

I CAN CONTROL RESOURCES

Chapter 141 - 135: Mission, Failed?

...

The three of them returned to the Eastern Capital Military Academy together at 7:30 p.m.

And the outcome was even more cruel than Gao Neng had imagined.

Before Gao Neng could even react, Fang Tangtang had already dragged Shen Ning'Er upstairs, not even giving her a chance to set foot in his room.

'Life's hard enough as it is!' Gao Neng stared at the two figures heading up to the second floor and sighed at the heavens. He entered his room, completely dejected. What was that saying again?

Fang Tangtang was the reason for his success, and also the reason for his failure.

Without Fang Tangtang, last night's mission would have been impossible.

But with Fang Tangtang around...

'Today's mission... was a failure?'

Gao Neng didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

'What do I do now?'

'Have I really hit a dead end? Does this mean I won't get the remaining advanced treasure chest and lucky prize wheel? And what about the D-Rank Challenge? Can I still complete it?'

'No, I have to complete it! Even without the rewards from the advanced treasure chest and the lucky prize wheel, I have to conquer the D-Rank Challenge!' Gao Neng grit his teeth.

'If I can't finish the bonus mission, then so be it.'

But his training could not be interrupted.

He had said he would challenge the D-Rank list again in two days, which meant he had to take first place in one fell swoop.

Gao Neng paid no more mind to the giggling from upstairs, nor did he overthink it. The path of the strong was like rowing upstream; even a super genius needed to work with tireless diligence.

'If Shen Ning'Er isn't here.'

'Then I'll just practice by myself!'

Without a moment's delay, Gao Neng immediately began to practice.

He stopped manifesting the mutt. No matter how well he controlled it, the thing simply wasn't powerful enough. To grow stronger, the choice of what to manifest was also a key factor.

'Is it possible to manifest something from my imagination?'

'A dragon?'

'That's basically a product of imagination, right?'

'Since Shen Ning'Er can manifest an Iron Dragon, can't I also try to use my imagination and manifest my own "powerful weapon"?''

With this thought in mind, Gao Neng began to experiment.

...

「Night in the City of Hope.」

Ripples of activity stirred beneath the city lights. Even in a post-apocalyptic world, humanity would always find ways to relax and entertain itself.

However, these minor ripples paled in comparison to the storm the stray cats of the City of Hope were currently experiencing.

Because Gao Xiaomeng had arrived.

She came with three hundred stray cats, handpicked from the Forgotten Land.

In just a few days, the three hundred strays had swept from their landing point in the West District all the way toward the Eastern District. So far, their army of three hundred had already swelled to two thousand.

And this was after Gao Xiaomeng had culled their ranks.

Tonight, Gao Xiaomeng led her two thousand stray cats through the underground drainage pipes, successfully reaching the edge of the Eastern District behind a silent factory.

"MEOW!"

"MEOW MEOW..."

One by one, the stray cats let out cries of victory.

Directly in front of the cats, atop a tall utility pole, stood a silver-white cat. Arcs of lightning crackled across its body.

As for the area below the utility pole...

Several hundred stray cats, their fur standing on end from being electrocuted, were prostrated on the ground. Not a single one dared to look up.

"All of you, raise your heads! Tell this queen, in which direction is the Eastern Capital Military Academy?"

"Meow meow meow..."

"In the center of the Eastern District, you say? Several hundred kilometers away... Looks like we'll have to wait a few more days." Gao Xiaomeng mused, but she quickly raised her head again. "Our target is the Eastern Capital Military Academy! Advance!"

"MEOW!!"

The stray cats raised their heads, their ranks swelling once more.

...

「Eastern Capital Military Academy.」

「Freshman Dormitory Area.」

「Time: 9:00 p.m.」

Gao Neng was still practicing. Whenever his energy was depleted, he replenished it. By now, he only had five Energy Pills left, but he showed no signs of stopping.

If he ran out of Energy Pills, he would just go exchange for more at the academy's logistics department.

He had to intensify his energy manifestation practice. He needed to manifest something powerful enough; everything else could be put on hold for now.

...

「Time: 10:30 p.m.」

Gao Neng was still practicing.

The sounds of laughter from the second floor continued, but Gao Neng paid them no mind. He was completely immersed in his imagination, trying to envision what kind of thing would be powerful enough.

'It has to succeed in a single sneak attack... What kind of thing can launch a surprise attack the fastest?'

'The speed has to be incredible!'

'Ideally, it should be a one-hit kill. But can a small thing achieve a one-hit kill? If it's too big, what special considerations are there for hiding it?'

'No, this won't work. I need to keep improving it!'

'Imagination... Yes, I have to make full use of my imagination. My biggest advantage right now is my 100% success rate. As long as my imagination can conceive it, I don't need to worry about the success rate...'

'The ultimate hunter... What kind of thing can be called the ultimate hunter?'

Gao Neng continuously pondered and refined his ideas.

...

「Time: 11:30 p.m.」

The dormitory area of the Eastern Capital Military Academy had gradually fallen silent.

Whether they were freshmen or upperclassmen, everyone had begun to rest. However, the light in Gao Neng's room was still on. He was still thinking, still refining, still practicing.

By this time, Gao Neng was actually no longer thinking about whether the mission could be completed.

His mind was consumed by a single thought: to manifest a "hunter" powerful enough to ambush enemies, kill in one strike, and possess absolute speed.

Time flowed by once more.

The clock was about to strike midnight.

Gao Neng looked up at the clock on the wall, a bitter smile touching his lips. 'So, the mission really is a failure after all?'

'Failure is failure...'

'A man can't be too selfish.'

Shen Ning'Er had already stayed in his room for one night, which even alerted Song Tianyun, the principal of the Eastern Capital Military Academy. If she kept staying over in his dorm, what would that make it?

Gao Neng shook his head.

Just as he was about to resume his practice, the door was pushed open from the outside.

"Why didn't you lock the door?" A figure stepped into the room as a crisp voice rang out. Then, the door was closed again and locked.

Gao Neng turned around.

He looked at the figure standing in his room.

She was no longer in a stiff, black military uniform, but had changed into a set of casual clothes. On top, she wore a loose white T-shirt that revealed a sliver of her slender waist, and on the bottom, a pair of retro-colored jeans with a small tear in them.

This was the first time Gao Neng had seen Shen Ning'Er in such an outfit. It was youthful and fashionable, lacking the iron-willed demeanor of a soldier, but radiating even more vitality.

"Want some water?" Gao Neng wasn't foolish enough to ask Shen Ning'Er why she had come, nor did he try to guess her purpose. Just like the first time, he asked a very calm question.

"Mm," Shen Ning'Er nodded, leaning back on the sofa.

Gao Neng immediately went to pour a glass of water and handed it to Shen Ning'Er.

Just as Shen Ning'Er was about to reach out and take it...

A subtle smile played on Gao Neng's lips.

"SPLASH!"

The cup tipped over.

Without the slightest hesitation, Gao Neng flung the glass of water toward Shen Ning'Er's face.

'Take that!'

'Get soaked!'

'Let's see you try and leave now!'

The instant he had that thought, he saw Shen Ning'Er, who had been lounging on the sofa, move. With an uncanny maneuver, she dodged the water splashing toward her.

Then, Gao Neng saw a figure flash before his eyes.

"Whoa... So fast!" Gao Neng instinctively kicked out behind him.

But the kick...

...missed.

'Not behind me?'

"Down here!" Shen Ning'Er's voice rang out.

"Huh?!" Startled, Gao Neng immediately looked down.

But there was no one there.

'This is bad,' he thought. But it was too late. A powerful force had already struck him from behind.

"THUMP!"

Gao Neng found himself sprawled on the sofa.

It was a bit damp.

"You pour water for a guest, only to end up 'drinking' it yourself? Your hospitality isn't very impressive," Shen Ning'Er said, clapping her hands. She then took a few steps back and sat down at the table.

Just then, Gao Neng felt a flash of inspiration strike him.

'Shen Ning'Er's movements just now!'

'So fast!'

'If I could simulate that...'

'What form would be best for simulating it?'

Although Gao Neng hadn't figured it out just yet, he felt as if a new line of thought had been opened. When he looked at Shen Ning'Er again, his eyes were shining.

"Want to try that again?" Shen Ning'Er asked, crossing one of her long legs.

"No, I'll go get you another glass of water." Gao Neng shook his head and quickly poured another glass. This time, he didn't try to splash it on her, handing it directly to her instead.

Shen Ning'Er didn't say much, simply taking the glass and having a sip.

"I've been thinking for a long time, and I've decided to try manifesting something from my imagination. It might give my combat power a huge boost. What do you think?" Gao Neng asked as soon as he saw Shen Ning'Er take a drink.

"Purely from imagination?" Shen Ning'Er countered.

"No, it's imagination built on a certain foundation!" Gao Neng shook his head.

"Then it's worth a try," Shen Ning'Er replied after a moment of careful thought.

"Mm, so... can you stay tonight?" Gao Neng finally asked, gritting his teeth. 'A man should just say what he's thinking. Shen Ning'Er came here on her own initiative, the opportunity is right in front of me. If I keep beating around the bush, I'd really be a coward.'

"..." Shen Ning'Er's expression flickered, as if she was also making a decision. But she soon nodded. "I can stay, but..."

"But what?"

"But I don't plan on sleeping tonight." There was no hint of a joke on Shen Ning'Er's face; she was completely serious, her bright eyes fixed on Gao Neng.

