

## Beast T 431

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They also felt it was inappropriate.

A Genius Breeder who could develop a Super-Rank Skill, if not valued by Dragon Nation, would find plenty of other countries, and people with ulterior motives, eager to recognize their importance.

If such a matter were handled poorly, even he would be subjected to mild inquiry.

The question was, how to add these points?

Master Zhu Hong pondered, and all the judges fell into a deep silence.

At this time, everyone naturally awaited Master Zhu Hong's guidance.

As the vice president of the Breeder Association and the highest-ranking individual present, it was natural for him to take charge of such matters.

Therefore, Master Zhu Hong glanced at Su Ping and, after some thought, said, "Su Ping, did you develop this by yourself?"

This time, Su Ping did not speak, but Old Liu beside him spoke up, "Indeed, Master Zhu Hong, I can vouch for it. From beginning to end, neither Xiao Sun nor I were aware of the Heart of the Sun's development. It was only in these past few days, after arriving in Magic Capital, that we heard about it from this lad!"

Master Zhu Hong nodded. "Good. The research outcome of the Jianghai Province Breeders Association, the Wanmu Wolf, was valued at 196 points, with a difficulty score of 184 points, totaling 380 points. Now, after discussion, the judging committee has decided that the Special Skill development for the Wanmu Wolf, which endows its new evolutionary form with even broader prospects, warrants additional recognition! Therefore, an additional 21 bonus points will be awarded, bringing the Wanmu Wolf's final score to 401 points! Furthermore, Su Ping, a Senior Breeder from Jianghai Province specializing in Forest Wolves, has made unique contributions to the breeding industry. In my personal

capacity, I will apply to Chairman Feng for you, Su Ping, to be granted the treatment of a Master-level researcher!"

As he spoke, and before everyone could react, Master Zhu Hong continued to explain, "Of course, this is just the treatment. A Breeder's Level has strict standards. Although developing a Super-Rank Skill is one of the most important criteria, you haven't met the other standards yet. Therefore, I can only apply for some corresponding benefits for you. The actual title of Breeding Master, however, will have to wait until you personally reach that stage!"

With that, Master Zhu Hong smiled slightly. "Of course, I believe that with your talent and Ability, that day will surely not be too far off."

Su Ping certainly felt no disappointment. A Breeding Master? He wasn't even aware that he had previously been a Senior Breeder, so naturally, he didn't care about such an empty title.

On the contrary, at this moment, Master Zhu Hong was offering him substantial benefits without the burden of an empty title; for Su Ping, this was indeed the best possible outcome.

Only, about these points... they weren't too low, but rather too high. Damn it, the total score for this breeding competition was only 400 points. Now, Master Zhu Hong has arbitrarily added this so-called 21 bonus points, bringing the Jianghai breeder team's score to 401 points. What does this mean? Exceeding the total score by one point! Even if those who come later perform perfectly, they could at best only achieve a perfect 400 points. But how could that be possible? Thus, even with the teams from Huaiyang, Imperial Capital, and Linjiang still to compete, the final outcome of this breeding competition seemed to be a foregone conclusion.

Wasn't this a bit too provocative? Su Ping felt somewhat uneasy.

But, on second thought, damn it, mediocrity evokes no jealousy. Besides, anyone who held a grudge would have to keep it to themselves. After all, Su Ping only then remembered that, in some ways, he was somewhat of a man with connections. The Ghost Saint never cared for any damn rules in his actions. Damn it, when others with connections flaunted power without competence and caused trouble, why should he, someone with both competence and connections, worry so much about such things?

Therefore, he finally nodded. "Thank you, Master Zhu Hong!"

Master Zhu Hong smiled slightly, without saying much more. He would go to Linzhou after the competition, where he would have more time to get to know this young man better.

"Since that's the case, let's announce the results. Also, the competition will be paused for half an hour."

The competition paused. Aside from the scheduled commercial breaks and the lunch break, this was the first unscheduled pause. Yet, everyone, including the two hosts, had no objections.

But this had nothing to do with Su Ping and his team. The outcome was unexpected for all of them, yet, in a way, it was within their expectations. The emergence of a Super-Rank Skill would inevitably cause an unimaginable sensation; this was normal.

So, Liu Fuhai and Su Ping bowed to the judges before leading Sun Chaoju, who hadn't said a single word from beginning to end, and Old Sha off the stage.

They came to the backstage corridor, and then, Su Ping saw the pairs of eyes and the numerous figures lining the passageway.

To Su Ping, only Chairman Han and Ding Yan at the front, and Ye Zhou and others further back, were familiar faces. The rest were all exceedingly unfamiliar. They should have been strangers to Su Ping as well. But from now on, they would probably never forget that at this special Breeder Competition, such a remarkably young Breeder had appeared.

Indeed, even some of the Breeders who had left the stage earlier had come to this backstage area, making the long, dark corridor somewhat crowded.

Su Ping realized. What Master Zhu Hong had mentioned earlier about cutting off the TV signal—it was clear they had seen the situation on the main stage from their lounge.

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They naturally knew what a grand show Su Ping and his fellow breeders from Jianghai Province had put on.

However, the rest of the audience could no longer continue watching due to the interruption of the TV signal. But these people were right backstage, where they could not possibly miss anything. Although they could no longer see or hear anything from the back, no one was content without seeing it with their own eyes.

And at this moment, the breeders from Huaiyang Province, Linjiang Province, and the Imperial Capital had the most complicated looks in their eyes. Some had not heard Master Zhu Hong's final additional score. However, the appearance of a Super-Rank Skill would make the three breeder teams, originally set for a stunning finale, look dull and lackluster.

In response to such gazes, Su Ping acted as if he didn't see them, his heart slightly panicking.

Old Liu, however, had a smile on his face, cupping his fist in the other hand and grinning at all the acquaintances he barely knew, "Please forgive our rudeness, let us pass. Master Zhu Hong said there will be a half-hour pause; you don't have to wait here anymore."

Everyone looked at Old Liu, this old fellow who was acting coy after reaping the benefits, but no one really had much to say. In situations like this, when one was outperformed in skill, there was nothing to be done. With a Super-Rank Skill revealed, what was there to complain about?

