter the numbers, they couldn't bridge the gap in weaponry.

If they failed, not only would the warriors die, but the elderly, women, and children behind them would also be buried alongside.

"Saqi, I understand your hatred." Mu Ya took a step forward, placing his hand on Saqi's shoulder, his tone serious yet pleading, "I also know you spoke with Uhou, Luo Ya, and the others last night. But I beg you, consider our people around us, the consequences of failure, we can't bear it."

Saqi felt the strength of Mu Ya's palm, then looked at his firm eyes, his tense body slowly relaxed, his eyes lowered, voice low, "Understood."

Just then, an urgent shout came from afar, "Mu Ya! Mu Ya! The Royal Personnel that Terreda mentioned is here!"

Mu Ya and Saqi's eyes both focused, quickly running toward the center of the camp.

They saw a black flying device slowly descending, the roar of its engine gradually weakening.

As the hatch opened, a tall figure emerged—black clothes and hair, face cold and stern, not quite imposing but upright like a pine on the snowfield, exuding a steady aura.

"Boss!" Terreda led a group of Barbarian Warriors to greet him quickly, Mu Ya also led his people to follow.

So this is Terreda's so-called "Boss"? Mu Ya observed Qin Tian calmly; from him, he couldn't sense any slight powerful qi and blood fluctuation, just like an ordinary person with no strength.

Yet Terreda and those strong Barbarian Warriors were actually loyal to an ordinary person?

Mu Ya found it unbelievable, but the scene before him couldn't not be believed.

"Boss, let me introduce you." Terreda sidestepped and pointed at Mu Ya, "Most of these fellows come from the Winter Tribe, and this is their leader, Mu Ya."

Qin Tian's eyes fell on Mu Ya—this Barbarian leader was half a head taller than Terreda, with ice-blue battle patterns etched on his exposed arms, tightly braided hair against his scalp, and deep blue eyes full of calm and composure.

"Mu Ya, Warriors of the Winter Tribe, greetings." Qin Tian spoke, but it was fluent Barbarian language, with just a hint of local Barbarian intonation.

With his current spiritual power, learning languages was effortlessly easy. During the two months in Demon Suppression Abyss, he often chatted with Barbarian Warriors, having long grasped the Barbarian language thoroughly.

"You... you can speak the Barbarian language?" Mu Ya's pupils shrank slightly, his face filled with surprise, yet within him rose an inexplicable sense of intimacy.

The language was a minor issue, but behind it lay respect; this Royal Personnel was willing to learn their language, at least showing that he placed the Barbarian Race close to heart.

During this brief moment of ease, an icy gaze quickly swept over Qin Tian's face—it was Saqi.

He quietly turned his head, exchanging a look with Uhou, Luo Ya, and others not far away, fierce determination flashing in his eyes.

This human seemed perfectly ordinary, yet he was Terreda's employer, holding the highest status.

Kidnapping him would be easiest, completely eliminating Mu Ya's hesitation; once seized, all of Winter Tribe could only follow him in rebellion, without any chance of turning back!

The opportunity existed only in this instant, and it could not be missed.

Saqi's footsteps silently moved forward, fingers quietly clutching the stone axe hidden behind; Uhou and Luo Ya also slowly edged towards Qin Tian under the cover of the crowd, their eyes glinting with desperate resolve.

#### Chapter 462: The Barbarian Race's Return to Loyalty

"Have you adapted well during your time at the outpost?"

Qin Tian looked at Mu Ya, speaking fluent Barbarian language, making communication seamless.

Mu Ya was momentarily stunned, then nodded vigorously, with genuine emotion in his voice:

"Adapted! It's so much better than the icy plains or the slave camps. We can live in warm houses that don't let in the wind, eat our fill of meat and grains every day, and even have potions that make us stronger. Such days, we never even dared to dream of before."

He took a deep breath, his azure eyes full of solemnity, "As long as you truly help us return home, the warriors of our Winter Tribe are willing to work for you!"

These words weren't perfunctory; they were a heartfelt decision after witnessing ordinary tribe members lead stable lives and warriors becoming several times stronger. To the Barbarian Race, "having food, a home, and strength" was a reason worth following.

Hearing this, Qin Tian showed a faint smile: "Good. Like Terreda and the others, as long as you work earnestly under me for five years, I will use all my resources to help you form an army, prepare supplies, and fully support your return to your homeland to reclaim the lost land from the invaders."

His words didn't hold grand promises but were clear and carried convincing power.

The last bit of resistance Mu Ya felt towards "humans" dissipated mostly at that moment—he could feel no deceit in Qin Tian's gaze, only sincere honesty.

Just as he was about to express gratitude, Mu Ya caught a fleeting shadow out of the corner of his eye—  
Saqi!

"Watch out!"

Mu Ya's pupils suddenly contracted, blood vessels bursting in his eyes, and a hoarse shout erupted from his throat as he instinctively lunged forward.

But Saqi was too close to Qin Tian, only three steps away, and his sudden outburst made him incredibly fast, like a fierce beast of the ice plains breaking its chains, pouncing towards Qin Tian.

At that moment, three more figures sprang from the crowd—Wu Hou, Luo Ya, and another warrior from the Winter Tribe. Like leopards lying in wait, they pounced towards Qin Tian, obviously conspiring with Saqi beforehand, catching everyone off guard during the conversation between Mu Ya and Qin Tian!

Mu Ya's heart sank to the bottom—he knew Saqi's intentions too well!

This wasn't simple rebellion but an attempt to force the entire Winter Tribe into a complete break with the Empire! If anything happened to the Royal Personnel, they couldn't explain it away, and would only be dragged onto the "rebel" chariot by Saqi, with no way back!

He wanted to reach out to stop it, but his body couldn't keep up with Saqi's speed, and all he could do was watch helplessly as Saqi got closer, despair gripping his heart.

The surrounding Barbarian Warriors were stunned, some even forgetting to breathe, plunging the entire station into a deathly tension.

Only Terreda and the veteran warriors beside him showed no panic; Terreda merely raised an eyebrow, his eyes flashing with undisguised mockery—as if he had long anticipated this scene, more like watching a farcical display of overreaching.

In the next second, a sudden change occurred!

"Boom!"

A dull explosive sound erupted in the center of the outpost, like two mountains crashing together.

The four figures lunging at Qin Tian seemed to slam into an invisible copper wall, their bodies jolting suddenly, then flying backward with three times the speed they came, crashing into the boulders dozens of meters away, the blood they coughed up staining the ground, helpless to even struggle up.

Before anyone could recover from this sudden change, they saw Qin Tian surrounded by dazzling golden divine radiance—the light warm but not glaring, like the sun at dawn, enveloping the entire station in a sacred halo.

He stood quietly in the center of the halo, his body—the size of which seemed ordinary—now like an awakened ancient mountain, an overwhelming surge of Qi and Blood bursting forth unreservedly, compressing the air till it nearly froze, causing the ground to tremble!

Mu Ya felt as if a thousand-ton boulder was pressed against his chest, his breathing became difficult, his legs trembled involuntarily, and his Qi and Blood felt frozen—this power was more terrifying than any tribal chief he had seen, even more astounding than the legendary "descendants of the Barbarian Gods" who could tear ice plain giant bears apart with bare hands!

The Barbarian Warriors nearby were worse off, collapsing on the ground, their foreheads touching the cold earth, without the courage to even lift their heads for a glance.

Even Terreda, who had long witnessed Qin Tian's prowess, instinctively tensed his body, eyes full of reverence.

The boss was even stronger!

Saqi lay on the ground, coughing blood as he struggled to lift his head, looking up at Qin Tian enveloped in golden divine radiance. His pupils were filled with incredulous fear—what "ordinary person" was this?

This was clearly a peerless martial god hiding his strength!