"Heh, I wasn't planning on sleeping tonight either," Gao Neng chuckled. He naturally understood what she meant: she was going to stay up all night to practice with him.

"Then let's begin." Shen Ning'Er nodded, then took out another 'silver high-dimensional capsule' and crushed it.

"CRACK!"

A huge chunk of earth and stone landed in the room. In addition to that, a large assortment of various knives of different sizes appeared on the floor.

Shen Ning'Er glanced over, picked up one of the knives, and shaved off a piece of the rock. "What do you want to manifest? I can help you sculpt it. That might help you master it faster!"

Chapter 142 - 136: Upgrade: Second Magnetic Core

"Carve it out?" Gao Neng looked at Shen Ning'Er, who was holding a set of carving tools. He had never imagined she would have something like this on her.

'But that's not right. When Shen Ning'Er came to the Eastern Capital Military Academy, she shouldn't have known she'd need to learn energy materialization, right? Why would she have these things prepared?'

'Did she get them while I was practicing...?'

Gao Neng looked toward Shen Ning'Er.

But Shen Ning'Er didn't seem to have any intention of explaining. She just spun the tools in her hand, seemingly familiarizing herself with their weight.

Gao Neng didn't dwell on it.

Because a mechanical voice had already sounded in his ear.

"DING! Congratulations, Host, for completing the quest 'Three Days, Three Nights - The Second Night.' Reward: one High-Level Treasure Chest."

'The mission's complete?' A flutter went through Gao Neng's heart. 'It's just past midnight, and my mission is already done?'

'Just as I thought. The condition for completing this quest was that Shen Ning'Er had to stay of her own free will.'

As long as it was past midnight and Shen Ning'Er wasn't thinking about leaving anymore, the mission would be flagged as a success.

Shen Ning'Er couldn't see things like treasure chests.

Gao Neng was relieved. So, while describing his ideas to Shen Ning'Er, he casually instructed the system to open the High-Level Treasure Chest.

"BEEP! A High-Level Treasure Chest contains several different rewards. The Host may select one based on their needs!"

"Randomizing rewards..."

"Randomization complete. Presenting three treasures: 1. One upgrade opportunity for a special ability or skill (can be used on Beginner or Intermediate-level abilities/skills). 2. One Treasure Map. 3. Two pages of 'Money-Making Tips' (contains two lucrative side-quests)."

Just like last time, three options appeared in the treasure chest.

What was different was that the Ningshen Awakening Pill and the random skill were gone. Instead, there was an upgrade opportunity for a special ability or skill, and... a treasure map?

Gao Neng's brow furrowed slightly.

This upgrade opportunity could be used on an Intermediate-level ability, which meant he could level up 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes.' It was better than what he could get from a Middle-Level Treasure Chest.

'But is it really necessary to upgrade 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes' right now?'

Gao Neng thought it over. 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes' was rather embarrassing, but that wasn't his primary concern. The main issue was that the skill accelerated his cultivation speed.

Currently, 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes' increased his cultivation speed by 300%.

'So what if I upgrade it to Advanced-level?'

'Could I get it to 400%?'

Gao Neng hesitated for a moment, wavering between the skill upgrade opportunity and the treasure map.

'After all, this is the first time a treasure map has shown up. Since the system gave it to me, maybe it leads to some kind of divine weapon?'

'What should I choose?'

'The treasure map...'

'It seems really good!'

'If I have a chance to find a divine weapon, won't my power take another leap forward?'

Gao Neng's finger hovered over the treasure map option, but just as he was about to select it, he paused. 'A treasure map? Doesn't that imply danger?'

'Besides, even if I get the map now, I don't really have a chance to go treasure hunting, do I?'

'Forget it. I'll lay low and power up first! On the path to becoming strong, not advancing is the same as retreating, but that doesn't mean I have to bet my life on it. My strength isn't sufficient right now. It's better to increase my cultivation speed first. Once I'm strong enough, I can open another High-Level Treasure Chest and pick the treasure map then!' Gao Neng finally made up his mind.

"I choose the skill upgrade opportunity."

"DING! Please select which skill the Host wishes to upgrade."

"Upgrade 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes'." Gao Neng didn't hesitate this time. His other special abilities were good too, but 'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes' was the one that boosted cultivation speed. Upgrading it first was the right call.

"'Three Hundred Nursery Rhymes' upgrading..."

"Upgrade complete. Obtained new special skill: Second Magnetic Core (Advanced)."

"Second Magnetic Core?!" Gao Neng immediately checked the system's Attribute Panel.

Sure enough, the Special Abilities section had changed.

Special Abilities: 1. Eye of Deprivation (Beginner). 2. Second Magnetic Core (Advanced). 3. Life Form Transformation (Beginner).

"Ning'Er, I'm going to get a drink of water," Gao Neng said to Shen Ning'Er.

"Mm." Shen Ning'Er nodded without a second thought. She went back to studying the tools in her hand, occasionally making a few test cuts on the block of earth and stone.

Gao Neng immediately ran to the kitchen and started to check the description for the Second Magnetic Core.

Second Magnetic Core: When using the second magnetic core, your cultivation speed will increase to 400%, your concentration will increase to 400%, and the recovery speed of your vitality and stamina will increase to 400%. Furthermore,

the energy contained within your Second Magnetic Core can be converted and transferred to your first magnetic core.

'My cultivation and recovery speeds both really increased to 400%?! And I can even convert energy?' Gao Neng was absolutely stunned.

What did this mean?

This meant that as long as he kept the Second Magnetic Core fully charged, he could instantly replenish his first magnetic core. That was far faster than eating an Energy Pill.

Energy Pills restored energy very slowly.

But this... it could be converted instantly.

How tyrannical!

Most importantly, he finally didn't have to sing those embarrassing songs anymore.

Gao Neng was thrilled. However, when his eyes landed on the final line of fine print, his expression darkened considerably.

Energy Conversion: 10,000 Alliance Coins per transfer.

'You damn idiot system, would it kill you not to have microtransactions?' Gao Neng was furious. 'Trying to rip me off again?' But on second thought, he calmed down. 'If it didn't try to rip me off, could it even be called an idiot system?'

The silver lining was...

'The energy conversion is probably meant for critical moments.'

'Normally, I can just eat Energy Pills, right?'

Thinking of this, Gao Neng's mood improved considerably. He wouldn't have to sing anymore, plus he now had a function to instantly restore his energy. This upgrade was definitely a net win.

He closed his eyes.

He observed the magnetic cores within his body.

Sure enough, a new golden magnetic core was orbiting the original red one, constantly rotating just like the moon around the Earth.

Though much smaller in size, it was pure gold.

'Why is it so much smaller? Is it because the golden core has a greater mass?' Gao Neng tried to magnetize his arm using the Second Magnetic Core.

Then, he discovered...

Nothing happened.

'Right, I haven't charged it with any energy yet.' With a mental command, Gao Neng began transferring energy from the red core to the golden one. The red core quickly faded to white.

'Wait a second.'

'My money didn't go down, did it?'

Gao Neng checked his pockets. His money was all there.

He breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed transferring energy from the first core to the second was free; only the reverse cost money.

Gao Neng ate some more Energy Pills.

He continued the transfer.

After a few more transfers, he found he couldn't send any more over.

'It seems that even though the second core is much smaller, its total capacity is the same as the first. That makes sense. It's basically double my total capacity.'

Gao Neng didn't experiment any further. He put aside the matter of magnetization for now. A more pressing problem had come up: his first magnetic core was now a faint, pale red.

And he had already run out of Energy Pills.

'After I'm done practicing energy materialization, I really need to go to the logistics department and trade for some more Energy Pills. The second core is full while the first is almost empty... this is enough to drive a perfectionist crazy!'

Gao Neng walked out of the kitchen.

Shen Ning'Er had already started carving, following the simple description Gao Neng had given her earlier.

...

Time passed quickly.

That night, neither Gao Neng nor Shen Ning'Er slept. Gao Neng constantly communicated his ideas to Shen Ning'Er, while Shen Ning'Er made modifications to the sculpture according to his descriptions.

One of them would speak, and the other would sculpt.

After she finished a round of modifications, Gao Neng would try practicing again.

After practicing, he would explain more.

And then, she would continue to sculpt...

They repeated this cycle over and over.

Gao Neng had no idea how the night flew by. All he knew was that it passed in what felt like the blink of an eye, and then it was dawn.

When dawn arrived, Gao Neng made breakfast for Shen Ning'Er as he usually did.

Fang Tangtang didn't seem to be awake yet.

Gao Neng didn't wake her. The two of them wolfed down their breakfast and immediately got back to work...

「At 9:30 in the morning.」

Fang Tangtang ran downstairs.

The moment she saw Shen Ning'Er, she let out a cry, her face a mask of pouty resentment. "Sister Ning'Er, you abandoned Tangtang to sneak off and fool around with Gao Neng..."

However, after seeing the sculpture placed in the room, Fang Tangtang shut her mouth.

"You two were carving this all night?"

"What else? What did you think we were doing?" Gao Neng replied irritably, then directly chased Fang Tangtang out.

'What the hell?'

'Can't she see we're doing something important?'

Shen Ning'Er didn't stop Gao Neng, just smiled.

「By noon.」

Fang Tangtang obediently brought food for the two of them.

After clinging to Shen Ning'Er for a while and circling the sculpture a few more times, Fang Tangtang left, showing no intention of staying.