Even the woman who served as the president of the Huaiyang Province breeders, nicknamed Han Laohu, had no choice but to concede both mentally and verbally. But for her, it was mostly regret.

Damn it! When Ding Yan returned from Jianghai, he made a point of discussing Su Ping with her. At that time, although she cared, she hadn't paid much attention to it. She never would have expected this! If she had been more proactive back then, to entice... oh no, to \*recruit\* Su Ping to Huaiyang Province, how could she have ended up losing both her general and her troops now? Although the bet—the Sea Core Spirit Turtle—against that old fellow wasn't anything precious, it was still something given away for nothing!

At this moment, only Sun Chaoju had completely changed from the nervous and timorous demeanor he displayed on stage just earlier. He was positively beaming!

Even though his appearance on stage this time had nothing to do with him personally. Anyone could see that it was all Su Ping's effort. But Sun Chaoju recalled all the disdainful faces he had seen over the past few days at the Breeder Association's guesthouse in Magic Capital. As an Intermediate Level Breeder, he was still somebody in Jianghai. But after coming to Magic Capital, things were different; in the Breeder Association guesthouse, you could throw a stone and hit a Senior Breeder. Naturally, that left him feeling rather stifled inside.

Now, even though this glory was Su Ping's doing, the evolution of the Wanmu Wolf had indeed been discovered by him, so he had a share in this achievement as well. Of course, he had the right to be elated.

Unfortunately, no one paid him any attention. Everyone's gaze was fixed on that calm, handsome young face and on the Wanmu Wolf with horns on its head.

Finally, someone broke the silence, "Old Liu, you sly dog! How come you didn't reveal even a hint about such a big deal beforehand?"

And at this point, compared to those who had already gone backstage, it was the countless viewers in front of their TVs, waiting for the live broadcast to return, who really felt like cursing.

"Is this ad ever going to end?"

"I've already complained to Magic Capital TV! So annoying!"

In the Linzhou Breeder Association, the impatient Jianghai "wolves" were furious! Especially Yang He.

"Damn it, bros, whenever I think of that son of a bitch Sun Chaoju, I just want to go up and punch him! That bastard got such a huge bargain!"

"We can't help it; he's just lucky. There's nothing we can say. But speaking of which, what exactly is a Super-Rank Skill? What does Heart of the Sun do?" someone asked helplessly.

Admittedly, they weren't ordinary Beast Tamers. They naturally understood that, under such circumstances, the Breeder Competition wouldn't disclose the specific details and information of Super-Rank Skills, no matter what.

But people are curious beings, so Old Wang thought for a moment and said, "How about we re-add Old Sun back into the chat group and ask him?"

As soon as these words came out, those who were just indignant fell into an awkward silence. They blinked at each other but said nothing. They had kicked the man out of the group a few days ago. Now they were supposed to bring him back in and eagerly ask questions? Wouldn't that make the bastard unbearably smug?

However, just as they were pondering, a voice came from the big screen.

"There's movement now, something's happening."

As expected, those dastardly ads finally disappeared, and the screen returned to the studio. However, the figures on the screen had vanished completely. Neither Su Ping nor that strange Wanmu Wolf were anywhere to be seen. Instead, the pair of male and female hosts appeared. Although the man was handsome and the woman pretty, who had the mood to care about that at this time?

"Dear viewers, a slight accident occurred during the Breeder Competition, causing some issues with the signal reception, but luckily, it has now been fixed! Moreover, the breeders from Jianghai Province have presented the most extraordinary breeding achievement to date! After discussion by the panel of judges, it was decided to award Jianghai Province's Cultivation Body, the 'Wanmu Wolf,' an additional 21 points! Jianghai Province now holds a total score of 401 points, placing them at the top and tentatively ranking first. Furthermore, due to equipment issues, the competition will be temporarily paused for thirty minutes. After thirty minutes, the competition will resume as usual. Thank you all for your patience."

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Before everyone could react, the momentary scene of the arena vanished. It was replaced by a documentary about the Breeder Competition, featuring interviews and highlights of participating Breeders.

But what had they actually heard? Dammit, where was the introduction to the Super-Rank Skill, Heart of the Sun? What about that Breeder from Jianghai Province? And how were those extra 21 points added?

Clearly, though unbeknownst to them how, everyone had supposedly witnessed the power of the Heart of the Sun with their own eyes. But they hadn't actually seen it, had they?

Dissatisfaction was already brewing on the internet. However, more significant matters were unfolding than just these online sentiments.

As expected, after the announcement and as the Breeder Competition entered a quiet period, Zhu Hong, sitting in his original seat, didn't wait long before his phone rang.

"Hello, Chairman Feng."

"Elder Zhu, I saw what happened this time; you handled it well. A Breeder's cultivated Super-Rank Skill cannot be casually revealed. Some internal staff in Magic Capital also need to be reined in. In addition to the confidentiality agreement, have the Soul Judge use some psychological suggestion on them!"

"Yes, rest assured."

"That youngster from Jianghai is quite good. Keep an eye on him in the future."

With those words, the caller promptly hung up. He knew Zhu Hong would likely be very busy, and detailed questions could wait.

Indeed, that was the case. No sooner had the call ended than another quickly came through.

"Hello, Lord Sang Sheng!"

His voice was slightly louder, allowing some people nearby to overhear. Several exchanged glances, understanding the implications.

"Um, rest assured, Su Ping's safety is absolutely guaranteed..."

"Yes..."

After ending the call, Zhu Hong let out a sigh of relief, but he had barely exhaled when another call came through.

This time, however, Zhu Hong was slightly taken aback—the number was unfamiliar. But since they knew his private number, he couldn't ignore it.

"Hello, may I ask who this is?"

"Ghost Saint!?"

Zhu Hong's voice rose sharply. Even for someone of his standing, while he had contact with some individuals who had reached this level, this particular one was different, somewhat more special.

His raised voice undoubtedly caused the other Breeder judges, representing various factions, to look over. Ghost Saint? How could \*he\* be involved in this?