His attempt to assassinate just now was nothing more than an ant challenging a lion, ridiculous and pathetic!

Qin Tian slowly retracted the divine radiance around him, his gaze falling on Saqi. His tone remained calm, yet carried an undeniable pressure: "I provide you with a stable life and opportunities for strength not for you to repay me with betrayal."

"Pah!"

Saqi spat a mouthful of blood-stained spit onto the ground. He lifted his head, staring at Qin Tian with a vicious look, his voice hoarse: "You speak well, but it's just to use us as tools."

"Tribesmen, don't believe the Empire people's lies. Haven't they fooled us enough? Have you forgotten how our tribe was burned? Forgotten how our loved ones died under their blades?"

#### Chapter 463: Barbarian Race's Sincere Submission (Part 2)

These words, like a spark, instantly ignited the disturbance within the crowd.

The warriors of the Winter Tribe looked at each other, their eyes full of conflict—on one side was Saqi, the warrior who once lived and died for the tribe; his hatred was the hatred of all. On the other side was the "benefactor" who set them free and gave them warmth, food, and strength.

Deciding which side to stand on, no one could make an immediate decision.

"Everyone! Calm down first!" Mu Ya, seeing the situation, quickly stepped forward, his shout overpowering the surrounding commotion.

He knew he couldn't let Saqi continue to incite, so he turned to Qin Tian, his tone urgent and pleading,

"Boss—Terreda calls you this, so I will too. Saqi and the other three, their parents and children were killed by the Empire warriors, the hatred in their hearts is too deep, that's why they lost their heads. I

beg you to give them a chance for redemption. I guarantee with the honor of the Winter Tribe that they will never offend again!"

"Mu Ya, you don't need to plead for me!" Saqi suddenly lifted his head, his voice full of resolute hatred, "Even if I die, I will never bow to a Royal Personnel!"

"Shut your mouth!" Mu Ya glared at him, his eyes bursting with bloodshot lines, his shout filled with anger, "Saqi! You want to kill yourself, and also drag the entire Winter Tribe with you?"

The recent Qi and Blood pressure released by Qin Tian had already made Mu Ya see reality clearly—in front of such a strong man, even if all of them combined, it would not be enough.

Saqi's assassination was like throwing an egg against a rock. If Qin Tian were truly angered, the only thing awaiting them would be a dead end!

Saqi looked at Mu Ya's bloodshot eyes and suddenly let out a bitter laugh, filled with sorrow, but said no more. He just closed his eyes, a death wish already forming in his heart.

"Terreda, take them away." Qin Tian waved his hand, his tone as indifferent as if discussing an unimportant matter.

"Wait!" Mu Ya quickly opened his mouth, his face full of worry; around him, the Winter Tribe members also stepped forward, wanting to plead for Saqi—though Saqi had erred, he was one of them, no one wanted to see him die.

Qin Tian glanced at them, speaking calmly, "Rest assured, I didn't plan to kill them."

Killing Saqi would certainly stand as a warning, but it would also breed resentment in Mu Ya and other Barbarian Warriors, not conducive to unity.

Moreover, he had some admiration for Saqi's unyielding character—not everyone has the courage to stand tall in front of a powerful figure.

If fully subdued, these people would be the sharpest spears on the battlefield in the future.

But, mistakes have to be punished, they couldn't just drop it like that.

"Tie them up and starve them for ten days."

Upon hearing this, Mu Ya and the Winter Tribe members instantly breathed a sigh of relief.

Starving for ten days was unpleasant—their hands and feet bound, not a drop of water, even thinking about it felt unbearable. But at least they kept their lives.

Compared to death, this punishment was already considered merciful.

"Thank you, boss!" Mu Ya quickly bowed in gratitude, his tone full of sincere thanks.

"Royal Personnel! You think I'll be grateful for sparing my life? Dream on—" Saqi suddenly shouted again, but before he could finish, a golden energy hand appeared out of thin air, and with a "slap," it struck him heavily on the face!

The blow was heavy, causing Saqi's face to instantly swell, several of his teeth loosened, his eyes rolled back, and he fainted directly.

Half of his face quickly swelled up like a clear palm print was branded on it, drool hung from his mouth, making him look as pathetic as a fish out of water.

"Talks too much." Qin Tian retrieved the energy hand, letting out a faint hum, and turned his gaze to the three other still-conscious Barbarian Warriors.

The three looked at Saqi's miserable condition and met Qin Tian's indifferent eyes, instantly feeling a chill down their spines, swallowing subconsciously.

They would rather Qin Tian killed them on the spot than to end up like Saqi—not only beaten but losing face as a Barbarian Warrior.

"Take them away." Qin Tian waved his hand again.

"Yes!" Terreda responded immediately, directing his warriors forward.

They carried the special binding ropes made by the Military Department, woven with high-grade alloy and embedded with precise mechanical clasps, specifically designed to bind Spiritualists.

Once tied, with Saqi and the others' current strength, escape was impossible.

The warriors stepped forward, swiftly tying Saqi, who had fainted, and the other three into bundles, dragging them toward the wooden cabins on the outskirts of the base.

The Winter Tribe members watched this scene with reluctance, but knowing this was the best outcome, none dared to speak.

"All right, this is just a minor incident, it won't affect my previous arrangements for you, nor change my attitude toward the Winter Tribe."

Qin Tian noticed the unsatisfied worry in Mu Ya's eyes, speaking calmly to soothe.

He knew what Mu Ya was concerned about—afraid Saqi's betrayal would implicate the entire tribe, turning prior promises into nothing, and that even the current treatment would be lost.

Hearing this, Mu Ya's suspended heart finally settled, his tense shoulders slowly relaxing.

He was truly scared beforehand—in the Barbarian tribe, anyone daring to betray the leader and attack them would have long been fed to the ice wolves, implicating even the family.

But Qin Tian did not take offense, even specifically reassuring him. Terreda was right; this boss was indeed generous.

After calming Mu Ya, Qin Tian walked into the crowd, first chatting with the Winter Tribe warriors, inquiring about their condition after taking the potions, then bent down to touch a few children's heads, handing out candies with a smile; he also patiently asked the elderly about their accommodations and dietary habits, with a genuinely friendly tone, without a hint of authoritative demeanor.

The prestige was already sufficiently established; following that, the benefits naturally needed to catch up.

"From today onwards, all members of the Winter Tribe no longer need to wear the locator devices." Qin Tian announced to everyone. As soon as he finished, warriors stepped forward, removing the locator wristbands from each of them.

"Your accommodations and meals will be standardized with Terreda's group — food, clothes, and meat will be sufficient, without any difference."

The elderly smiled calmly upon hearing this; the warriors nodded one after another, their resistance diminishing little by little.

Next, Qin Tian had recording boards brought out and said to the three hundred Winter Tribe warriors, "Now, we will measure your height, shoulder width, and the weapons you are accustomed to using— axes, spears, knives, all can be mentioned. Afterward, I will craft a set of exclusive weapons and armor for each of you, just like Terreda's group."

"Boom!"

These words were like a spark falling into a barrel of oil, causing immediate uproar!

The Winter Tribe warriors had been envious of Terreda's group's black armor and weapons for a long time, unable to resist glancing at them every time they saw them, dreaming of having their own set— more tempting than wine and women for a Barbarian Warrior!

"Is it true? Can we really have armor and weapons like that?" A young warrior asked excitedly, his voice trembling.

"Of course." Qin Tian nodded, a light smile on his face, "As long as you follow me and do well, there will be more opportunities to become stronger in the future."

This series of "appeasement + benefits" combinations visibly increased the recognition of the Winter Tribe people towards Qin Tian.

Were there to be a loyalty value visible, it would certainly show an increase by at least twenty points—from early "observation," gradually shifting to "closeness."