Gao Neng was actually already a bit tired at this point.

A wave of drowsiness washed over him, especially after the meal. But looking at the sculpture, which was still not quite finished, he felt he had to give it one last push, no matter what.

There wasn't much time left.

Shen Ning'Er would be leaving tomorrow.

And according to what he told Song Tianyun, he would challenge the Ding Ranking again tomorrow afternoon. Time was everything right now; he had to race against every second.

「In the afternoon.」

Fang Tangtang brought food again.

After Gao Neng and Shen Ning'Er ate together, they didn't relax for even a second and immediately threw themselves back into practice. The sculpture was also nearing its final stages.

"Gao Neng's gone mad, and he's dragged Sister Ning'Er down with him..." Fang Tangtang muttered. She went upstairs on her own and started bustling about.

The sky darkened.

Time ticked away...

As the two continued their non-stop practice, the stroke of midnight was once again approaching.

"How about a little change here?"

"That's it! Speed, surprise attack, a one-hit kill... Ning'Er, what do you think?" Gao Neng gazed at the sculpture before them, his mind buzzing with excitement.

"It's good. It's really good!" Shen Ning'Er nodded.

"We succeeded?!"

"Yes, we succeeded!" Shen Ning'Er nodded again.

A slight blush crept onto Gao Neng's face. This was the first time in two days he had heard such praise from Shen Ning'Er. While what he'd learned might not be perfect yet, it was at least enough to handle most of the teams on the Ding Ranking.

And he still had nearly a month to continue perfecting it.

'First place on the Ding Ranking... I have a shot!'

Chapter 143 - 137: Overpowered Ability: Wordless Celestial Book

Gao Neng was truly excited.

But after the intense excitement came overwhelming sleepiness.

After fighting continuously for dozens of hours, he couldn't hold on anymore. His eyes could barely stay open. Even Shen Ning'Er was turning into two, then four, in his vision.

"Ning'Er, I'll try one more time..." Gao Neng shook his head hard, trying to clear it. 'At the very least, I have to test this thing's true power.'

But with just that shake...

He felt the world spinning around him.

'So dizzy!'

He saw Shen Ning'Er, who appeared to be saying something.

But he couldn't hear a thing.

He was truly exhausted.

Simply pulling an all-nighter was no problem, but he had maintained a state of high mental tension for the past few dozen hours. The moment he relaxed, he pitched forward and collapsed.

...

「That night.」

Gao Neng slept soundly.

No thoughts of system missions entered his mind. In fact, he even had a dream...

In the dream, he was unstoppable. He sent Principal Song Tianyun flying with a single palm strike and broke Vice-Principal Wang Qixing's leg with a kick. As for Gui Zian, he could only grovel at Gao Neng's feet, trembling.

"A bald little pup, and you dare call yourself Bald Shark? I'll pluck all your hair... Oh, right, you don't have any!" Gao Neng laughed with abandon in his dream.

By the time he woke up, it was already ten in the morning.

When he opened his eyes, he found himself on a bed. The room was completely silent. Shen Ning'Er was gone; only a sculpture covered with a cloth remained.

"Ding! Congratulations, Host, for completing the third night of 'Three Days and Three Nights.' Reward: one spin of the Lucky Wheel."

'I completed the mission?' The moment Gao Neng heard the mechanical voice, his mind finally cleared. 'Shen Ning'Er didn't leave last night? But if she didn't... why am I on the bed? Shouldn't I be on the sofa? What is going on?'

So, does that mean...

'Shen Ning'Er slept on the sofa all night?'

Gao Neng shook his head. He glanced at his clothes and saw they hadn't been taken off. It seemed nothing that crossed the line had happened last night.

However, he saw a note left on the table.

"I've returned to the Military Department. I've issued the challenge for the D-Rankings for you. Wagered 200 Merit Points. Time: 4:30 PM. If you lose... I'll beat you to death!"

Gao Neng was left speechless.

'Classic Shen Ning'Er.'

The note had a distinct military air to it.

Gao Neng put the note away, quickly washed up, and then his gaze fell on the golden wheel that had been waiting in front of him.

'It's time for the Lucky Wheel again!'

'I wonder what I'll get this time?'

"Begin the draw!"

"Lucky Wheel, spin, spin, spin..."

The pointer quickly came to a stop.

"Ding! Congratulations, Host! You're radiating with good fortune! You have obtained the ultra-powerful special ability, 'Wordless Celestial Book'."

'Wordless Celestial Book? And it's an *ultra-powerful* special ability?!' Gao Neng was thrilled to hear the words "ultra-powerful special skill." 'Another special skill, and an ultra-powerful one, no less!'

'That's got to be invincible, right?'

'But what exactly is a Wordless Celestial Book?'

He opened the system's Attribute Panel.

Sure enough, there was a new item under Special Abilities.

Special Abilities: 1. Eye of Deprivation (Beginner). 2. Second Magnetic Core (Advanced). 3. Lifeform Transformation (Beginner). 4. Wordless Celestial Book (Beginner).

He opened the description for the Wordless Celestial Book.

Wordless Celestial Book: Place a combat technique into the Celestial Book. Through the Celestial Book's evolution process, any existing flaws in the technique will be automatically repaired, and it will be enhanced into a new combat technique.

Cost: The cost varies depending on the grade of the combat technique. For example: 100,000 Alliance Coins per use, 500,000 Alliance Coins per use...

'Wow, it really is ultra-powerful! It can fix flaws in combat techniques? Any combat technique can be evolved and enhanced into a new one. This is an essential skill for every occasion! But the problem is... a minimum of 100,000 Alliance Coins per use? Is this a fucking robbery?! Motherf—'

Gao Neng bit back the last word.

Because this ability was just that powerful!

'Fixing flaws in combat techniques... That's basically perfecting low-level techniques. Is it powerful? Damn right it's powerful! But the problem is... he's broke.'

'The Second Magnetic Core costs money!'

'Lifeform Transformation costs money too!'

'And now the Wordless Celestial Book also needs money!'

Gao Neng could already see it: the higher the skill tier, the higher the cost. On top of that, training and fighting both required energy, which meant more money.

'Money, money, money...'

'So you can't even play the game right without being rich, huh?'

The world was already realistic enough, but the system he got was even more of a goddamn materialist.

Gao Neng didn't dwell on it. He had two combat technique manuals on hand. One was Military Boxing—a dime-a-dozen technique, so there wasn't much point in enhancing it.

As for the second one...

It was the combat technique Gui Zian had given him.

It was called: Seven-Step Kill.

Gao Neng had glanced through it when he got it. The gist was that with each step, your aura would change, as would the power of your attacks.

It was a fairly generic combat technique, focused on building up the user's aura. To put it simply, the goal was to kill an opponent in seven steps.

By the time you take the seventh step...

...your aura will have reached its peak.

And a single punch can take your opponent down.

The only condition is...

...your opponent has to let you take all seven steps.

Gao Neng thought it was kind of bullshit. 'If I can kill someone in one step, why must I take seven? Isn't that just giving my opponent more time?'

Still, he was actually planning to practice it.

Because, apart from Seven-Step Kill, he didn't have any other decent combat techniques. It's not like he could rely on Military Boxing, right?

As for why he hadn't started practicing yet...

It was because he hadn't found the time to practice yet.

'I can enhance this Seven-Step Kill when I get the chance. For now, though, I should head to the Logistics Department to grab some things. I'm out of Energy Pills!' Gao Neng stopped mulling it over. Since the challenge had been issued, a shopping trip to the Logistics Department was now a necessity.

...

「Logistics Department.」

The old lady wearing glasses looked at Gao Neng.

Gao Neng was also looking at the old lady.

"I'm not answering any questions," the old lady said, breaking the silence.

"I'm not asking any questions. I'll take everything on the last list. The whole thing. And with the twenty percent discount, right?" Gao Neng said with an air of magnanimity, showing a man's decisiveness without a hint of hesitation.

"So straightforward today?" The old lady was a bit surprised as she took the list. "1050 Merit Points. After the 20% discount, that's 840. You'll have 310 left. Are you sure you want to make the exchange?"

"I'm sure!"

"..."

After leaving the Logistics Department.

Gao Neng finally had the feeling of being rich.

He had bought fifty Energy Pills in one go. Besides that, he also got a weapon, and some raw materials and ores.

Millions of Alliance Coins' worth of stuff, weighing down the bag on his back.

Gao Neng's gaze swept around. For a moment, everyone looked like a thief to him. After all, with a few million in the Forgotten Land, you could buy several buildings. Just by collecting rent, you could live comfortably all year round.

"We finally found you, Gao Neng! How dare you still wander around here? Bald Shark is furious right now! He said that after he catches you, he's definitely going to beat you up badly!"

As he was looking around, he saw two figures running over from not too far away. It was Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing, both with a hint of nervousness on their faces.

"Why does he want to beat me up?" Gao Neng was baffled.

"You don't know what you did?" Kong Kun looked at Gao Neng in astonishment.

"What did I do?"

"You were the one who issued the challenge for the D-Rankings, right?"

"Yeah... I guess you could say that? What's the problem?"

"..." Kong Kun was rendered truly speechless this time. He gave Gao Neng a strange look. "And you don't think there's a problem with that challenge letter?"

"???" Gao Neng was genuinely clueless.