Then, to their surprise, Zhu Hong's next words sparked even more speculation, "Ah? Oh, I never expected that Breeder Su would have such a connection with you! Don't worry, it's just... about the online discussion..."

The lazy voice on the phone said lightly, "Try to reduce Su Ping's visibility in online discussions, but don't be too forceful, alright? Just downplay Su Ping's leading role in this Breeder Competition. Avoid any unnecessary interviews. In a few days, cook up some entertainment news to divert attention. You're all quite proficient with these tactics, aren't you? It's not about outright silencing anyone; this little matter just doesn't warrant so much public attention.

"It's not just the Breeder Association; I'll give a heads-up to the other sides as well. Master Zhu, you just need to cooperate a bit. Don't let this issue continue to escalate.

"After all, for the average Beast Tamer, the effects of Super-Rank Skills have little to do with them, right?"

"That... I understand!"

After hanging up, Zhu Hong breathed a long sigh of relief. Compared to Sang Sheng, whom he also didn't know well, conversing with this individual was even more unsettling. It couldn't be helped—this person's reputation wasn't exactly stellar.

He never imagined that Su Ping not only had a deep connection with Sang Sheng but was also further entangled with this Ghost Saint from the Northern Border. No wonder then.

In the time that followed, a few more intermittent calls came through, though their callers didn't carry the same weight as the previous ones.

During this half-hour, some observant people also noticed something. Although many were cursing the Magic Capital broadcast station online, the trending topics on the internet remained unchanged.

Even the briefly seen trending search term 'Breeder Competition, Super-Rank Skill' had been swiftly removed within thirty seconds, vanishing without a trace. Aside from those still keenly discussing the Breeder Competition, virtually no other information leaked out.

Compared to how almost every appearance of a new Evolutionary Body had previously shot to the top of trending searches, this current situation, in its abnormality, paradoxically hinted at a controlled normalcy.

However, it was amidst this abnormality that the Breeder Competition, after a half-hour pause, resumed its scheduled proceedings.

Chairman Han led his team onto the stage. However, their appearance felt somewhat unfair. The host's questioning time had been cut by nearly half, and as they began to introduce the Spark Bugs, the judges repeatedly seemed distracted.

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But regardless, once they were in this competition, they had to see it through.

The Evolutionary Body of the Starfire Bug was known as the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada!

It had to be said, it was no wonder the Breeders from Huaiyang Province were so confident.

Chairman Han and Ding Yan indeed had reason to be confident.

This Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada, while not costly to raise, was an Evolutionary Body with a race limit around the Monarch Fourth Order.

Furthermore, as an insect-type Pet Beast and belonging to the Fire Element—a combination relatively advantageous in combat—it was a highly popular type of Pet Beast.

Moreover, the abilities of the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada were quite exceptional; it was capable of flight and possessed extraordinary control and mastery over Fire Skills.

The final score also left the Breeder team from Huaiyang Province with mixed feelings.

Value score 194, difficulty score 185, total score 379.

Even without the additional twenty-one points from the Wanmu Wolf, the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada's score was still one point less than the Wanmu Wolf's.

This finally made the Breeders from Huaiyang Province wholeheartedly accept the results.

But even so, the appearance of the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada, as expected, slightly diluted the impact created by the Wanmu Wolf and its Super-Rank Skill.

People's attention was drawn back to the ongoing proceedings.

Simultaneously, the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada also secured the second-place rank, right after the Wanmu Wolf!

This served as a small consolation for Huaiyang Province.

Following Huaiyang Province was the Breeder team from Linjiang Province. As an inland province, Linjiang also boasted extremely vast Pet Beast resources.

The Pet Beast presented by Linjiang Province was also a flying type: an Ordinary Level Pet Beast unique to Linjiang Province, the Iron-feathered White Crane.

A bird-type Pet Beast of the Metal Element, its twin wings unfurled like razor-sharp blades.

Its Evolutionary Body was the Commander Level Sharpblade White Crane.

With an added affinity for the Metal Element, its power was even greater.

The evolution effect was quite good.

However, the difficulty of its evolution also required Commander Level resources, so both its value and difficulty scores were lower than those of the Wanmu Wolf and the Six-winged Firecatcher Cicada.

Its score was on par with that of the Flightspeed Osprey.

This left the Breeders from Linjiang Province somewhat disheartened.

And finally, the Breeder from the Imperial Capital, appearing last, took the stage.

Jumping Zombie.

As a low-level Undead Pet Beast, comparable in weakness to the Skeleton Soldier, it was still a preferred choice among some enthusiasts of the Necromancy Series.

Of course, it was chosen less often than the Skeleton Soldier.

Skeleton Soldiers, though somewhat ferocious, being mere skeletons, at least had some aesthetic appeal.

However, the Jumping Zombie, despite having no rotting flesh and possessing an iron-blue skin—the classic appearance of a zombie—was difficult for some people to accept as a Pet Beast from an aesthetic standpoint.

Nevertheless, Jumping Zombies still had a following worldwide.

They were a Pet Beast type chosen by a considerable number of Beast Tamers.

The impact of a new Evolutionary Body for this Pet Beast emerging needed no explanation.

This, too, was an Evolutionary Body that had reached Commander Level.

Although it was only Commander Level, its name was quite formidable: the Netherworld Corpse General.

And it was even a rare dual-element (Earth and Water) Necromancy Series Evolutionary Body.

One could imagine what the final score of this Netherworld Corpse General would be.

Had it not been for the Super-Rank Skill, Heart of the Sun, the first place would undoubtedly have belonged to the Breeder team from the Imperial Capital.

Its final score was 198 for value and 188 for difficulty, totaling 386 points.

This was an unprecedentedly high score.

Looking back at the Breeders' Competitions of the past few years, it was rare to see such a high-scoring Cultivation Body.

In any other year, this would have been the undisputed first place.

Unfortunately, this year featured an unexpected variable, one that took everyone by surprise.

Therefore, despite their reluctance, the Imperial Capital Breeders had to settle for second place.

Finally, the day-long Breeders' Competition came to a complete close.