Standing amidst the crowd, Mu Ya looked at the genuine smiles on the tribesmen's faces and then at Qin Tian surrounded in the center, pursing his lips, his mind full of thoughts.

Following this boss, perhaps the Winter Tribe could truly stand up again.

Chapter 464: Thunderpole Crystal, Breaking Through to Tier 6

Two days later

"Goodbye, General Qin!"

The officer in a lieutenant colonel's uniform put his feet together and gave Qin Tian a standard military salute.

Qin Tian raised his hand in return, and after watching the military flying device streak across the sky, he handed the jade box in his hand to the Poisonous Widow beside him.

The Poisonous Widow felt the cool temperature of the box with her fingertips when she took it, and couldn't help but ask curiously, "Boss, what's inside this?"

Early in the morning, a military flying device descended on their residence, and several officers personally handed the escorted jade box to their boss. Seeing this situation, it was clear that the contents of the jade box were undoubtedly precious.

"It's the Thunder Crystal, exchanged from the military department's treasury with Military Merit Points for Thunder Element treasure materials," Qin Tian said, rubbing the box's lid with his fingertips, unable to hide his suppressed anticipation,

"With it, I can break through to Tier Six."

"Break through to Tier Six!" The Poisonous Widow's eyes widened instantly.

The transition from Tier Five to Tier Six was a qualitative leap within the Spiritual Ability System. The boss could easily crush some Tier Six powerhouses even at Tier Five, and if he succeeded in breaking through, his combat power would definitely soar to unimaginable heights.

Qin Tian opened a Gate of Space and stepped in first, with the Poisonous Widow following closely behind. When they landed, they were already standing in the hall of the Lingfeng Trading Company's exclusive Cultivation Base.

This base had been acquired and transformed through heavy investments by Feng Mochuan: Fifty cultivation rooms were divided into four grades according to the concentration of Spiritual Qi; the low-grade rooms could gather three times the Spiritual Qi, the mid-grade five times, the high-grade ten times, and the top-grade cultivation room at the deepest part could reach twenty times the concentration of the outside world. The walls were inscribed with three layers of Spirit Gathering Runes, and the energy crystal nuclei consumed every hour were astronomical.

"You guard outside the door."

Qin Tian instructed the Poisonous Widow, then pushed open the alloy gate of the top-grade cultivation room.

The heavy door slowly slid open, and the Spiritual Qi inside flowed out through the gap with a faint fragrance of grass and wood.

Inside the cultivation room, just as Qin Tian sat on the cushion in the center, the Spiritual Qi aggregation device at the top emitted a low hum.

In the next moment, milky white Spiritual Qi gushed out from the device like an inverted waterfall, quickly condensing into a tangible mist in the room, swirling around him, filling his lungs with each breath.

He slowly opened the jade box.

"Sizzle—!"

Violent thunder energy burst out instantly, as if an invisible thunder net spread across the room.

Qin Tian's hair stood slightly on end due to the electricity, and a fine tingling sensation spread across his skin. Even the air was filled with faint purple lightning arcs, crackling incessantly.

Inside the box lay the Thunder Crystal, about the size of a fist, deep purple in color, its surface entwined with serpent-like thunder patterns. Each flicker caused a slight tremor in the surrounding Spiritual Qi.

This was a treasure from Thunder Magnetar—a death planet enveloped by perpetual thunderstorms, where even battle armor dared not land lightly, yet it nurtured such a treasure as the Thunder Crystal.

Qin Tian used the special privileges of the Imperial Glory Medal, along with 480,000 Military Merit Points, to exchange it out from the military department's treasury's "strategic materials" catalog.

Qin Tian took a deep breath and held the Thunder Crystal in his palm.

The cool crystal stone just touched his skin, and a scorching thunder power surged madly into his body along the meridians of his palm—as if an angry Thunder Serpent rampaged through his meridians, the walls of which felt like they were burning with sharp pain wherever it passed.

He immediately operated the "Nine Nether Thunder Brilliance Technique."

The Golden Level Technique activated in an instant, and the Spiritual Energy within his body was immediately mobilized.

The left half of his body suddenly lit up with a faint purple thunder glow, and under his skin, lightning arcs could vaguely be seen flowing, even the exhaled breath carried a slight electric sound.

Meanwhile, the right half of his body slowly seeped out a dense dark Spiritual Energy, like ink that could not be dissolved, swallowing the light, even his fingertips were shrouded in a faint black mist.

The two types of Spiritual Energies were distinct within his body, circulating along their respective meridians, but they formed an invisible barrier in front of the Dantian—this was the root cause of his being stuck at the pinnacle of Tier Five.

The Dark Spiritual Energy was too heavy, like a piece of weighty black iron, while the Thunder Spiritual Energy was relatively thin, unable to achieve balance. The two forces restrained each other, making it difficult to even increase the total amount of Spiritual Energy, let alone impact Tier Six.

Qin Tian fully activated the cultivation technique, guiding the thunder power from the Thunder Crystal toward the Thunder Spiritual Energy on the left.

The faint purple thunder radiance surged instantly, burning fiercely within the left side of his body like a fire with added wood. The lightning arcs in the meridians became more robust, and even fine thunder patterns condensed on the skin's surface.

The Thunder Spiritual Energy on the left grew stronger and finally broke through that invisible barrier, pressing toward the Dark Spiritual Energy on the right!

"Buzz——"

At the moment when the two Spiritual Energies collided, Qin Tian's body trembled violently.

The Dark Spiritual Energy reacted like a frightened beast, pushing back frantically, trying to force the Thunder Spiritual Energy back to the left; meanwhile, the Thunder Spiritual Energy, carrying the Thunder Crystal's violent power, pressed forward step by step. The two forces repeatedly tugged and collided above the Dantian, and each impact made his internal organs feel like they were pounded by a sledgehammer.

He gritted his teeth tightly, allowing sweat to soak his clothing, yet his fingers grasped the Thunder Crystal ever more firmly—the glow of the Thunder Crystal dimmed, its thunder power being continuously extracted and injected into his body.

After an unknown period, when the Thunder Crystal became dim, the Thunder Spiritual Energy on the left finally reached a delicate balance with the Dark Spiritual Energy on the right.

The faint purple lightning arcs and black mist slowly intertwined above the Dantian—the lightning arcs entwined with the black mist, while the black mist enveloped the lightning arcs. The two originally repellent forces now slowly fused into a new type of Spiritual Energy: with a faint purple base dotted with fine black lines, black mist flashing with weak thunder light, carrying both the ferocity of thunder and the secrecy of darkness.

"It's now!"

Qin Tian seized this moment of balance, guiding the fused Spiritual Energy toward the final Spiritual Aperture within his body.

"Bang!"

The moment the fused Spiritual Energy struck the Spiritual Aperture, Qin Tian let out a muffled groan and his body jerked backward.

That Spiritual Aperture was like a long-sealed door, smashed open by the fused Spiritual Energy, followed by the successive breaking through of other blocked Spiritual Apertures—a series of "bang! bang! bang!" crashing sounds echoed within his body. With each breach, new Spiritual Energy flowed into the Dantian, thickening the fused Spiritual Energy even further.

When the last Spiritual Aperture was breached, a faint golden light bridge suddenly lit up above the Dantian.

This light bridge was about half a foot long, completely transparent, seemingly condensed from Spiritual Energy, one end connected to the Dantian, the other extending into the void, vaguely linked with the mist in the cultivation room—this was the hallmark of a Tier Six Spiritualist, the Divine Bridge!

As soon as the Divine Bridge formed, the Spiritual Qi in the cultivation room boiled instantly!

The originally swirling white mist found an outlet, frantically rushing into Qin Tian's body, channeling directly into the Dantian along the Divine Bridge.