"Arrogant!" Seeing Gao Neng silent, Feng Qingqing finally couldn't hold it in anymore. "Even though you said you'd cover all the Merit Points if we lose, but..."

Feng Qingqing didn't say the rest of her sentence, but her face was clearly flushed.

Gao Neng roughly understood what Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing meant.

'So the problem is with the challenge letter?'

'But didn't I already say I was going to keep challenging the D-Rankings? What could the problem be...? Besides, I wasn't the one who issued the challenge. Shen Ning'Er did.'

'Wait a minute!'

'Shen Ning'Er issued the challenge letter?!'

"Wait a minute. How did the two of you see the challenge letter *I* issued?" Gao Neng finally pinpointed the issue. According to protocol, only the members of the challenged team should be able to see the letter's contents.

But the crucial point was that Shen Ning'Er had written this letter.

So where had Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing seen it?

'Isn't the challenge letter supposed to be delivered directly into the hands of the challenged captain?'

"Duh! You hung the challenge letter on the War Academy building! Even a blind person could see it, okay?" Feng Qingqing was so angry her face turned a little pale.

"The challenge letter was hung on the War Academy building..." Gao Neng's expression finally shifted. He had a feeling this wasn't as simple as he'd thought.

Without any further delay, he ran towards the War Academy without looking back.

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing immediately followed.

As soon as he reached the War Academy...

Gao Neng's face truly darkened.

'What a huge challenge letter!' Gao Neng stared at the large red paper hanging high at the entrance of the War Academy, momentarily at a loss for words.

"I, Gao Neng, hereby issue this challenge. In the coming month, I will continuously challenge the 19 teams of the D-Rankings. You lowly scoundrels..."

Gao Neng skimmed past those words.

Because that wasn't the crucial part.

The real issue was the list of conditions below:

1. Merit Point Wager: Each challenge must have a wager of 200 Merit Points or more. If you don't dare, get lost!

2. Money Wager: Besides Merit Points, each challenge must also include a wager of at least 100,000 Alliance Coins. If you don't dare, get lost!

3. Hunt Mode Wager: If you achieve a clean sweep, the Merit Point and money stakes are doubled. If you don't dare, get lost!

4. Time Wager: Achieve a clean sweep within 15 minutes...

5. Captain Wager...

...

Gao Neng looked at the long list of wagers below, and that outrageously arrogant "Get lost!" after each one. He had a feeling his life was about to get a lot harder.

And reality proved him right...

The moment he appeared, the crowd that had been spectating at the War Academy's entrance surged toward him like a starving man spotting a naked woman.

Chapter 144 - 138: Gao Neng's Hunt

"Gao Neng, I'm a sophomore reporter for the campus newspaper. Can I ask, what gave you the courage to issue a challenge like that?"

"Gao Neng, you're so openly provoking the upperclassmen. Aren't you afraid you'll be beaten to death the second you step outside the gates of Eastern Capital Military Academy?"

"Gao Neng..."

"..."

In the blink of an eye, Gao Neng was surrounded.

Worst of all, some guy was even taking the opportunity to sneak a hand into his backpack.

That crossed the line.

Gao Neng kicked out.

"OWWW!" A pained howl.

A figure went flying, both hands clamped tightly over his crotch.

"..."

The area immediately fell silent.

"You ask where my courage comes from? I'll tell you. Having strong fists *is* courage!" Gao Neng didn't even glance at the figure as he turned and walked away.

"How arrogant!"

"So unbelievably arrogant!"

"A first-year freshman dares to hit someone in public?!"

The students watched Gao Neng leave, hurling insults at his back. However, not a single one of them went to help the guy kneeling on the ground. None of them were idiots.

Anyone with eyes could see that this was a classic case of a plan backfiring. Who could the guy blame but himself for getting kicked?

...

Upstairs in the War Academy building.

Two figures watched Gao Neng's departure.

"Principal, didn't you say Shen Ning'Er was teaching Gao Neng some discipline these past two days? But from where I'm standing, it looks like he's gotten even more unruly," Gui Zian said with a wry smile.

"..." Song Tianyun didn't speak.

What could he say?

Shen Ning'Er had said that in two days, he would understand the reason.

'And what reason is that?'

'It's not hard to guess, is it?'

'In just two days, could Gao Neng have really gotten that much stronger? If that were true, there'd be no need for principals and instructors like them, would there?'

Besides, the most important thing was that neither Gao Neng nor Shen Ning'Er had left the room for the past two or three days, so it definitely wasn't a matter of training.

'Since it wasn't a huge leap in strength...'

'...it had to be his "personality."

It was a well-known fact that Gao Neng came from the Forgotten Land.

Therefore, it was only natural that Shen Ning'Er had come to Eastern Capital Military Academy specifically to teach Gao Neng the rules, a proper attitude toward learning, and a calm and steady mindset.

"How about this? Why don't you call Vice Commander Shen and have this kid tossed into the Military Department... He's got a death wish!" Gui Zian had seen his fair share of rich kids over the years, but he had truly never seen a "rich kid" quite like Gao Neng.

After all, very few people like that were still alive today.

"What the hell are you talking about? On the path of the strong, you either advance or fall behind! What's wrong with being arrogant? Anyway, I've handed him over to you. How you manage him is none of my business!" Song Tianyun gritted his teeth, then turned and left.

"..." Gui Zian was momentarily stunned.

Watching Song Tianyun leave, he felt a wave of exhaustion. There was nothing wrong with arrogance, but arrogance without the strength to back it up would get you killed.

Not even Jesus could save you!

...

「Time: 4:20 PM.」

The viewing room at Eastern Capital Military Academy was packed once again.

This time, they weren't here to see Shen Ning'Er. They were here to see how Gao Neng would be beaten to a pulp. After all, it was rare to see someone so arrogant these days.

The two principals, Song Tianyun and Wang Qixing, did not show up this time.

However, Gui Zian was still there.

He had to be. Gao Neng was his student, and watching him get killed was practically in his job description. What kind of instructor would he be if he missed it?

"Alright, alright, place your bets! What mode will Gao Neng pick this time?"

"Mission Mode, right?"

"Not necessarily. Didn't you read his challenge? Merit Points are doubled for a total wipeout in Hunter Mode... Hahaha, he's definitely picking Hunter!"

"Hunter? You think they can last five minutes? The Four Teeth Team may only be third-years, but they're much stronger than the fourth-year Lone Soul Team!"

"Don't say that... that's just mean. Gao Neng might be arrogant, but he's tough and can take a beating. Maybe he'll even last six minutes!"

"I bet six minutes and one second!"

"Bro, that's a bold bet..."

"..."

The viewing hall buzzed with noisy anticipation while they waited for the match to begin.

Inside Training Room 079.

The captain of the Four Teeth Team, Song Jingyan, was glaring coldly at Gao Neng, who was in the same training room.

That's right, Song Jingyan was a woman.

But her appearance didn't quite match her name. There was nothing "stunning" about her; on the contrary, she was rather coarse, with a 220-pound frame and a face like a round pancake.

"Don't think I'll go easy on you just because you're handsome!" Song Jingyan cursed viciously. Then, she turned to the three fat guys behind her. "You three fatasses listen up! If any of you dare to hold back against that loli and the campus belle, I'll personally end you tonight!"

"Don't worry, Captain! Our hearts are as hard as stone! What loli? What campus belle? They're all just flowers in the water, the moon in the mirror. In our hearts, you're the only stunner, Captain!" The three fat guys had a strong survival instinct.

Gao Neng was rendered speechless listening to this from the side. A team of four fat people, one woman and three men at that, was truly... "stunning."

'But the best part is their captain's name...'

'Song Jingyan. Wasn't that name basically a promise to give me experience points?'

"Gao Neng, that pancake-faced woman dared to call me a loli! Don't you lift a finger later. I'm going to blast her to bits with my Electromagnetic Cannon!" Fang Tangtang fumed.

"Was she wrong?" Kong Kun asked, stunned for a moment.

WHOOSH! Fang Tangtang's gaze was like a lightning bolt.

"..." Kong Kun didn't quite understand, but he still took a step back instinctively. This was a training room. If Fang Tangtang used her Electromagnetic Cannon here, the entire room would be destroyed.

'Can't afford to provoke her. Definitely can't.'

"I've analyzed their combat record. In Hunter Mode, they have 9 wins out of 12 matches, and their highest rank was 14th on the D-Ranked Leaderboard. However, their record in Mission Mode is 5 wins out of 13 matches, which is why they're currently 19th on the D-Ranked Leaderboard. My conclusion is that they're a power-type team, very strong in a direct confrontation but lacking in flexibility. Gao Neng, let's pick Mission Mode this time. If we compete on speed, we won't necessarily lose to them!" Feng Qingqing analyzed carefully.

"Mission Mode again? So boring... But whatever. As long as we win!" Fang Tangtang seemed a little unhappy, but she nodded anyway.

After all, being arrogant didn't mean she was stupid.

The fact that Fang Tangtang had achieved the rank of Lieutenant before even entering Eastern Capital Military Academy meant she wasn't the type of fool to underestimate her opponents.

"I have no objections. Gao Neng, what do you think?" Kong Kun looked at Gao Neng. Gao Neng was the one who had insisted on this challenge, and all the Merit

Points were riding on him alone. Therefore, the right to make the final decision naturally fell back to him.

"Hunter," Gao Neng said calmly.

"Hunter?!"

"You really want to pick Hunter?"

"..."