Throughout the day, countless viewers across the Dragon Nation had witnessed numerous new cultivation achievements and novel research directions.

They had seen a variety of incredibly wondrous Evolutionary Bodies.

Of course, there was also that team from Jianghai Province—their special Breeder team—which, even now, remained a puzzle in everyone's mind.

And that special, so-called Super-Rank Skill, Heart of the Sun—what exactly was it?

But no matter how intensely speculation raged online, the competition organizers seemed to have forgotten this matter entirely, making no mention of it and leaving all the expectant viewers speechless.

It was only at the very end, when the two hosts on stage announced the final results and the top three winning Breeder teams of this competition came up to receive their awards, that the Jianghai Province Breeder team was seen again.

Su Ping was not concerned with how many people were now intently focused on him.

Truth be told, he wasn't interested in becoming famous at all; it was simply too much hassle. While being the center of attention might have its perks, if it disrupted his normal routine or his Pet Beast Cultivation, Su Ping was absolutely unwilling to accept it.

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Therefore, when he returned to the backstage resting room, Leng Ye's call had already come in, discussing reducing public discourse, and Su Ping readily agreed.

Now that he had earned both ranking and profit, who cared about face? Whoever wanted it could use it. Anyway, Su Ping didn't care much.

He only cared about one thing now. There were, of course, the trophy and the previously promised rewards, such as the Breeder Association's Points and various treatment benefits. However, the top prize of this Breeder Competition also included additional rewards!

These additional rewards were nothing short of lavish: two Cultivation Methods to be chosen at will, housed within the Breeder Association. These could pertain to a Pet Beast's Evolution or the attainment of specific Skills. Next, a Spiritual Level Resource, also to be chosen at will. And finally, a Soul Fruit.

It went without saying how precious the two optional Cultivation Methods were, saving a great deal of Points that would otherwise be needed for exchange.

The entire knowledge base of the Breeder Association was virtually open to them. However, since this was a joint win for the three of them, they decided it would be better to discuss it thoroughly upon their return before making the exchanges.

What a Spiritual Level Resource represented need not be overemphasized. In the eyes of many outsiders, this resource was the most precious prize of this Breeder Competition. A Spiritual Level Resource! This was not something money could buy.

Su Ping still remembered seeing the exchange value for the Sword Intent Origin in the Legion's backstage area.

Back then, such a Spiritual Level Resource was beyond his imagination. But now, even though he was allowed to choose one, Su Ping temporarily had no specific preference.

What really garnered all of Su Ping's attention was the Soul Fruit.

This item was given together with the trophy on the spot, and its high value needed no further mention.

It enhanced the Talents of the individual, somewhat similar to the Myriad Spirit Beast Atlas's effect of lighting up and upgrading other Catalogs.

But the specifics of the effect were unknown. Moreover, which Talent would it enhance?

With the Myriad Spirit Beast Atlas, Su Ping's number of Talents was more than a little above the average person.

Eye of Truth, Telepathic Communication (Psychic Communication), Fast Recovery, Rain Summoning Technique, Elementalization, as well as his accompanying 'Pet Beast Home.'

If Su Ping had to choose, he would naturally lean towards the Eye of Truth. However, it wasn't up to him to decide just by saying so.

The fruit was only the size of a lychee, its surface covered in lines of strange patterns that could make one's eyes dazzle with a single glance.

Liu Fuhai and Sun Chaoju glanced at it. The former remained unmoved, while the latter seemed envious but didn't make any pointless remarks.

These things were all rightfully Su Ping's. For Sun Chaoju, just tagging along to gain some fame was already a stroke of incredible luck.

The top three stepped onto the award platform.

The two hosts, smiling at the cameras zooming from near to far, announced, "Dear audience friends, with the final award ceremony concluded, the 225th New Year's Breeder Competition officially comes to an end. We want to thank every Breeder who presented a marvelous creation. Without them, Dragon Nation's Pet Beast industry wouldn't be flourishing, and the innovation and strengthening of Pet Beasts would be much slower.

"We also want to thank all the viewers. Let's meet again next year!"

The screen froze, then flashed through the production credits, contestant lists, participating members, and the judges' identities, before finally fading to black.

It marked the end of this Breeder Competition.

Some were happy, some were sorrowful, but Su Ping was definitely one of the happy ones.

Leaving contentedly through the rear door of the Breeder Competition venue, Su Ping waved at Liu Fuhai and Sun Chaoju, "Sang Sheng asked me to go to the academy, so I won't return with you guys. After I'm back in Linzhou in a day or two, let's celebrate together!"

Hearing Sang Sheng had summoned him, Liu Fuhai and Sun Chaoju naturally had no objections.

However, as Su Ping boarded the bus waiting for him, he paused slightly. Aside from the driver, there were others on board: none other than the ever-smiling Ye Zhou and Professor Wang from Magic Capital Academy.

"Su Ping, come and sit," Ye Zhou beckoned with his hand, gesturing for Su Ping to join him in the last row.

Everyone cast a complex glance at Old Sha, who had re-boarded the bus and put on his Psychic Interference Device. Then, their gazes returned to the young Breeder who had just triumphantly proven his dominance.

However, Ye Zhou clearly had a different purpose at this moment.

He casually praised Su Ping for a few sentences, then suddenly asked, "Su Ping, have you had any thoughts about that research direction you had before?"

Previous research direction? Su Ping was startled, then realized Ye Zhou was referring to Pet Beast regression.

He shook his head. This matter couldn't be rushed for now.

But he could tell Ye Zhou was very interested in this area.

What Su Ping didn't expect was that, after a pause, Ye Zhou thought for a moment and said, "As for regression, I have some hypotheses."

This man seemed to be more than just interested.

While they were only hypotheses, in the field of Pet Beast Cultivation, having a hypothesis was invaluable. After all, researching the essence of Pet Beasts is a process of continuous conjecture and then verifying those conjectures.

Although Su Ping wouldn't have time to focus on this in the coming days, discussing it while still in Magic Capital wasn't a problem.

Narrowing his eyes slightly, Su Ping gave him a look and then said thoughtfully, "Let's talk in detail after we return to the academy."