With the nourishment of Spiritual Qi, the fused Spiritual Energy skyrocketed at a speed visible to the naked eye, growing from a thin stream to a small river, then from a river to a river—the total amount of Spiritual Energy increased fivefold in just a quarter-hour!

Not only that, but the Divine Bridge constantly attracted external Spiritual Qi, making the recovery speed of Spiritual Energy extremely rapid—the energy consumed in the Spiritual Aperture breakthrough was replenished in just a few minutes.

Meanwhile, his physical body was undergoing changes under the quenching of Spiritual Qi: his skin became tougher, faintly showing a golden sheen; a subtle "crack" sound came from his bones, increasing in density and strength; even his meridians broadened considerably, accommodating more circulating Spiritual Energy.

The fused Spiritual Energy continued to rise—the barrier of Tier Six One Star was easily breached, the total amount of Spiritual Energy kept climbing; soon reaching Tier Six Two Stars, still with no sign of stopping; until the total Spiritual Energy surged nearly tenfold from before the breakthrough, stabilizing at the peak of Tier Six Three Stars.

Qin Tian slowly opened his eyes, a flash of purple-black light intertwined in his eyes.

He waved his hand, and fused Spiritual Energy condensed at his fingertip into a small light blade—carrying both the ferocity of thunder and the corrosive sensation of darkness.

Feeling the surging yet docile Spiritual Energy within, and the affinity brought by the Divine Bridge, he curved a slight smile—the accumulated potential of the Dual Holy Blood hadn't let him down.

Now, he felt fully confident in contending with ordinary Tier Seven Spiritualists.

Chapter 465: Manipulating People's Hearts

Clang—

The rusty iron door slowly opened with the creak of hinges, and four staggering figures walked out side by side.

The morning sun was particularly dazzling. Saqi, Wu Hou, Luo Ya, and Suo Ao instinctively squinted their eyes, their dry, cracked lips forming a line. There seemed to be a fire burning in their stomachs, causing hunger that made their vision faintly green.

"Saqi, Wu Hou, Luo Ya, Suo Ao!"

A rough voice came, as the tall Barbarian Warrior Gita carried four two-liter buckets of mineral water and quickly walked forward, with ice-cold water droplets still clinging to the surface.

Seeing the mineral water, the four of them rushed forward without even greeting, grabbing the buckets, twisting off the caps, and pouring the contents into their mouths.

The sound of gulping echoed on the open ground, their muddled eyes filled only with a thirst for water—ten whole days, bound tightly with restraint ropes, not a drop of water, unable to move a finger.

Barbarian Warriors naturally had a robust constitution, able to endure not eating for four or five days; they had previously endured such days for hunting Ice Giant Beasts, at least able to grab a handful of snow to moisten their throats.

But this time, not only were their hands and feet bound, they couldn't even sip a mouthful of water; now their throats were dry as if smoking, their stomachs empty and filled only with stomach acid burning their membranes.

In just a few seconds, a bucket of water was emptied.

Luo Ya wiped the water stains from the corner of his mouth, his voice hoarse as if sandpapered, his gaze fixed on Gita: "Gita, do you have anything to eat? I need food..."

The look resembled a starving wolf on the brink of collapse.

"The food is ready." Gita smiled and stepped aside, a half-person-high insulated box placed at his feet.

He lifted the box lid, and the rich aroma of meat instantly wafted out—inside were golden roasted beast meats, still steaming.

The four of them had their eyes lit up instantly, rushing forward like hungry tigers pouncing on prey, grabbing the beast meat and stuffing it into their mouths, eager even to chew and swallow the bones. The scorching meat juice numbed their tongues, yet they didn't mind, only cared about swallowing mouthfuls, fearing the food would vanish if they were slow by a second.

"Eat slower, nobody's going to snatch it from you." Gita laughed helplessly.

But the four of them didn't have time to pay attention to him, only focusing on burying their heads in the meat.

Once they had consumed all the beast meat from the insulated box and each drank half a bucket of water, they slumped to the ground, clutching their bulging bellies, exhaling deeply—finally feeling a bit alive again.

"Thanks, Gita." Saqi leaned against the wall, his voice carrying a trace of imperceptible grievance, "So many people, yet only you came to see us."

He held a bitterness inside: he suffered for the freedom and revenge of the tribe, yet not even a word of concern from other tribe members, which was truly disheartening.

Gita hastily explained: "Saqi, it's not that people don't care about you. I'm here as arranged by Mu Ya to pick you up—recently the tribe has been busy allocating new houses, everyone's waiting for arrangements and truly couldn't leave."

"Allocating houses?" Wu Hou furrowed his brow in confusion, "Not living in the old wooden houses anymore?"

"Oh, those broken wooden houses previously can hardly be called homes!" Gita waved his hand, full of excitement, "We're now living in new houses built by the boss, built quickly and ten times more comfortable than those old wooden houses! I even have one allocated, want to take a look?"

Saqi and the others exchanged glances, seeing curiosity in each other's eyes, and silently nodded.

"Let's go!" Gita enthusiastically led them toward the new residential area, soon stopping at a stand-alone two-story small building. Opening the door, a bright living room came into view—glistening white floor tiles reflecting light, a beautiful chandelier hanging from the ceiling, even the walls painted snow-white, starkly different from the previously dim, damp wooden houses.

What captivated the four was the black Armor and steel War Axe hanging on the living room wall.

The Armor gleamed with cold metallic sheen, the War Axe's blade sharp enough to reflect light, clearly not ordinary goods.

"Gita, is this Armor and War Axe..." Luo Ya's eyes slightly widened, his voice trembling.

"These are specially custom-made for each of us by the boss!" Gita patted the War Axe, speaking with pride, "You know I'm best with axes, so the boss custom-made this steel axe for me—splits stones as easily as snow, can split them in one go! The Armor is also very robust; even our Clan Leader's ancestral armor isn't more formidable than mine!"

Each of us a set, custom-made?

Saqi looked at the sophisticated equipment, listening to Gita's words, feeling an inexplicable pang of bitterness—like something important had been missed by him.

But he quickly shook his head, his gaze becoming resolute: These were the Empire's tricks to win people's hearts, he couldn't be deceived!

"Come, let me show you my new home!"

Without noticing his unease, Gita cheerfully pulled them to the kitchen, "Look at this, it's for cooking, press for fire!"

He twisted the gas stove switch, instantly igniting a Blue flame, radiating warmth.

"In the tribe before, lighting a fire was such a hassle? Wind blew it out immediately, now it's much easier!" Gita grinned broadly.

Watching the flickering flame, Saqi and the others' expressions grew increasingly complex—thinking of those days on the ice field where they'd freeze with numb limbs just to guard a campfire.

"And this!" Gita led them to the bathroom, pointing at the toilet, "This is for taking a dump, press this button afterward..." He pressed the flush button, water swirling to cleanly wash away the waste, "See, so clean and convenient! No more freezing asses in the snow, having to bury with snow!"

#### Chapter 466: Manipulating Hearts (Part 2)

The four, including Saqi, remained completely silent. They looked at the pristine toilet, the water heater on the wall, and the flowing water in the sink, feeling as though something was blocking their hearts, rendering them speechless.

"Come and see my bedroom!" Gita led them upstairs again, pointing at the soft bed and saying, "This bed is incredibly comfortable, much softer than the animal skin mattresses! My house is spacious too, even the chieftain's house isn't as roomy as mine!"

"Well, aren't you going to say something?" Gita was perplexed by their continued silence and asked.

Saqi looked at Gita's excited demeanor, and a flame inexplicably ignited within him—he couldn't tell if it was anger or jealousy.

He suppressed his emotions and coldly asked, "Aside from these, what else did the Empire give you?"