Feng Qingqing and Kong Kun were both shocked.

Even Fang Tangtang was uncharacteristically silent. She knew Gao Neng had been practicing energy materialization, but he had just started. How strong could he possibly be?

Most importantly, the opposing team was a genuine power-type team. A close-quarters, head-on confrontation was actually the worst possible choice.

'Could Sister Ning'Er have left some kind of treasure for Gao Neng?'

The three of them were lost in their own thoughts.

But Gao Neng, a smile on his face, had already pressed "Hunter Mode" on the selection screen.

...

"Invincible War God VS Four Teeth Team! Challenge Mode: Hunter!"

When this announcement echoed through the viewing hall, the previously buzzing room suddenly fell silent. Then, it was as if a bowl of ice water had been poured into a wok of boiling oil.

It exploded!

"Hunter! Gao Neng really chose Hunter Mode!"

"This isn't just arrogance anymore, is it? This is pure insanity!"

"I seriously wonder if he even analyzed his opponents. Any idiot knows the Four Teeth Team is a classic power-type team, and he's actually playing Hunter Mode against them!"

"He must be crazy!"

The viewing hall was in an uproar.

Meanwhile, in Training Room 079.

Song Jingyan of the Four Teeth Team and her three fat teammates were also stunned for a moment. All four of them stared at Gao Neng in disbelief.

"He's actually playing Hunter Mode against us?! Is he trying to get himself killed?"

"Let's crush them!"

"Captain Jingyan, you're the most beautiful!"

The three fat guys shouted in unison.

Song Jingyan, however, gave Gao Neng a serious look before letting out a soft sigh. "What a waste of a pretty face. Turns out he's an idiot."

Neither team said anything more.

They stepped through their respective metal doors into the battlefield at almost the same time.

Hunter Mode.

The area of operations was very small.

The total map size was no more than 200 meters across.

Although the map scenes included desert, jungle, snowfield, swamp, and so on, it still meant the two teams would be in a true close-quarters engagement.

"CHARGE!"

With a single cry, the battle began.

Time limit: One hour.

Victory Condition: Point system (1 point for killing a team member, 1.5 points for killing the captain).

Scene: Swamp.

"A swamp? That gives them a chance to hide! But too bad for you, you're playing Hunter Mode... Four Teeth Team, push forward in a line! Watch out for Fang Tangtang's Electromagnetic Cannon. Everyone maintain a two-meter distance from each other. The cannon is a linear attack, so we'll stand in a curved formation. Remember, don't miss a single ditch!" Song Jingyan made her assessment the moment she entered the scene.

"Yes, ma'am!" The three fat guys immediately spread out.

The swamp was a good place for hiding.

Although it couldn't compare to the jungle.

But if someone were to hide in a nook at the edge of the swamp, they'd have a real chance at an ambush. That was why Song Jingyan didn't have her team spread out too far.

They had the advantage in strength.

So they would just push straight forward and sweep the area.

As for the Electromagnetic Cannon Fang Tangtang had shown off last time, with a two-meter spacing, it could only hit one person at most.

"Damn it, they're using serpentine movements?" Fang Tangtang clenched her fists, lying prone on the ground. She had been planning to take out two or three of them right at the start, but now, even a successful ambush would only net her one kill at most.

This was a bit...

'Not worth it!'

'It'd basically be a one-for-one trade!'

"Trying to use serpentine movements on me? Heh." Gao Neng chuckled. He crushed a high-dimensional capsule he had ready in his hand. CRACK! A flood of black liquid gushed out.

(Please vote with your monthly tickets! Recommending a new book by my friend 'Meticulous' called 'So I'm Not an Ordinary Person'. I hear it's very good, so friends who are interested shouldn't miss it!)

Chapter 145 - 139: What Is This Monster?

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing were both stunned for a moment.

Gao Neng was using his energy with such fanfare, which was tantamount to exposing his own position. 'Is he really going to face the Four Teeth Team head-on?'

Just as they were thinking this, the Four Teeth Team did indeed see the display.

"Over there!"

"He actually exposed his own position?!"

"Four Teeth Team, charge!"

A few roars erupted.

Led by Song Jingyan, the three Fatties charged toward Gao Neng like madmen.

But Gao Neng... he was dancing.

As his hands continuously moved in front of his chest, the liquid black energy flowed around his body like strands of black silk.

"What is he doing? Could it be... Energy Manifestation?"

"Energy Manifestation?!"

"Gao Neng can use Energy Manifestation? That's impossible!"

The Four Teeth Team was shocked.

It wasn't just the Four Teeth Team. The students in the viewing hall, and even Gui Zian, stared wide-eyed at the screen.

A Tier One Early Stage freshman...

...is using the Energy Manifestation technique?

'What the hell...'

'Is this a joke?!'

Setting aside the requirements for using Energy Manifestation, the fact that a magnetic core's power cannot be released externally should make a successful manifestation impossible.

But what was the reality?

Er...

The reality was exactly as everyone had expected.

After Gao Neng danced for a bit, the black energy on his hands vanished. Forget manifesting anything—he'd even managed to play away all his energy.

"..."

The viewing hall fell silent.

Then, it erupted with jeers.

And on the hunting grounds, the Four Teeth Team was also momentarily dumbfounded.

'He made such a huge scene, only for it to fizzle out?'

'The freshmen nowadays...'

'Are all their minds this bizarre?'

"Gao Neng, where's the thing you manifested?" Kong Kun felt he shouldn't be asking this question, but he really couldn't help himself.

Feng Qingqing was equally stunned.

Both of them were staring at Gao Neng.

'Exposing our position is one thing.'

'But after playing around with Energy Manifestation for so long, you should have at least made *something*.'

'But in the end, there was nothing?!'

It wasn't just Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing who were baffled; even Fang Tangtang, who knew Gao Neng could successfully manifest things, wore a look of confusion.

'That's not right!'

'Didn't Gao Neng manifest something back in the dorm?'

'Why can't he do it now?'

'Could it be that his body has been... drained?'

"You didn't see what I manifested?" Gao Neng casually replied to Kong Kun, the smile on his lips growing wider. "That's right. It's normal that you didn't see it!"

"It's normal that we didn't see it?"

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing exchanged a look, their eyes filled with question marks.

'What does he mean?'

"Yeah! Kong Kun, what are you spacing out for? Get them! You're the one who can take a beating!" Gao Neng didn't want to not explain; he just didn't have the time.

"..." Kong Kun was speechless.

However, now that their position was completely exposed, there was no longer any chance for a sneak attack. Given the circumstances, Gao Neng's words were actually on point.

He *could* take a beating!

"Kill!"

Kong Kun didn't hesitate any longer. With a roar, he shot forward, simultaneously covering his arms and torso with Alloy Steel.

Meanwhile, the charging Four Teeth Team was also left a bit speechless by this turn of events.

'After all that...'

'...it still comes down to a direct confrontation?'

"Er Pang, you take Kong Kun. Big Fatty, you take Fang Tangtang. Feng Qingqing is yours, San Pang. As for Gao Neng... leave him to me!" Song Jingyan immediately issued her commands.

The two sides were now less than fifty meters apart.

A single charge was all it would take to truly engage.

Closer!

Closer!

Thirty meters!

Twenty meters!

Ten meters!

Kong Kun finally clashed with Er Pang.

Both of them had a head-on fighting style, a contest of strength and physical fortitude. Although Kong Kun was only a Tier Two Mid Stage, he was by no means at a disadvantage against the Tier Two Late Stage Er Pang.

BOOM!

The two fists collided.

Waves of energy radiated outwards.

Feng Qingqing also made her move, two Alloy Swords in hand, constantly using her slight speed advantage to entangle San Pang.

As for Fang Tangtang, she brought out her Scythe of Death and began slashing wildly.

"Witness my Thirteen Death God Slash!"

In terms of sheer might, it was quite formidable.

However, Big Fatty's Defense Power was clearly the super-strong type. He blocked Fang Tangtang's Scythe of Death with just his bare arms, and with his advantage in strength...

...Fang Tangtang was quickly forced to retreat again and again.

As for Gao Neng...

...he was also locked in combat with Song Jingyan.

Song Jingyan wielded a Double-Handed Large Alloy Axe. Brass-colored armor covered her entire body, and her Tier Three strength was on full display.

Aside from her head, she was, you could say, fully armed.

"Gao Neng, with just this, you dared to choose Hunt Mode?! I really don't know where you get your nerve!"

"I can use Energy Manifestation, why can't I choose Hunt Mode?" Gao Neng shouted as he dodged back and forth.

"You can use Energy Manifestation? Then where's the thing you manifested?"

"Isn't it right behind you?"

"Behind... me?!" Song Jingyan was startled. Looking back on a battlefield was the most foolish choice, but she was genuinely curious. So, she instinctively glanced back out of the corner of her eye.

The result...

...was nothing!

'He's messing with me?!'

BAM!

Song Jingyan took a punch to the chest.

'My boobs hurt!'

After all, Gao Neng's explosive power was over two thousand points!

"You beast, you won't even spare me?!" Song Jingyan was furious. She had always thought her incredibly safe pancake face would protect her, but she never expected to fall victim anyway.

'Just as the rumors say, this guy really does specialize in hitting women in the chest!'

'This is infuriating!'

'I have to beat him to a pulp.'

This time, Song Jingyan was truly enraged. She charged forward bravely, her Double-Handed Large Alloy Axe raised high, about to cleave Gao Neng in two.