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"What do you think regression is?"

Back at the academy, Su Ping didn't rush back to Sang Sheng's dormitory.

With an hour left before dinner, he followed Ye Zhou to the campus cafe.

Unfortunately, Su Ping really didn't fancy the stuff, and he wasn't here for coffee anyway.

Facing Ye Zhou's question, Su Ping thought for a moment:

"In this world, where there's Death, there's rebirth. The opposition of Life and Death represents the positive and negative poles of everything, so naturally, where there's Evolution, there's regression. Regression is the diminution of one's own life form and Level.

Of course, it might also be due to adjustments in the living environment. In ecological development, certain aspects might influence a species' extinction, and thus, these aspects gradually disappear in the species' development.

In the era of Pet Beasts, it's the reduction of one's own Energy and Level. Also, if I must say, there might be another term that's quite fitting: atavism."

Ye Zhou nodded.

"The general consensus in Pet Beast history is that all Pet Beasts are constantly evolving. Under the rules of Evolution, this process can be slow or fast.

Through serendipity, as well as modern human assistance, Pet Beast Evolution can occur many times over decades or centuries. Most Evolutions, due to the accumulation of Energy resources, bring about a substantial increase in strength!

However, in ancient and prehistoric times, when human Beast Tamers had not yet fully dominated the land, or even before they appeared, this Evolution was built up over time!"

Su Ping's brows furrowed slightly.

"But, in that case, there are still some things that don't add up!"

Ye Zhou was slightly startled but quickly showed a smile of appreciation and nodded.

"Indeed. You're worthy of being the champion of this Cultivation Competition. Correct, there are some things here that don't add up. The most direct example is, if all modern Pet Beast forms are a result of Evolution, then why are there records of more powerful Pet Beasts frequently seen in Ancient Times?

Take, for example, the ancient Pet Beast 'Kunpeng,' which was mentioned in the Sky-Soaring Fish Hawk—a cultivation achievement from Minyue Province. No one has actually witnessed a Mythical Level Pet Beast, but the 'Kunpeng' that existed in Ancient Times, even if not a Mythical Level Pet Beast, was probably a creature of Legendary Level.

Yet, this type of creature was not passed down. Aside from the difficulty in reproduction, the main reason is very likely that even the subspecies carrying its bloodline completed the so-called 'Energy-unrequiring' Evolution over time!

Or, in other words, regression. Actual regression!"

Actual regression...

Su Ping's eyes narrowed slightly.

At this moment, Su Ping was beginning to grasp what Ye Zhou was trying to say.

The regression he had previously mentioned and imagined was fundamentally different from the regression Ye Zhou was now proposing.

The regression Su Ping had in mind was the form before Evolution.

But the 'Evolution' Su Ping was talking about might not necessarily be true 'Evolution.'

At this moment, Ye Zhou's eyes shone brightly.

"Exactly. In historical archaeology, much evidence strongly suggests that some powerful Pet Beasts existed in Ancient Times and vanished over time, perhaps because they were 'evolved.'

Take the Kunpeng, for example. Perhaps the reduction in its power caused its offspring—the subspecies—to be unable to maintain their Energy form, so they too evolved.

After Evolution, they became more adapted to this world, but the power they displayed was reduced. However, what if they reproduced more quickly, their size became more concealed, and they followed survival laws more suited to them?"

Su Ping's brows knitted tightly.

Ye Zhou's words presented a path completely opposite to what he had previously thought.

His previous thoughts were much simpler, similar to the relationship between the Forest Wolf, the Forest Wolf, and the Wood Wolf.

He merely wanted to use the 'Wood Wolf' form as a base to develop more Evolutionary Body forms in parallel.

But he hadn't expected Ye Zhou's thoughts to be much broader.

In fact, this could very well be an entirely new, special evolutionary path.

"Atavistic Evolution of ancient Pet Beasts?"

He subconsciously uttered these words.

Ye Zhou's eyes brightened even more.

"That's exactly it!"

"So, have you found a method?"

Upon hearing this, Ye Zhou's expression stiffened slightly.

Su Ping rolled his eyes. Clearly, the man was just in a phase of pure conceptualization.

He had merely proposed a concept.

"I can't really consider myself a true Breeder yet. On this matter, it's only because Time-Series Pet Beasts have a deeper sense of time's passage and a clearer sensitivity to ancient traces, so it's just an idea."

Su Ping nodded, quickly grasping the other's meaning. He then directly proposed a method to test this line of thinking:

"Your idea is quite interesting. However, in actual practice, it's much more difficult than the method I mentioned before: finding a new evolutionary path from a regressed form.

The first step is to find a corresponding Pet Beast with an ancient bloodline, ensuring that the ancient type can indeed grow stronger through atavistic regression of its bloodline.

Otherwise, if you use resources to make its bloodline regress, even if it regresses from Ordinary Level to Elite Level, yet its Skills don't increase—or worse, their number decreases and their intensity diminishes—then it's a complete failure."

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"Secondly, bloodline genetics is an extremely complex field of Pet Beast bioengineering. The knowledge involved isn't something that can be figured out with a mere snap decision. To succeed, one needs to

know the ultimate source of the bloodline regression and have a profound understanding of the original Pet Beast!"

Ye Zhou listened very seriously and nodded.

He also felt somewhat bewildered. Clearly, even if the person before him was incredibly strong, and even if both he and Su Ping were prodigies who had participated in the Breeder competition at a young age—Ye Zhou having even surpassed Beast Tamers of the same rank at Magic Capital Academy—they were ultimately still just young men.

In this respect, they had some creative ideas, but it was very, very difficult to know where to begin.

However, Su Ping smiled faintly and said, "Your idea is interesting, but I probably won't have the leisure to research this in the near future. However, if you encounter any trouble, you can ask me. In my free time, I can help you! Therefore, I suggest you first find a Pet Beast that has a clear case of regressive evolution. Then, trace its bloodline and search for its source through archaeological history. After that, you can focus your efforts on such a Pet Beast."