"Oh, right!" Gita slapped his forehead and said, "The boss also distributed some round pills to some people, I think they're called 'Qi Blood Pills'? I can't quite remember, but after eating them, one's qi and blood can increase significantly, and one's strength also grows! Unfortunately, I didn't get any due to my lack of power, but the boss said that as long as I train well, I'll get my chance in the future!"

Qi Blood Pill?

Saqi's heart sank abruptly. Food, lodging, weapons, elixirs... The Empire was putting more effort into their people than he had imagined. From Gita's appearance, it was clear the tribesmen were living well, even happier than they had been in the icefield tribe.

But there is no such thing as a free lunch; does this really come without a price?

Saqi remained skeptical—why would the Empire genuinely nurture Barbarian Warriors? There must be a deeper scheme, surely!

"That's pretty much my home." Gita looked at the sky and suggested, "Others are still being assigned houses, do you want to go have a look?"

Saqi instinctively resisted in his heart, but his body seemed uncontrollably to nod: "Let's go."

The four followed Gita to the plaza of the new residential area, and the sight before them left them stunned—a previously abandoned woodland had been completely cleared, transforming into a vast plain where rows of small houses stood alone like a white ocean.

The plaza was crowded with Barbarian tribesmen, each wearing an excited smile, waiting for their number to be called at the registration table ahead.

"Building No. 45! Who drew No. 45? Come and get your key!" shouted a Barbarian Warrior behind the registration table.

"It's me! It's me!" An elderly Barbarian excitedly raised his hand, and his hands shook as he accepted the key, "Thank you! Thank you, boss!"

"No. 32! Is No. 32 here?"

"Here! Right here!"

"Take the key, and it's a straight walk down this path!"

Watching the tribesmen cheerfully, as if they had received precious treasures, Saqi pursed his lips tighter and suddenly felt a surge of confusion—why had they forgotten their hatred so quickly? Did none of them want to return home to avenge their loved ones? Were his actions right or wrong?

Wu Hou, Luo Ya, and So'o also seemed lost in thought, their eyes turned dim, with no previous hostility.

Boom!

Just then, from the distant forest, two pillars of qi and blood suddenly rose—one was golden, the other was blood-red, their overwhelming aura soared into the sky, even causing the ground to tremble slightly, rustling the leaves in the woods.

"What is that?" Saqi abruptly looked up, feeling a strong sense of oppression from the qi and blood, his heart suddenly tightened.

"It should be Captain Terreda and Mr. Xiong breaking through!" Gita explained, "I heard in the morning that the boss prepared treasures for them to help break their bottleneck, and it looks like they're succeeding!"

Saqi's eyes narrowed rapidly: "Let's go, take a look!"

The four started running toward the forest with all their might, now having recovered some strength after a hearty meal.

It wasn't long before they saw Terreda and Xiong in the clearing of the forest.

The two were about a hundred meters apart, golden and red pillars of qi and blood towering over them, scorching waves spreading and slightly bending the surrounding trees.

Saqi stood tens of meters away, overwhelmed by the invisible pressure, even finding breathing difficult and his eyes filled with shock—Terreda and that hulking man were actually so strong!

Though Saqi was unclear about Xiong's strength, Terreda had mentioned he was previously just a high-level warrior from an ordinary tribe, yet the qi and blood he now unleashed could rival that of a major tribe's chieftain or even a legendary warrior!

Thinking of the Superman Potion they had taken earlier and the Qi Blood Pill mentioned by Gita, the four's expressions grew heavier, silent like four stones.

"Let's go back." Saqi waved listlessly; he dared not look any longer—watching more would destroy the principles he had upheld.

"Alright." Gita noticed their dejection and didn't ask more, leading them back to the old residential area, finally stopping in front of a secluded wooden hut, "You'll stay here for now, arranged by Mu Ya."

"We live here?" Luo Ya frowned, looking at the dilapidated hut, feeling uncomfortable.

"There's no other choice, the new houses are so sought after, many people waited several days to get one." Gita said apologetically, "You'll have to make do for a while, maybe you'll get a new house later on."

Saqi stayed silent—he knew those were just comforting words.

Having just committed the crime of assassinating Empire people, he was lucky to keep his life, how dare he hope for a new house?

Opening the wooden hut door, a damp scent came rushing in. The inside was just a large communal bed, covered with old animal skins, and a few bugs could be seen crawling around in the corners.

Previously, living here seemed fine, but having witnessed Gita's new house, the wooden hut now appeared oppressive and run-down.

The four entered silently, sitting on the communal bed without speaking. The air was filled with awkwardness and confusion, only the laughter of tribesmen outside pierced sharper.

.....

"Humph, see the gap now, don't you."

At the window of the cultivation room, Qin Tian viewed through the "bug view" in real-time—the bewilderment of the four at Gita's home, their silence in the new residential area, not a single subtle expression escaped his eyes.

The Barbarian warrior named Gita was specifically chosen by him as the "guide": outgoing, unable to hide his thoughts, and full of gratitude for his newly gained life, having him display the benefits was more effective than any lecturing.

"Not concerned with scarcity but inequality; this is applicable everywhere." Qin Tian's mouth curled into an understanding smile.

Saqi and the others' obsession stemmed from hatred towards the "Empire people", but when they saw their compatriots living in warm houses, wielding spiritual artifacts, and holding divine weapons compared to their own shabby wooden huts and cold stone axes, their inner defenses would melt like ice boiled in warm water.

Although the method wasn't sophisticated, it was extremely effective—those entertainment venues often led virtuous women astray using the same tactic; the key was to let the other party clearly see the chasm between "what they want" and "what they own."

However, he didn't plan to expend much effort on Saqi's group; the follow-up could be handled by Feng Mochuan.

With Feng Mochuan's years of experience as a mercenary and understanding of human nature, dealing with a few internally wavering Barbarian Warriors would be a piece of cake.

"Terreda and Xiong have also broken through, and now my core team has formed."

Qin Tian's eyes were deep; he had spent a high price to purchase a batch of elixirs from the Dongfang Clan, including two Dragon Blood Transformation Pills for Terreda and Xiong.

Dragon Blood Transformation Pills are crafted using Tier Eight dragon essence blood coupled with various spirit plant ingredients, primarily to boost qi and blood and temper the body.

After Terreda and Xiong consumed them, they smoothly broke through their bottlenecks, stepping into the gate of Tier Six combat power.

Currently, he has Feng Mochuan, Xiong, Terreda, and Old Ghost, all Tier Six experts under his command, and Jie La, Kazik, and Karsas, three major Spirit Beasts, also possess Tier Six strength, with Jie La's power reaching close to Tier Seven.

Li Qi, possessing the Night Demon King Bloodline, is only a matter of time before ascending Tier Six, and the Poisonous Widow, although slightly less talented, with ample resources poured in, breaking Tier Six isn't difficult either.

Compared to those silver and golden bloodline families, he is still weak, even some medium-sized conglomerates surpass him, but let's not forget, this is only his second year in this world.

In two years, he has become a Major General holding the Empire Glory Medal, commanding elite private forces, a trade empire, and a secret Shadow Division.

This growth speed is unmatched across the Empire.

Qin Tian walked to the window, gazing at the distant Star Port, his eyes seemingly penetrating the atmosphere to the vast Star Sea.

Step by step, someday he will stand on the highest stage—

Overlooking all beings.

Chapter 467: Transferred to Mingwang Planet, Secret Mission

Central Star Realm, Imperial Capital.

The top floor of the towering Military Department building, the office was filled with a faint aroma of tea.

Yang Zheng, dressed in a black tactical outfit, bowed slightly, the sharpness in his eyebrows slightly restrained. He respectfully reported, "Marshal Lin, the Military Department has reached a decision — Lu Yuan, due to inadequate defense of Soul-Splitting Ice Valley leading to heavy losses for the Thirteenth Army, has been reassigned from Mingwang Planet to serve as the head of logistics for the 37th Army on Seda Star, with his military rank reduced to Major General."