But just then, Gao Neng shouted again.

"Watch your back!"

"Trying that again?! I don't believe you!" Having been fooled once, how could Song Jingyan possibly believe him again?

"Captain, watch out!"

"Behind you!"

Just as Song Jingyan was ignoring him completely, the voices of Big Fatty and San Pang rang out. Because they were fighting Fang Tangtang and Feng Qingqing, they weren't actually far from Gao Neng and Song Jingyan.

"What behi—" Song Jingyan never finished her sentence, because her head was already flying through the air.

'Huh? How can I see my own body?'

'I'm dead?!'

'Wait, how did I die?'

Before Song Jingyan could even figure it out, she appeared at the training room's exit.

Even at the moment of her death, she didn't know how she died.

She did know one thing, though: her head seemed to have been sliced off by something. But what was it that had sliced her head off?

At that moment, Song Jingyan was truly and utterly baffled.

And in the viewing hall...

...there was complete silence.

"..."

Everyone had seen the moment Song Jingyan died.

A black shadow had suddenly shot out of the swamp. Then, with a flash of black light, Song Jingyan's neck was easily severed.

And then, quick as lightning, the black shadow darted into another part of the swamp.

And vanished!

"What was that?!"

"That black shadow just now, what the hell was that thing?"

"So fast!"

"It was hiding in the swamp... Could there be a ninth person on the battlefield?"

The students were equally baffled.

Strange ideas popped up one after another, but they all knew that the possibility of a ninth person on the battlefield was nil. That left only one possibility.

Energy Manifestation!

Gao Neng had really done it—Energy Manifestation!

And what's more, the thing he manifested had been hiding in the swamp.

But what was it?

Just as they were wondering, the black shadow appeared again.

And this time...

...it appeared behind Er Pang, who was locked in a deadly struggle with Kong Kun.

If there was anyone on the Four Teeth Team who hadn't sensed the danger, it was definitely Er Pang, because he was the farthest from Gao Neng.

There were at least fifteen meters between them.

But in the few short seconds after killing Song Jingyan, the black shadow had appeared behind Er Pang. Its movement speed was simply astonishing.

Most importantly...

...the black shadow had clearly submerged back into the swamp in front of Gao Neng.

So, how did it appear behind Er Pang?

"It's burrowing underground!"

"The thing Gao Neng manifested can burrow underground!"

"That thing wasn't hiding in the swamp in front of Gao Neng at all! It was constantly burrowing underground, looking for the perfect opportunity to strike!"

There was no shortage of upperclassmen and instructors in the viewing hall.

The answer quickly came to light.

At the same time, the completely defenseless Er Pang followed in Song Jingyan's footsteps. His head was also sent flying by a single slash, and he died without ever knowing how it happened.

"I was ambushed?"

"Who ambushed me...? There's no one here."

"Could it be a ghost?"

Countless question marks flashed through Er Pang's mind.

Then, he saw Song Jingyan also standing at the training room entrance.

"Huh? Captain, you died too? How'd you die?"

"How the hell did I die, don't you know?!" Song Jingyan was still fuming. She smacked Er Pang on the head, sending him sprawling to the ground.

'Damn it!'

'So infuriating!'

'I died first, and this guy had no idea.'

"..." Er Pang felt wronged.

'Weren't we clear that I was only supposed to deal with Kong Kun?'

'I wasn't paying attention!'

"Energy Manifestation! Gao Neng actually managed to use Energy Manifestation! He used it to ambush me! I... I, Song Jingyan, refuse to accept this!" Song Jingyan stomped her feet in anger.

She refused to accept it.

But it was completely useless.

Because if this had been a real battlefield, she would already be dead.

...

In the viewing hall.

As Er Pang was slain...

...the black shadow finally landed on the ground.

All the students, including Gui Zian and several instructors, stared wide-eyed at the roughly one-meter-tall monster on the screen.

It truly was a monster...

Its entire body had an undulating, streamlined shape, looking like a long beetle with a pointed head. But unlike a normal beetle, this one had powerful hind legs.

Two powerful hind legs supported its body, allowing the monster to stand upright like a person.

And the monster's forelimbs were even more exaggerated.

It had two massive arms that were like scythes, with a dark light flowing over them. No one would dare question that if that thing slashed you from behind, your neck would not remain intact.

"What is that monster?!"

Chapter 146 - 140: The 3rd Attribute: Change in Gestation

The students all stared at the monster on the screen, truly shocked. None of them had ever seen a creature like this.

"It's an imagination manifestation!"

"Gao Neng manifested a monster from his imagination!"

"This... how did he do that?"

When they heard "imagination manifestation," a strange atmosphere fell over the viewing hall. Imagination manifestation was far more difficult than normal energy manifestation.

A simple analogy: original creation is always harder than imitation.

Gao Neng, a Tier One Early Stage whose Magnetic Core Energy wasn't even strong enough to be projected externally...

He hadn't just achieved the impossible feat of energy manifestation, but an *imagination* manifestation. The word "genius" was no longer enough to describe him; "prodigy" wouldn't be an overstatement.

"That kid..." Gui Zian's expression was a mixture of emotions.

Was he pleasantly surprised?

He was...

'But the problem is, this pleasant surprise doesn't seem to have a damn thing to do with me, does it?'

'So, the real reason Shen Ning'Er stayed at the Eastern Capital Military Academy wasn't to teach Gao Neng the rules, but to teach him imagination manifestation?'

Gui Zian didn't know what to feel. On the one hand, he was happy—Gao Neng had won the challenge, which was certainly a reason to be happy. After all, it made him look good.

But on the other hand, he was genuinely frustrated. The student was his, but he hadn't been the one to teach Gao Neng energy manifestation.

...

「Inside the hunting grounds.」

Kong Kun, Feng Qingqing, and Fang Tangtang were also staring at the monster before them, too shocked for words.

'Gao Neng actually managed to manifest energy!'

'And he manifested an imaginary monster at that! A monster that can even travel underground? And what's with those two giant scythes?'

"Gao Neng, fess up... did you get the inspiration for those two scythes from me, Death God Fang Tangtang?" Fang Tangtang's gaze was fixed not on anything else, but on those two huge scythes.

After all, when she saw the sculpture in Gao Neng's dorm, it didn't have any scythes, and its aura was completely different.

"What the hell does it have to do with your scythe..." A slight smile played on Gao Neng's lips.

The moment he finished speaking, the monster leaped up. Its two scythe-like forelimbs rapidly drew together, resembling a giant drill.

SWOOSH!

The monster's body spun rapidly and, in an instant, it burrowed back underground.

"Mine is a scythe that can burrow. I've named it: Super Earth Dragon!" Gao Neng waved his hand dismissively. Having created a new species, he naturally had to give it a domineering name.

"Super Earth Dragon? Great name!" Fang Tangtang immediately raised both hands in approval.

Kong Kun, however, was a little speechless.

'What the heck is a Super Earth Dragon? Does this thing have even the slightest connection to a dragon? If you had to say what it looked like, wouldn't it be a burrowing mantis-and-beetle hybrid monster?'

'As expected, Gao Neng has zero talent points in naming things.'

"Gao Neng, 'Super Earth Dragon' is just too tacky. I think 'Double-bladed Egg' would be more fitting. Don't you think its shell looks like an egg?" Feng Qingqing, who also seemed speechless, immediately offered a suggestion.

"Double-bladed Egg..." Kong Kun was speechless again. Looking at Feng Qingqing, he suddenly felt that Gao Neng's naming ability wasn't so bad after all.

As for Big Fatty and San Pang...

...they were being completely ignored by the group.

Of course, the expressions on Big Fatty and San Pang's faces were quite grim right now, not because they were being ignored, but because their minds were in turmoil.

'Gao Neng actually succeeded in his manifestation!'

'And he even managed to ambush and kill our captain and Er Pang!'

The Four Teeth Team...

...was about to be wiped out!

And by a team of first-year freshmen, no less!

'What do we do?'

Big Fatty and San Pang glanced at each other, a warrior's glint flashing in their eyes.

"We'll fight them to the death! We have to take at least one of them down with us!" the two roared. Unleashing their full power, they lunged toward Fang Tangtang in unison.

Melee fighters versus a ranged one.

Moreover, it was two against one, with the advantage of a higher tier.

The two fatties instantly gained the absolute upper hand.

Fang Tangtang swung her Scythe of Death relentlessly, but she was still sent tumbling across the ground.

"Help!" Fang Tangtang cried out.

"Unhand that loli! Let me at 'em!" Gao Neng shouted as he saw this, immediately lunging forward. He remembered the terms of the challenge: if they could annihilate the opposing team without a single death on their side, the wager would be doubled.

"Ignore Gao Neng! Focus on killing Fang Tangtang!" The two fatties paid Gao Neng no mind, relentlessly pressing their attack on Fang Tangtang, closing in step by step.

Every punch and every kick was aimed at her vitals.

"Tangtang, run!" Feng Qingqing grew anxious and leaped forward to help.

"Hahaha, perfect! We were waiting for you, the glass cannon! Witness our feint!" The two fatties' eyes lit up. Their real target wasn't Fang Tangtang, but Feng Qingqing.

The reason was simple.

They had all gathered intel on their opponents beforehand.

Although Fang Tangtang was a ranged fighter, she wasn't easy to deal with. Intel from the freshmen orientation assembly mentioned that she had been knocked down by Gao Neng once.