Ye Zhou blinked. His eyes firm with resolve, he nodded. After regaining his composure, he said, "Good! As for what you mentioned about Pet Beasts' strength regressing after Evolution in this sort of post-modern era, I also have some ideas, though I just haven't tried them out yet."

"Oh?"

Ye Zhou smiled and said, "Actually, the principle is quite simple. Evolution isn't just the morphological changes brought about by an increase in one's own Energy; it's also a transformation of the soul..."

...

At the dinner table, Sang Sheng and Qin Xiaoxue spoke up repeatedly. While Qin Chuan didn't say anything, he kept looking at Su Ping.

However, Su Ping had found his mind wandering many times in just that short while.

The others didn't mind, and they certainly didn't blame Su Ping.

After all, the events of this one day had indeed been overwhelming for someone Su Ping's age.

Because of this single day, many people would likely remember Su Ping.

Only, they clearly didn't know that Su Ping wasn't actually concerned about such trivial matters at this moment; he was purely contemplating what Ye Zhou had said to him earlier.

Su Ping had never underestimated anyone else.

But it had to be said that after arriving at Magic Capital Academy, the Paperman Qian Yi had effortlessly broken the Elite Level record Ye Zhou had set in the Trial Tower.

He didn't say it outright, but in his heart, he felt quite proud and self-satisfied.

However, after further contact with Ye Zhou and their chat about Evolution and regression, Su Ping also understood that Dragon Nation was not lacking in true geniuses like Ye Zhou.

Such conversations were beneficial to them both.

For Su Ping especially, it was tantamount to opening up a completely new path.

It was just a pity that the so-called soul of Pet Beasts was a completely unknown field.

Perhaps, when he had time and met Leng Ye again, he could inquire with Ghost Saint—the one unparalleled in Dragon Nation in the domain of souls.

"Su Ping, when are you planning to return to Linzhou?"

Sang Sheng's question brought Su Ping back to his senses. After thinking for a moment, he replied directly, "In a couple of days, preferably tomorrow or the day after. I've been out for more than half a month now. Haha, there must be quite a few things at home waiting for me."

Sang Sheng smiled faintly and said, "Indeed, there are quite a few matters. Although the news and public opinion on the internet have been suppressed, as long as you don't stir up anything new, the attention will die down. But in Linzhou, it probably won't be that simple. I expect there will still be quite a few people coming to your door."

Qin Xiaoxue, at the side, pursed her lips. "You're not short of money now. If you ask me, that cultivation base might as well just stop operating."

Dong Muyun would never say such a thing.

Su Ping, however, didn't mind Miss Qin's thoughtless remarks.

Besides, operating Heart of Woods didn't really affect him much at this point anyway.

Yet before Su Ping could speak, Qin Chuan, who was beside them, interjected, "How can a man not have a career he loves? Whether it's the cultivation industry, the business industry..."

Qin Chuan hadn't finished speaking when he saw his mother looking at him with a smile. He instantly stiffened, like a mouse seeing a cat, and after a couple of mumbles, he managed to say, "Um... and the education industry..."

Qin Xiaoxue pursed her lips, not bothering to acknowledge her father's twisted logic.

Seeing that no one was paying him any mind, Qin Chuan couldn't be bothered to say more and refocused his attention on the dull dinner before him.

Su Ping paid no mind to this perpetually discontented man and said with a smile, "Heart of Woods is my grandfather's painstaking effort. He has always wanted to see it flourish."

Qin Xiaoxue nodded and didn't pursue that topic of conversation further.

However, Sang Sheng suddenly smiled and said, "Right, Su Ping, your grandfather also had a military career back then, didn't he?"

Su Ping was taken aback, then nodded. "It seems so. I think I heard my dad mention it once."

"Hehe, back when Ghost Saint was young, he also experienced defending the frontier in Ximo with a certain esteemed figure."

Su Ping was startled. However, Sang Sheng didn't elaborate on this topic, changing the subject instead. "You've been away for quite a while now; it's good to return early. Actually, I'll have Ah Qin take you and Master Zhu Hong to Linzhou tomorrow. Master Zhu Hong's visit to Linzhou is an opportunity for you. If there's anything you don't understand, you can always ask for his advice. It will always be beneficial for you."

Chapter 438: Ancient Pet Beast Breeding! Su Anyong's Collapse!\_3

"Yes, thank you, Dean..."

...

You have 99+ friend requests:

[Bro Ping, I'm Little Zhou. I saw you on TV today; you've become a celebrity at our Number Six Middle School!]

[Student Su, I am Xie Wenhui, the principal of Linzhou City's Sixth Basic Beast Tamer School. I am proud that Number Six Middle School has produced a talent like you. Our alma mater holds you in high regard.]

[Breeder Su Ping, it's Zhang Guowei...]

[Su Ping, I'm with the admissions office of Imperial Capital Academy...]

[...]

It had been a busy day. After returning to the academy, Su Ping spoke with Sang Sheng during dinner about some upcoming matters. At the same time, Sang Sheng expressed approval for Su Ping's decision not to continue courting fame.

Finding early fame is something many people dream of; after all, for many, gaining fame earlier is definitely better. However, for someone with genuine skills like Su Ping, it could actually be a bad thing. If it weren't for Zhu Hong overtly taking calls from both Sang Sheng and the Ghost Saint in front of everyone previously, and Su Ping returning straight to the academy afterward, chances are people would have come to visit him tonight. All sorts of temptations would certainly follow. Asking young people to resist such temptations with their own willpower alone is clearly unreasonable. Therefore, by both Spirit Saint Levels speaking out, they largely eliminated this possibility.

Still, even so, from the moment he lay in bed that night, the stream of friend requests showed the impact Su Ping had within his circle of acquaintance.

Su Ping glanced through them casually. There were too many friend requests to count at a glance: people he knew, people he didn't know, people he'd heard of but didn't know, and people he hadn't even heard of nor knew. A whole mess of them, from all walks of life.

Some classmates he hadn't contacted in eons, teachers and principals from his alma mater, and even admissions officers and vice principals from numerous domestic colleges were among them. Even behemoths like the Dragon Prosperous Group and Kunlun Group, leading companies in the Dragon Nation, reached out.