The man in front of him was none other than the legendary marshal of the Royal Army — Lin Xuanqing.

Marshal Lin had a gentle Eastern face, his black hair neatly tied at the back, with strands of silver woven in, adding a touch of maturity. He rubbed the edge of the teacup with his fingers, his deep eyes calm, speaking lightly, "Lu Yuan previously investigated the corruption case of the Luo Hou clan, causing them to lose a seat in the Senate. This is the Luo Hou family's retaliation."

Yang Zheng's brows instantly furrowed — the Luo Hou clan, as one of the Nine Great Holy Bloods, had deep roots and a complex network of influence. They wanted to target a lieutenant general like Lu Yuan. Even with Marshal Lin's protection, it would be difficult for Lu Yuan to escape unscathed.

The "mistake" at Soul-Splitting Ice Valley was clearly a trap set by the Luo Hou clan; otherwise, with Lu Yuan's capabilities, he would never have made such a basic error in overseeing strategic positions.

"Marshal Lin, with Lu Yuan gone, we've lost the most important pillar in our plans for Mingwang Planet. We must find someone to replace him quickly," Yang Zheng said gravely, but then hesitated, "But now that the Luo Hou clan is openly challenging us, whoever we send over will have to endure their targeting and retaliation. I've thought it over, but haven't found a suitable candidate yet."

Mingwang Planet is one of the eight major planets that guard the Royal star, its strategic importance cannot be overstated. Various powers are eager to plant their personnel there.

The person replacing Lu Yuan must not only possess formidable martial strength but also be adept at schemes and social interactions to navigate the complex network on Mingwang Planet.

Several suitable candidates crossed his mind, but they were either in crucial positions and couldn't be moved, or had obvious shortcomings in some areas, making it impossible for them to bear this burden.

Marshal Lin gently placed the teacup down, his voice still calm, "Lu Yuan's position as Guardian Envoy is certainly untenable, and the Luo Hou family will undoubtedly place their own people to replace him. For now, withdraw our people stationed at Soul-Splitting Ice Valley to avoid them seizing the opportunity to settle scores. But —"

His tone shifted, carrying a hint of coldness, "Courtesy demands reciprocity. Since the Luo Hou family has moved against my people, I naturally must return the favor."

Yang Zheng's eyes flickered, immediately understanding Marshal Lin's intention.

Marshal Lin held two "sharp blades": one being the Judgement Court, responsible for governing crimes of Spiritualists, which even the direct lineage of the Holy Blood clans feared as a "Sword of Damocles"

hanging overhead; the other, the Seventh Bureau, directly subordinate to the Military Department, specializes in monitoring corruption and misconduct within the military — a sharp spear inserted into the military realm.

The rise and fall of bloodline families are always tied to their influence within the military.

Compared to the Judgement Court, the existence of the Seventh Bureau is what truly terrifies these families.

Daring to target Lu Yuan, Marshal Lin will undoubtedly use these two "sharp blades" to regain ground elsewhere.

Buzz —

At that moment, the metallic sculpture in the corner of the office suddenly began to vibrate.

It was a messenger pigeon cast in profound iron, usually inconspicuous as a decorative piece, now emitting a faint blue glow, instantly drawing the focus of both Marshal Lin and Yang Zheng.

Marshal Lin took off the metal necklace he wore — the pendant was a small star emblem, which fit perfectly into the slot on the back of the messenger pigeon. He embedded the pendant into the slot, gently tapped the pigeon's head with his fingertip, and closed his eyes, seemingly receiving encrypted information.

A moment later, he opened his eyes, a hint of elusive brilliance emerging from them, softly murmuring, "Finally can't sit still, huh... Moving against that brother and sister after all."

The wheels of fate began to turn.

Next, it will be up to who can laugh last in this turbulent game of shadows.

He looked up at Yang Zheng, his tone slightly more relaxed, "Yang Zheng, I already have a candidate to replace Lu Yuan."

"Who is it?" Yang Zheng immediately asked, two names quickly flashing through his mind, "Is it Guan Shanyue, or Luo Nan?"

These two were the only ones he could think of, both capable and able to be deployed by Marshal Lin.

"Neither."

Marshal Lin shook his head, the corners of his mouth rare to see lifted into a faint smile, "It's a very interesting little fellow."

Interesting?

Yang Zheng was stunned — he had followed Marshal Lin for years and had never heard him use "interesting" to describe anyone.

For him to use that word, just who is that "little fellow"?

Curiosity wrapped around his heart like vines, prompting Yang Zheng to ask further, "Marshal Lin, who exactly is this person?"

But Marshal Lin deliberately kept it a mystery, taking a sip of his tea with a light smile, "No rush, you'll meet him soon enough."

...

Silver Gray Star

Yan Qing held a gold-edged document in hand, standing by the window, his tone carrying a touch of sentiment, "Qin Tian, your transfer order has arrived."

Qin Tian stepped forward to receive the document — the paper was dense and smooth, with the edges embossed with the distinctive star pattern of the Military Department, indicating it was a high-level transfer order.

His fingers brushed across the paper surface, his gaze quickly scanning the content, but his pupils froze when he reached the "place of assignment."

Mingwang Planet.

He had considered the possibility of stepping onto the stage of the Central Star Realm. Silver Gray Star was, after all, a star on the Empire's fringe, with ultimately limited scope.

But he hadn't thought it would come so soon — Mingwang Planet, one of the eight major planets orbiting the Royal star, supposedly where the planetary core's large star gate allows access to the Royal star within half an hour, truly making it "under the feet of the emperor."

Transferring from Silver Gray Star to Mingwang Planet was akin to moving from a small county town in the northeast to a position in the capital — an opportunity that is rarely available to anyone.

A glimmer of light emerged in Qin Tian's eyes,

Silver Gray Star was indeed too small. Here, his strength growth was gradually hitting a bottleneck, while Mingwang Planet, and even around the Royal star, gathered top talents from the Nine Great Star Realms, descendants of the Nine Great Holy Bloods, core members of various guilds, elites nurtured by conglomerates... There lay the top-tier cultivation resources, the most scarce Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures, along with the most outstanding talents.

Yet, opportunities bring hidden risks.

The powers surrounding the Royal star are deeply intertwined, with the Military Department, Senate, Holy Blood clans, conglomerates, alien forces... the conflicts have never ceased, making it far more challenging to gain a foothold there than expanding in Silver Gray Star.

"Director Yan, when should I depart?" Qin Tian scanned the transfer order again, noticing that it only stated the position but not the reporting time, sparking his suspicion.

Yan Qing turned around, walking up to him with a more serious expression than before. He spoke slowly, "Qin Tian, before your appointment, Marshal Lin has entrusted you with a secret mission."

"Marshal Lin?"

Qin Tian's gaze shifted slightly — for such a prominent figure to personally assign a task, the matter was clearly not simple.

He asked in a deep voice, "What is the task?"

Yan Qing took another sealed dossier from the briefcase behind him, the flap adorned with a red "Top Secret" label. He handed the dossier to Qin Tian, his tone solemn, "You need to protect this person, ensuring her safe entry into the Royal star."

Qin Tian opened the dossier, and a photo slipped out — the girl in the photo wore a light blue dress, her features delicate, with a clean smile as pure as untainted snow, exuding an aura of innocence and charm.

Below the photo, written in neat handwriting with a steel pen, was the target of his mission for this trip.

Dongfang Mingyue.

Chapter 468: The Closed Loop of Fate

Qin Tian glanced at the four characters "Dongfang Mingyue" on the document, his brows slightly furrowed, a hint of doubt flickering in his eyes.