But during that incident, Gao Neng's punch hadn't seemed to truly injure her.

What did that imply?

It implied that Fang Tangtang had some kind of defensive treasure on her.

But Feng Qingqing... did not!

Because she had been knocked unconscious on the spot by Gao Neng.

Seeing Feng Qingqing charge over, the two fatties immediately switched targets.

But just then, the Super Earth Dragon burst out from underground again. Its two large, scythe-like claws swiped swiftly beneath the two fatties, and both of them felt a sudden chill between their legs.

...

Silence.

More silence.

The two fatties were furious.

Even if this was the Virtual Battlefield, wasn't this move... a bit much?

"You dare hit a woman? I'll beat you to death!" Gao Neng had no time to care what the two fatties were thinking. With a righteous expression, he pounced, pinning them firmly to the ground.

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing arrived at that moment as well.

"Get 'em!"

"You dare counter-attack me, Feng Qingqing? Take my crotch kick!" Feng Qingqing was ferocious. Having been nearly killed in a counter-attack, she showed no mercy with her kicks.

"AHH... OOH..."

"AWOO..."

Two bizarre screams echoed, and the two fatties finally closed their eyes in peace.

"Damn it, they died that fast?!" Feng Qingqing's chest heaved as she resentfully withdrew her leg.

In truth, in that last moment, she had felt the threat of death. If the Super Earth Dragon hadn't appeared in time, she really would have been killed by the two fatties' combined assault.

"Glass cannons need to be more careful. Try not to make this kind of mistake in the future." As the captain of the Invincible Team, Gao Neng felt it was necessary to remind his teammate, Feng Qingqing.

"I know..." Feng Qingqing, surprisingly, didn't argue back. After all, she had indeed made the mistake of underestimating her opponents. However, her expression wasn't great, and she turned her head away.

Gao Neng didn't lecture her further.

The Invincible Team had annihilated the Four Teeth Team. The wager was doubled!

He was quite happy right now.

Besides, he now knew that the fight inside the training room could be seen in the War Academy's viewing hall.

'In that case...'

Gao Neng's gaze sharpened. He cleared his throat twice and announced, "Tomorrow... same time, the Invincible Team will continue its challenge against the 'Hook Hook Team' in training room 078! I'd like the four members of the Hook Hook Team to be prepared to be beaten to death. At the same time, all you students in the viewing hall, don't forget to tune in!"

...

Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing were both silent.

Fang Tangtang, on the other hand, was incredibly excited. She instantly sidled up to Gao Neng. "The scene might be a bit bloody, but cruelty is not in our nature.

Our wish is for world peace! Please remember my name, everyone. I am the vice-captain of the Invincible Team, Death God Fang Tangtang!"

...

...

In the viewing hall, there was dead silence.

'So arrogant!'

'So conceited!'

'They really think us upperclassmen are pushovers, don't they?'

The upperclassmen were furious.

But there was nothing they could do.

The guy won with pure skill, and in Hunt Mode no less. What could they say?

Most importantly, Gao Neng now had the capital to be arrogant and conceited. An imagination manifestation... 'My brothers in training room 078, can you handle that?'

"The Eastern Capital Military Academy... it's not going to be peaceful anymore." An instructor sighed, watching Gao Neng and Fang Tangtang on the screen.

In the past, the battle rankings were fiercely contested.

But something like this had never happened before—a first-year freshman team, right after enrolling, had challenged two upperclassman teams in a row and won both times.

Where could the upperclassmen hide their faces?

"The upperclassmen of the War Academy should never be at peace! On the path of the strong, if you don't advance, you fall behind!" Gui Zian said coldly, then turned and left.

...

「Outside the training room.」

Song Jingyan had really come bearing gifts—not just experience, but cash as well.

Annihilating the enemy meant double the Merit Points and money!

Merit Points became 400, and one hundred thousand Alliance Coins became two hundred thousand!

Song Jingyan didn't waste any words. After settling the debt on the spot, he pulled his three fatties away and left quickly.

Gao Neng was so happy he could have written a poem. This time, he was taking the entire 400 Merit Points and two hundred thousand Alliance Coins for himself.

'He who contributes the most, earns the most...'

So, he didn't bother with any courtesies toward Fang Tangtang and the others.

Besides, that girl Fang Tangtang was clearly not short on cash. As for Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing, they didn't seem to be hurting for money either. At least, when he received the payment, neither of them so much as glanced at it.

'Challenging the D-Rankings was definitely the right choice. You get fame and fortune! This is practically a money farm!' Gao Neng did a quick calculation. He now had 710 Merit Points.

On top of that, he had over two hundred and twenty thousand Alliance Coins.

'I have to thank Shen Ning'Er for helping me issue that challenge...'

'Without that domineering challenge letter from Shen Ning'Er, my earnings would have been 100 Merit Points at most. The difference was just too massive.'

"Let's go celebrate tonight! Gao Neng's treating!" Fang Tangtang shouted, glancing at the money Gao Neng was pocketing.

"Celebrate what? How can we be so arrogant over such a small victory? Go back and practice. It won't be too late to celebrate after we take first place in the D-Rankings!" Gao Neng immediately put a stop to such improper behavior.

'Celebrating at the drop of a hat.'

'And expecting me to pay?'

'Naive!'

Gao Neng turned and walked away. At the same time, he opened his system's Attribute Panel, took out the Seven-Step Kill combat technique manual, and mentally chanted, 'Use the Wordless Celestial Book's ability on Seven-Step Kill, use the Wordless Celestial Book's ability on Seven-Step Kill...'

Soon, a mechanical voice sounded.

"Notice: Evolving Seven-Step Kill requires a cost of two hundred thousand Alliance Coins. Do you wish to evolve?"

"Two hundred thousand? Wasn't it one hundred thousand? Could it be that Seven-Step Kill is some high-grade item... Fine, it should be a bit stronger than that Military Boxing! Money... you can always earn more after you spend it. Confirm evolution!" Gao Neng wasn't stingy. Combat techniques were essential skills; the sooner you learned them, the sooner you could enjoy the benefits.

Besides, Gui Zian had told him that before reaching Tier Four, the power of energy couldn't be fully unleashed, so victory often relied on combat techniques.

"DING! Seven-Step Kill evolution successful!"

"That was fast?" Gao Neng immediately looked at the Seven-Step Kill manual in his hand. He then noticed that the text and illustrations on it were constantly changing.

'Wow, this ability is awesome!'

Gao Neng quickened his pace, looking for a place to practice.

But for some reason, when he saw the system's Attribute Panel, he opened the third page on a whim and took a look.

Ever since the system upgrade, the third page had been a field of flowing darkness.

Other than that, there was only the single word "Incubating."

But the system offered no explanation as to what was incubating.

'So many days have passed, has anything changed?' Gao Neng's gaze fell upon the third page. It was still a field of flowing darkness.

No change?

No, wait!

There **is** a change!

Chapter 147 - 141: Really in for It This Time

The third attribute page had really changed.

Originally, it only had a patch of flowing darkness and the word "Nurture." But now, a small option had appeared below that word.

"Energy Materialization!"

'An "Energy Materialization" option has appeared?'

And next to "Energy Materialization," there was an expansion symbol.

'What does this mean?'

Gao Neng was filled with doubt. He subconsciously tapped it with his finger, and the "Energy Materialization" option expanded, revealing three words.

"Super Earth Dragon!"

'It's the Super Earth Dragon he successfully materialized?!'

Gao Neng was truly surprised this time. It was one thing for an "Energy Materialization" option to appear under Nurture, but for it to now contain the Super Earth Dragon he had materialized... what did this mean?

'Replication?'

'Does this mean anything I materialize can be replicated?'

It seemed possible.

But upon further reflection, it felt like something was missing. If it was just replication, it would be completely unnecessary. He could already materialize a second one himself.

"I'll just have to try it!" Gao Neng directly tapped on "Super Earth Dragon." He figured that for things he couldn't wrap his head around, he should just experiment. He wanted to see what exactly "nurturing" a Super Earth Dragon would produce.

And with his tap...

The flowing darkness began to change.

The darkness started to condense toward the center. In just a moment, he discovered that something like an "egg" had formed in the middle.

'An egg appeared?!'

'Does this mean... I can lay an egg myself?'

Gao Neng was rather speechless.

He tapped the egg again but found there was no reaction. It seemed just tapping it was useless. He decided to try infusing it with energy.

'Hatching an egg with energy... that should be the principle, right?' Gao Neng tried to infuse the egg with his energy, only to find it had no effect whatsoever.

The egg...

...was still just an egg!

'Looks like that won't work... Do I have to wait for it to hatch on its own?' Gao Neng shook his head and didn't try any further. After all, he didn't have that many Energy Pills at the moment—just barely enough. Besides, he needed to accelerate his training.

As his training speed increased, so did his rate of consumption.

To put it simply, if others spent two million a month, he had to spend eight million. But the cost was worth it.

After all, time was everything.

'I need to find a way to make some money. I can earn a little from the D-rank list for now, but what about after I'm done with it? I have to think long-term. Plus, my tier is still too low. I need to at least finish magnetizing my entire arm, and it would be best if I could break through to Tier 2. That would probably give me a much bigger boost in combat power!' Gao Neng quickly came to this realization.

Energy Materialization was like gaining a "little buddy."

This little buddy could certainly increase his overall combat power, but it was ultimately an "external tool." Raising his own tier was what truly mattered.