These companies, in fact, were not just trying to attract him; their friend request messages were clear and straightforward—their primary offer was money. Indeed, blunt and simple. Dubbed as breeding research sponsorship fees, what they expected from him in return wasn't mentioned at all.

But Su Ping wasn't the type to be swayed by small advantages. He didn't need it. If it was just about money, the Pingyun Group would ensure he was well-funded. Therefore, no matter if it was Dragon

Prosperous Group or some COO from Kunlun Group, Su Ping didn't accept their friend requests but politely declined them in his response.

As for the others, Su Ping made a selective choice. He accepted the requests from the admissions directors and some of the vice principals of various Advanced Colleges. However, they invited him to join their institutions, not even as a student but in a role similar to the visiting professors Sang Sheng had mentioned earlier. Su Ping politely declined these offers and explained his reasons in detail.

Su Ping was not the type to forget himself once he gained momentum. A person should, of course, revel in their successes when the time calls for it, but one must remember, the more you are held in high regard, the more careful you need to be with the small details than you were before. If one used to be imprudent before making a name for themselves, that's human nature. But if they continue to be so afterward, real villains might silently curse and call them smug. Envy might also lurk in people's hearts. Though it wasn't a big concern, it wasn't worth attracting trouble over such trivial matters.

To boast and talk loftily when successful is like trying to scoop the moon from water; to Swallow Ice and Nibble Snow during setbacks, that is truly cultivating a lotus in fire. Although the meaning isn't exactly the same as Su Ping's current situation, the principles are quite similar.

So, after thinking it over, Su Ping didn't reject some friend requests that were obviously trying to establish a connection, like from his previous Number Six Middle School's principal and the class headteacher who had been quite kind to him. For those he had never heard of, he replied with a message and then stopped paying them any mind.

Then, Su Ping promptly turned off the feature that allowed people to add him through introductions. It was too overwhelming.

While it's said that all life experiences are learning opportunities, not everyone can fully grasp and embody this knowledge. Luckily, in this world of Beast Tamers, strength was more useful than such knowledge.

But undeniably, aside from those seeking to establish relationships, there were also many congratulatory messages. Strangely though, while there were messages, no one called to congratulate him.

Therefore, after briefly scanning through them and sending a general reply, he directly opened his father Su Anyong's contact:

[Su Ping: Pretty badass, huh, Dad?]

[Su Anyong: Badass! From now on, I'm not calling you 'Dad.' You're my ancestor, alright?]

Su Anyong's messages came back quickly. Clearly, although the old man wasn't the most reliable, the impact of what happened today had left him too agitated to sleep yet.

[Su Ping: No need for that. Just give me that 'superior shadow' you owe me. That'll do.]

[Su Anyong: ???]

[Su Anyong: Su Ping, have you no shame? Huh? That's all the coffin money your old man has, and you've been eyeing it relentlessly, haven't you? You're so damn rich now, and you're still trying to squeeze something out of me, eh?]

Chapter 439: Ancient Pet Beast Breeding! Su Anyong's Collapse!\_4

[Su Ping: ??? What do you mean, shameless? You know the saying, 'A lean horse can have long fur and fat hooves,' and 'a son helping himself to his father's things isn't really stealing!' Besides, it wasn't stealing; I won it from you fair and square!]

[Su Anyong: Get lost! Quit your damn blabbering. What rank is Xiao Qing now?]

[Su Ping: Seventh Rank. He's currently using resources for rank advancement cultivation. I estimate he'll reach Eighth Rank in a few more days. Su Anyong, don't change the subject!]

[Su Anyong: Have you figured out which direction to evolve him?]

[Su Ping: Yeah, I've already started on it.]

[Su Anyong: Good.]

After this exchange, Su Ping didn't reply further, falling silent. That Super-Shadow is a lost cause anyway. Might as well let the old codger stew for a bit.

Su Ping knew that Su Anyong was also anxiously waiting for something. Father and son had engaged in these conversational battles of wills more than once, seeing who would crack first. Usually, in such competitions, it was Su Anyong who emerged victorious. But now, the initiative was in Su Ping's hands. Thus, Su Ping remained perfectly calm and composed, not flustered in the slightest.

Finally, after three minutes, Su Anyong couldn't hold back any longer.

[Su Anyong: Su Ping, what's the real deal with Old Sha?]

[Su Ping: What do you mean 'what's the real deal'? Oh right, Su Anyong, do you know how Old Sha got his Wolf King Majesty skill?]

[Su Anyong: How the hell would I know? Damn it, Old Sha is even a few years older than me! He's old enough to be a wolf that belonged to your eldest uncle! It's all you, you little whelp, dragging Old Sha around and putting him through all sorts of things every day!]

After pausing for a bit, Su Anyong's message came through once more:

[Su Anyong: However, back when Old Ghost was serving in the Northwest, his highest-ranking commanding officer primarily used a Wolf Pet. Old Sha was likely brought back from Ximo around that time.

In Ximo, there are primarily three threats to guard against. One is the Beast Tides of wind-and-sand type Elemental Sprites from the desert storms in the southwestern part of Xihai Province.

Another is the Ferocious Beast Tides within the desert, which includes all sorts of types. Decades ago, we also had to guard against the wolf packs on the Great Prairie of the Northwest.

Of course, that's not so much of a concern nowadays. Alright, enough idle talk! Hurry up, what's the deal with Old Sha's Super-Rank Skill?]

Su Ping didn't know much about Ximo and had no interest in it at the moment.

[Su Ping: Oh, you mean that?]

Then, Su Ping didn't reply.

Clearly, Su Ping was just trying to whet the old man's appetite.

He put down his phone, planning to reply after a while. However, the day had been packed. He had attended the Breeders' competition, witnessing countless diverse Breeders and their cultivation results. His mind had cycled through excitement, then numbness, and finally, profound exhaustion. Now, at last able to relax, drowsiness washed over him. He couldn't fight it and simply drifted off to sleep.

「Deep night in Beiyuan Province.」

Within his personal quarters in the Beiyuan Legion, Su Anyong had waited for the better part of the night, his eyes red raw from staying up. He glared with bloodshot eyes, still waiting.