The direct lineage and side branches of the Dongfang Clan were clearly distinguished by their names: those with single-character names were all core members of the direct lineage, such as Marshal Dongfang Yue, Great Elder Dongfang Ke, or his comrade-in-arms, Dongfang Yu, in the Demon Suppression Abyss; while those with double-character names were mostly from the side branches, like his friend Dongfang Mingyu and his grandfather Eastern Cloud Sea.

Clearly, Dongfang Mingyue was from a side branch.

But why would a girl from a side branch alarm Marshal Lin in the far-off Royal Star, to the extent of arranging a secret escort for her?

There must be some unknown hidden motives behind this.

He suppressed his doubts and continued to browse through the document.

Immediate family: Mother Dongfang Qin (deceased), brother Dongfang Haoyue; father's section, blank.

"Dongfang Haoyue..." Qin Tian's fingertips gently brushed over these three characters, a thoughtful expression flashing in his eyes.

He seemed to have heard this name somewhere before.

A moment later, he suddenly remembered—back on the Elf Star, Alan had once mentioned that a young scion of the Dongfang Clan had entered the Elves' sacred Silver Moon Lake years ago, and that person's name was Dongfang Haoyue.

At that time, he thought Dongfang Haoyue must be a talented member of the Dongfang Clan's direct lineage, as Silver Moon Lake had very strict restrictions on outsiders. Even he only gained entry by helping the Elf Race solve several major problems.

For Dongfang Haoyue to set foot there, the Dongfang Clan must have paid a significant price.

But now, it seemed things were far more complicated than he imagined. Why would a member from a side branch receive such preferential resources from the clan?

Recalling Alan's assessment of Dongfang Haoyue, a glint flashed in Qin Tian's eyes. It seemed the brother and sister were not as simple as they appeared on the surface.

He read on. The description of Dongfang Mingyue was sparse, but one aspect stood out—alchemy talent.

Dongfang Mingyue was a rare prodigious alchemist, showing incredible insight into the art of alchemy from a young age. After reaching adulthood, she repeatedly won major awards in alchemy competitions across various star realms.

Recently, she had maneuvered her way impressively into the top eight during the regional competition of the "Starry Cup" held by the Alchemy General Association in the Azure Wood Star Realm.

The "Starry Cup" was limited to alchemists below the sixth grade, yet had no age restrictions—meaning many of Dongfang Mingyue's competitors were veteran alchemists with decades of experience.

And for a young girl in her early twenties to make it through such competition, her talent and ability had evidently reached the pinnacle among peers her age.

The document's end also noted: The champion of the "Starry Cup" would be granted direct entry for advanced studies at the Imperial Capital's Alchemist Association headquarters, under the personal tutelage of a ninth-grade alchemist.

Marshal Lin's arrangement for him to escort Dongfang Mingyue to the capital implied confidence in her victory.

"Truly a genius girl." Qin Tian looked at the bright and innocent smile in the photograph, a hint of understanding lighting his eyes.

The Dongfang Clan was already renowned for producing alchemists, and even within such a talent-laden family, Dongfang Mingyue's talent was exceptional. Her brilliance could easily draw concern from rival factions.

Such as organizations like the Blood Demon Cult, the Xieshen Association, or spies from enemy nations, all known for targeting and destroying such prodigious talents.

Marshal Lin must have chosen him for this mission, valuing his strength and approach, trusting him to eliminate any hurdles for Dongfang Mingyue.

But... Qin Tian's brows furrowed once more.

Given Dongfang Mingyue's outstanding alchemical talent, even if she was from a side branch, the Dongfang Clan ought to have assigned top protectors.

Yet Marshal Lin still arranged for him to escort her discreetly, indicating a lack of trust in the guards deployed by the Dongfang Clan.

"Dongfang Mingyue is currently on Shuang Hua star, and the 'Starry Cup' top eight matches will commence there in five days." Yan Qing's voice interrupted Qin Tian's thoughts. "Marshal Lin orders you to set off immediately, ensuring Dongfang Mingyue's safety throughout, until she safely enters the Imperial Capital's Alchemist Association headquarters."

Qin Tian put away the document, straightened up, and saluted Yan Qing with a crisp, powerful voice, "Yes! I guarantee the successful completion of the mission!"

He turned to look out the window, a sharp glint flashing in his eyes—this journey to Shuang Hua star would likely be far from peaceful.

He had a vague premonition that protecting Dongfang Mingyue might be just the beginning, possibly leading to a far deeper scheme.

And he had already become a part of this chess game.

...

The morning light on Shuang Hua star carried a gentle coolness, casting slender beams of light through the gap in the hotel room curtains onto the carpet.

The light moved gradually, eventually falling on the bed and lightly brushing the girl's cheek.

Dongfang Mingyue's eyelashes fluttered slightly, like butterfly wings gracefully flickering twice, and then she opened her eyes—her pupils were clear as autumn water, with a touch of drowsiness from just waking up.

She sat up, the silk blanket slipping from her shoulders, revealing a small patch of fair skin.

The girl instinctively raised her hand to cover her cheek, her fingertips sensing a faint warmth from her skin, with even her earlobes subtly tinged with pink.

"Miss, you're awake? What's with that look?" A crisp voice sounded as Little Jade, wearing a goose-yellow dress, walked in with a cup of warm water.

Her face was round, her eyes lively like grapes, and seeing Dongfang Mingyue covering her face, she curiously leaned in, "Is there something wrong?"

Chapter 469: Fate's Closed Loop (Part 2)

Dongfang Mingyue lowered her hand, her eyes somewhat evasive: "No, I'm not uncomfortable... it's just... I had a dream."

"A dream?" Xiaoyu's eyes lit up, she immediately sat by the bed, leaning closer, "What did you dream about? Seeing your face so red, did you dream about a handsome guy?"

Mentioning this, Dongfang Mingyue's face turned even redder: "Mm... I dreamed of a man. I-I even initiated a hug with him."

"Wow!" Xiaoyu instantly became excited, gently shaking Dongfang Mingyue's arm, "Miss, miss! Was he handsome? Is he your type? What else did you do in the dream?"

"Why are you so nosy!" Dongfang Mingyue was embarrassed and annoyed, reaching out to gently tap Xiaoyu's forehead with her finger, pushing her back.

"Ah, miss, I'm just curious!" Xiaoyu persisted, shaking her arm coyly, "Just tell me a little, just a bit!"

Seeing Xiaoyu's pitiful look, Dongfang Mingyue sighed helplessly and had to compromise: "Alright, alright..."

She closed her eyes, the scenes from the dream appearing in her mind — a snow-filled street, deserted, only the streetlights emitting a warm yellow glow.

She watched the man, walking step by step toward him, he stood in the snow, tall and upright, his profile cold and hard, like a meticulously carved ice sculpture.

"He looks... quite handsome." Dongfang Mingyue opened her eyes, "The type of cold-faced handsome guy, who doesn't seem easy to approach."

"Cold-faced handsome guy!" Xiaoyu jumped up immediately, her eyes sparkling with gossip, "Miss, do you know him? What's his name? Have you met him before, is that why you dreamed of him?"

"You have too many questions!" Dongfang Mingyue dodged her inquiries, lifted the quilt, and got out of bed, "I refuse to answer."

She was wearing white silk pajamas, the material light and clinging to her skin, outlining her tall and slender figure, neither too thin nor with excess flesh, just right.

Dongfang Mingyue headed straight to the bathroom, her hand just touching the doorknob when the sensor light in front of the mirror automatically turned on, filling the space with warm white light.

The mirror reflected her appearance — a bare face without makeup, her skin fair and translucent, like a freshly peeled egg, without a visible pore; slender and soft eyebrows, slightly upturned at the ends, lips a faint pink, moist and full.

"Miss, should I go check out the local specialties nearby?" Xiaoyu followed behind, still asking insistently, "Yesterday's Shuang Hua cake was so delicious, should we try the snow velvet soup today? We can chat while eating?"

"I refuse to answer any of your questions." Dongfang Mingyue interrupted her, picking up a cleansing towel beside her, "Remember to choose a place with good reviews."

"Oh, alright." Xiaoyu pouted slightly, reluctantly turning to leave, before leaving she didn't forget to look back, her eyes full of determination like "I'll be back."

The bathroom door closed gently, leaving Dongfang Mingyue alone in the room. She turned on the faucet, scooped a handful of cold water, lightly patting her face, trying to suppress the inexplicable heat.

But as the icy water touched her skin, fragments of the dream flashed in her mind again — when she threw herself into the man's arms, feeling that solid strength, and the faint scent on him, like a pine forest after snow.

Dongfang Mingyue raised her head, looking at herself in the mirror — the flush on her cheeks not only hadn't faded but had spread to her neck, she gently bit her lower lip, feeling a hint of excitement she couldn't even understand herself.

Who exactly is he?

...

"Wow! This snow velvet soup is just too delicious!"

Xiaoyu scooped a spoonful of the milky-white soup into her mouth, the sweet aroma mixed with the delicate texture exploded on her tongue, her eyes immediately brightened, staring at the bowl of soup with a treasure-finding look.

"Haha, little girl, thanks for the praise!" The owner behind the counter smiled, his face full of wrinkles, stopping his dish towel in hand, his tone full of pride, "I've been running this shop for thirty years, can't say about other dishes, but this snow velvet soup, you won't find many places on Shuang Hua star doing it as authentically as I do!"

"Boss, your skills are simply amazing!" Xiaoyu put down the spoon, giving the owner a thumbs up, her clear voice paired with her chubby face, looking like an adorable charm doll, making many of the customers in the shop laugh.

Across from her, Dongfang Mingyue watched the scene, a faint smile spreading across her lips.

Xiaoyu was like this, wherever she went she was like a little sun, always able to easily brighten a dull atmosphere. Over the years, without Xiaoyu by her side, her life would probably have lacked a lot of warmth.

At this moment, a middle-aged man stood up, walking towards the counter while putting on a dark gray coat, the bright red scarf with an embroidered little flower around his neck forming a strange contrast with his rough and somewhat fierce face.

"Check, please." The man slapped his smart wristband onto the counter.

"That will be 69 yuan." The owner deftly quoted the price.

"Having breakfast is this expensive!" The man complained, but his fingers deftly tapped on the wristband to pay, "If it weren't for my wife and kids craving your food, I wouldn't come."

The owner wasn't annoyed, still smiling cheerfully: "You can tell you're a good man who cares for his wife and kids. These days, there aren't many men willing to get up early to buy breakfast for their family."

This hit right home for the man, and he smiled: "Alright, the boss knows how to talk! Just for that, I'll come back in a couple of days."

"Haha, I'll give you a 10% discount when you come!" The owner waved cheerfully.

The man carried the packed snow velvet soup, pushed open the glass door, and walked out.

#### Chapter 470: The Closed Loop of Fate (Part 3)

A chill seeped through the door crack, making Xiaoyu instinctively shrink her neck. She was just about to complain to Dongfang Mingyue about the cold outside when she noticed something amiss with the girl's expression—Dongfang Mingyue's eyes were downcast, long lashes casting faint shadows below. Her fingers were unconsciously clutching the dining spoon, turning her fingertips white.

"Miss, what's wrong?" Xiaoyu leaned closer and asked softly.

Dongfang Mingyue's voice was low, almost a whisper: "Two months ago... I dreamt of this man."

"Huh?" Xiaoyu's eyes widened instantly, quickly asking, "What happened in the dream? Did something bad happen?"

Dongfang Mingyue's eyes darkened, and she nodded lightly: "In the dream, his flying device malfunctioned midway, plummeting from the sky and crushing a passing young man. He didn't survive either."

"Then I must hurry and tell him! Tell him not to use that flying device!" Xiaoyu said, getting up and grabbing her coat as she dashed for the door.

Dongfang Mingyue instinctively raised her hand to stop her, but Xiaoyu had already rushed out like the wind. She could only lower her hand powerlessly, murmuring in a voice only she could hear: "It's useless... Fate cannot be changed. Those who try to intervene only make the outcome worse."

Outside the shop, Xiaoyu hurriedly caught up with the man, grabbing his arm and pointing to the personal flying device parked by the roadside, speaking rapidly: "Sir, wait a moment! I'm a flying device

engineer, and I just heard a strange noise coming from your flight device. It must be an engine problem! If you use it now, it might crash mid-flight!"

The man suspiciously eyed the young girl in front of him—the shop's door was shut tight, so how had she heard the unusual noise from the flying device? "Young lady, you're not lying to me, are you? Your hearing is a bit too sharp, isn't it?"

"I'm not lying! I'm also a Spiritualist!" Xiaoyu was flustered, quickly raising her hand to reveal a gentle white light blossoming in her palm.

Seeing Xiaoyu really was a Spiritualist, the man's doubt vanished instantly—a Spiritualist wouldn't deceive an ordinary person for no reason.

He quickly thanked her: "Oh, thank you so much, young lady! I'll leave the device here and wait for the insurance company to fix it!"

"No problem!" Xiaoyu waved her hand and asked, "How will you get home then? Your wife and children are waiting for breakfast."

The man shook the takeout box in his hand, smiling as he said, "The kids at home are in a hurry; I'll just call for an unmanned flying device."

He soon ordered one on a ride-hailing app, and within minutes, an old black unmanned flying device landed by the roadside, its fuselage showing signs of worn paint, clearly an old model used for many years.

"Thank you again, young lady! Goodbye!" The man got on the flying device, waving back at Xiaoyu.

"Goodbye!" Xiaoyu smiled and waved back, turning around to skip her way back into the shop.

But as soon as she sat down, she noticed Dongfang Mingyue's expression had worsened—the girl's gaze was filled with helplessness, struggle, and a hint of unknowable sorrow, like a lake shrouded in mist, heavy enough to unsettle one's heart.

"Miss, why are you still unhappy? We've prevented that man from using the faulty flying device, nothing will happen!" Xiaoyu tugged at Dongfang Mingyue's sleeve, trying to comfort her.

Just as Dongfang Mingyue was about to say something, a loud "boom" erupted from outside, like something heavy crashing to ground, causing the glasses in the shop to tremble slightly.

The two exchanged a glance, immediately getting up and rushing out. Following the sound, they saw a few hundred meters away in the open field, a black flying device was smoldering, its body deformed from the crash, the surrounding snow melted by the explosive heat wave.

Dongfang Mingyue and Xiaoyu rushed over, joining the crowd that had gathered.

Among the crowd, two strong men acted first—they were Spiritualists, working together to pull the unconscious man from the flying device, then lifting the deformed fuselage aside.

Beneath the fuselage, the scene was so tragic Xiaoyu instantly covered her mouth—a woman lay in the snow, protectively hovering over two young children, clearly having used her body as a final shield when the flying device fell.

But flesh and blood could not withstand the collision with steel. The woman and the two children were lifeless, their small bodies appearing particularly fragile in the snow.

Xiaoyu's limbs went icy cold, her face pale as paper, tears streaming uncontrollably—she had meant to save lives, how did it come to this?

Dongfang Mingyue stood still, staring at the blood-stained snow with a gaze full of complex emotions—regret, desolation, and a hint of near-helpless despair.

She had long known that once the wheel of fate turned, it would not deviate from its course for anyone's intervention. It would only return to its original track in a more cruel manner.