Then, he finally couldn't hold back any longer and sent out the message:

[Su Ping, where are you?] (January 2, 225, 1:32)

[Seriously? What's the situation with that Super-Rank Skill?] (January 2, 225, 1:37)

[Hurry up, what exactly is the Heart of the Sun about?] (January 2, 225, 1:40)

[?] (January 2, 225, 1:57)

[??] (January 2, 225, 2:05)

[?????] (January 2, 225, 2:22)

[Fine, fine, fine!] (January 2, 225, 3:01)

[Su Ping, come on, answer the damn phone!] (January 2, 225, 3:26)

[Are you itching for a beating, you little brat?] (January 2, 225, 3:39)

[Alright! Fine! Just you wait till I get back!] (January 2, 225, 4:02)

[...]

Chapter 440: Talent Upgrade: Home of All Spirits! Return to Linzhou!

Su Ping waved his hand to bid farewell to Qin Xiaoxue, who waved back vigorously, and then boarded Sang Sheng's exclusive plane, "Cloud Soarer."

On the return trip, there was one more person than when he had arrived.

The presence of Master Zhu Hong made neither Liu Fuhai nor Sun Chaoju feel as at ease as they did on the way there.

At this time, Su Ping was not concerned with their feelings. He was looking at the messages Su Anyong had sent persistently from the previous night until the next morning, and that last message, filled with resentment, "You just wait for me."

Su Ping was speechless.

He then sent a message, but unfortunately, it clearly showed: [Message failed to send, the user is not in your friends list, please add as a friend.]

Next, Su Ping made a phone call, but in the end, he got a similarly frustrating message: "Hello, the number you have dialed cannot be reached."

Helplessly shaking his head, Su Ping thought, Blocked my calls too? Is that necessary? How come the old man gets less and less able to take a joke as he gets older? Besides, it's not like I intentionally made fun of the old man; wasn't I just too sleepy and fell asleep? I hadn't even had the chance to consume the Soul Fruit before I fell asleep; how could I be blamed?

Anyway, Su Ping didn't bother with the old man's sour attitude. Glancing at the three slightly awkward figures, he went straight to the point, "Master Zhu, I heard from Sang Sheng that you once cultivated a Super-Rank Skill called Heart of Elements on a Pet Beast?"

At these words, Sun Chaoju and Liu Fuhai both perked up their ears.

Zhu Hong nodded with a smile, "Indeed, but it was only a basic Heart of Five Elements, without delving into deeper elemental energies like wind, lightning, and ice among the other attributes."

"That's still quite impressive. I would like to learn more about this from you!" Su Ping said with a smile.

To his surprise, Zhu Hong shook his head, "In fact, while it might seem like my accomplishment, the reality is that the Pet Beast itself was special. Without that unique Pet Beast, succeeding so smoothly wouldn't have been possible."

Liu Fuhai finally found an opportunity to interject, "Master Zhu Hong, what kind of Pet Beast can endure such a variety of elemental attribute changes?"

Su Ping was also intrigued.

This type of Pet Beast, capable of containing multiple attributes, could significantly boost the Five Elements Origami Man if studied thoroughly! Moreover, I'm confident in my own abilities. Leng Ye still owes me a promise, and the Spiritual Level Resource I want from the Breeder competition hasn't been decided yet – exchanging for this Pet Beast shouldn't be a problem, right? In a nutshell, I'm now of the mindset, 'Money is no issue for me!'

Master Zhu glanced at him. Seeing Su Ping's equally curious and expectant gaze, he didn't conceal anything and spoke bluntly, "There's nothing to hide about this. The Pet Beast is none other than the Divine Dragon, now under the care of Holy Dragon. Ordinary Red Dragons from the Dragon Clan can evolve into Spirit Saint Level Fire Dragons. Similarly, after reaching the Spirit Saint Level, this type of Dragon Clan can undergo a special evolution to integrate multiple elements. Their racial upper limit then reaches the Legendary Level, becoming the Multi-Element Dragon, also known as a Divine Dragon. At that time, I cultivated the Heart of Elements on that Divine Dragon."

Su Ping was speechless.

Liu Fuhai was speechless.

Sun Chaoju was speechless.

Alright, alright, alright. That's truly impressive, Su Ping thought. He nodded. My mistake.

Dragons, being among the strongest Pet Beasts even within their own Level, are something I can hardly acquire right now, even the lowliest pure-blooded kind. Besides, dragons are said to be very delicate, and keeping them well is no easy task. Possessing the Myriad Spirit Beast Atlas, I pursue the cultivation of many Pet Beasts. My interest in dragons is primarily limited to the rewards for illuminating one level of the Catalog. As for the rest, I had considered it, like the Dragon's Heart that had fleetingly appeared in my dreams while building the Heart of Woods. Unfortunately, for now, it seems that can only be realized in dreams.

However, Master Zhu, who had become more talkative, paused for a moment before continuing, "Speaking of which, this year's Breeder competition does have some rumors. In recent years, many young dragons have been born in our Dragon Nation. Originally, the association intended to offer a young dragon hatchling as the first prize in this year's competition. Moreover, it was to be a particularly rare one. Regrettably, they changed their minds. They now plan to offer that dragon hatchling as a reward for this summer's Professional Assessment National Examination. Therefore, the last-minute decision was made to replace the precious dragon hatchling with the Soul Fruit."

Dragon hatchling!? Sun Chaoju and his teacher exchanged glances, both seeing the surprise in each other's eyes. They had originally planned to use this as a reward? It was well known that Dragon Tamers were among the most envied of the Dragon Nation's Beast Tamers. The Dragon Nation has absolute

restrictions on the number of dragons. Only those with special national status, identity, and strength are eligible to receive Dragon Pet rewards from the Dragon Nation. Otherwise, ordinary people don't even get a chance to touch them. And now, it turned out this year's Breeder competition almost had a Dragon Pet as a reward! Judging by Master Zhu's words, it seemed this wasn't just any ordinary Dragon Pet either, was it?