The most pressing tasks now were to master the new, evolved Seven-Step Kill and raise his tier. That would make the subsequent challenges on the D-rank list much smoother.

Gao Neng quickly returned to his dorm and began practicing the new Seven-Step Kill.

Activate the second magnetic core.

Focus increased by 400%!

Gao Neng's comprehension soared, and he quickly understood the contents of the new Seven-Step Kill. Although it was also about enhancing one's aura, the steps were much simpler.

He scanned the description of the new Seven-Step Kill...

Kill in one step!

No, that's not right. Kill one person in half a step!

'Concentrate power into a single point, use Spiritual Power to augment your aura... Forcibly push the aura to its peak with Spiritual Power... The consumption is huge, but the power is also obvious!' After carefully reading it, Gao Neng began to practice. At the same time, he split his focus and continued to magnetize his right arm.

...

Time passed quickly.

「The next day.」

Gao Neng's Invincible Team challenging the Hook Hook Team in training room #078 once again drew considerable attention. Even Song Tianyun had come to watch.

As for the mode...

Gao Neng, as usual, had chosen Hunt Mode.

This time, however, Fang Tangtang and the others had bought in, with the three of them pooling 100 Merit Points for a bet.

Gao Neng wasn't surprised by this.

There was money to be made for everyone, after all...

He wasn't actually stingy, just too poor. The hardships of the poor were difficult for rich kids to understand. At the very least, he couldn't be as extravagant as Fang Tangtang.

If Fang Tangtang spent all her money, her family would just give her more.

But him?

Who could he ask?

The battle in training room #078 was more intense than expected.

As soon as the battle started, the Hook Hook Team launched an all-out offensive.

Gao Neng used Energy Materialization once again.

The four members of the Hook Hook Team, however, all used a special kind of weapon that looked just like hooks. The four of them coordinated their movements, appearing like a single entity.

The materialized creature made all four members of the Hook Hook Team incredibly nervous, terrified of being assassinated. But just as the four were guarding against a sneak attack, Fang Tangtang's Electromagnetic Cannon came through.

Her only fear was that her opponents *wouldn't* group up!

Now that the opposing team had practically become a four-in-one target, she didn't hold back, firing a shot from her Electromagnetic Cannon to teach them a lesson.

Half an hour later...

The Hook Hook Team was completely wiped out.

Gao Neng's Invincible Team, on the other hand, once again claimed a flawless victory with all four members surviving, doubling their bets of Merit Points and money.

The freshmen began to cheer!

The upperclassmen were, once again, shocked.

A team of first-year freshmen had defeated three upperclassmen teams in a row on the D-rank list. This meant that Gao Neng and his teammates truly possessed the strength of a D-rank team.

Chapter 148 - 141: Really in Big Trouble This Time

For the next five days, Invincible Team's momentum was unstoppable.

They constantly issued challenges on the D-List, stirring up a storm and starting an unhealthy trend of freshmen "slaughtering" upperclassmen, leaving the teams at the bottom of the rankings utterly miserable.

Eight battles, eight victories.

That was the record Invincible Team set in their eight challenge matches.

This, in turn, inspired the other freshmen to follow suit.

New teams constantly sprang up among the first-year students: the Awesome Squad, the Alpha Team, the Cookie Crew... The list was endless.

However, the results were all brutal.

While shouting slogans like, "On the path of the strong, one must advance or be left behind!" these new teams were promptly beaten back. The upperclassman teams they challenged showed no mercy. It was as if they were venting all their pent-up frustration and anger, using the cruelest moves they knew.

As expected, these teams collectively lost the shirts off their backs.

The freshmen eventually came to a single conclusion.

Some people are just different.

But this also drove home just how powerful Invincible Team was. In just a few short days, Gao Neng, Fang Tangtang, and their teammates had officially become the leading role models for the first-year students.

However, the topic of how far Gao Neng and the others could actually go became a hot topic of debate at the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

An eight-battle winning streak...

...didn't mean they could actually take first place on the D-List.

After all, the teams got progressively stronger the higher up the rankings you went.

The freshmen cheered, "Invincible Team is invincible!"

The upperclassmen shot back, "They'll fall in the next match!"

Of course, overall, the aggressive approach of Gao Neng and the others was something the leadership of the Eastern Capital Military Academy was happy to see.

When there's a leader of the pack, everyone else is more motivated, after all.

However, some people were extremely frustrated by all this.

Like Gui Zian.

Gui Zian wasn't frustrated about Gao Neng's continuous challenges on the D-List, nor was he frustrated that he wasn't the one who had taught Gao Neng energy materialization. What frustrated him was that Gao Neng never showed up for classes at the War Academy.

That's right. Ever since Gao Neng had enrolled in the War Academy at Eastern Capital Military Academy, he had barely attended a single formal class there.

The theoretical courses at the Eastern Capital Military Academy were not mandatory.

You could attend if you wanted to, but if you didn't... no one would force you to sit through lectures every day.

The crux of the matter was...

Gao Neng wasn't actually skipping classes. If that were the only issue, Gui Zian wouldn't be so frustrated. The real problem was that Gao Neng **was** attending class every single day.

What's more, he was a model student who was rarely late.

Except...

He was attending classes at the Manufacturing Academy!

This was just too much.

Gui Zian was furious. 'If you're going to say you don't have time or you don't want to attend theory classes, fine! But you're a model freshman from the War Academy! What the hell are you doing running off to the Manufacturing Academy every day?'

...

It was another bright and sunny morning.

Gao Neng was in a great mood. He had finished magnetizing both his arms, which meant he had officially entered the Tier One Late Stage.

'Who would dare call me a Tier One Early Stage noob now?'

'I'll beat the crap out of you!'

But there was something Gao Neng was a little confused about. He had reached the Tier One Late Stage the night before last, but last night he had not successfully broken through to Tier Two.

'Is there some kind of bottleneck I have to break through for each tier?'

Gao Neng decided to find some time to ask someone. But for now, it was time for class. After washing up, he hummed a song and headed for the Manufacturing Academy as usual.

He had a 100% success rate in weapon manufacturing.

So, what was he lacking now?

'Theory. As long as I have enough manufacturing blueprints, I can make anything. And those blueprints aren't taught at the War Academy; they're only covered in the theory courses at the Manufacturing Academy. As for combat techniques... with the Wordless Celestial Book, I'm not too worried about that for now.'

Eastern Capital Military Academy was huge.

But Gao Neng moved quickly, stepping through the gates of the Manufacturing Academy right on time. Then, he took a seat in the very front row and prepared to listen attentively.

"Gao Neng, you're here again?" The Manufacturing Academy instructor was at a loss for words. 'This kid has been in my class for five days straight; of course I recognize him. Besides, Gao Neng is a celebrity at the Eastern Capital Military Academy now.'

'And he's super handsome...'

'It would be hard *not* to recognize him.'

"Yes, sir," Gao Neng replied with an obedient nod. "Are we continuing with long-bladed swords today?"

"Um... yes, let's continue. The manufacturing of long-bladed swords is generally divided into several types: true long blades... like the Cyan Dragon Crescent Blade, which is suitable for large-scale battles. Besides that, long-bladed swords are also divided into..." The Manufacturing Academy instructor gave a wry smile and picked up where he left off yesterday.

'What a good student.'

'But the problem is... you're from the War Academy!'

'So what's the deal with you running over to our Manufacturing Academy to be a perfect student every single day?'

...

Outside the Manufacturing Academy gate, Gui Zian's face was pale with anger.

'Gao Neng went in again!'

'That brat must be doing this on purpose. He just wants to tell everyone at Eastern Capital Military Academy that his growth has nothing to do with Gui Zian, doesn't he?'

'Just because I put you in your place during the freshman orientation?'

'Is it really necessary to go this far?!'

"Well, well. Is Vice Director Gui here to accompany the 'Prince Consort' to his studies again?" A light chuckle sounded from behind Gui Zian as a figure appeared before him.

"Just passing by." Gui Zian glanced at Wang Qixing, who had appeared before him, and frowned.

"Really just passing by? Your War Academy's genius student is now running to our Manufacturing Academy for class every day. The whole school knows about it now. Honestly... it puts us in a difficult position. How about I issue an order for the Manufacturing Academy, banning Gao Neng from attending our classes? What do you think, Vice Director Gui?" Wang Qixing smiled again, speaking with a sincere expression.

"Vice Principal Wang, don't overstep your authority. The theoretical courses at the Eastern Capital Military Academy have no such restrictions. It's normal for students to occasionally visit other academies to broaden their horizons. Oh, right, I have some matters to attend to at the War Academy, so I'll be going now." After saying this, Gui Zian turned to leave directly.

"Vice Director Gui, if you leave now, you'll just have to make another trip back later. Why bother?" Wang Qixing waved and called out a reminder.

"What do you mean by that, Vice Principal Wang?" Gui Zian stopped, his brows furrowed slightly.

"We have a guest coming today."

"A guest is coming? What does that have to do with me?"

"Normally, it wouldn't. But since you're Gao Neng's mentor now, it has a little something to do with you. Alright, I have things to take care of at the Manufacturing Academy, so I'm off." Wang Qixing stopped there and said no more, turning to leave.

Gui Zian was lost in thought.

'Wang Qixing hadn't spelled it out, but he understood the implication. A guest was coming to the Eastern Capital Military Academy today, and this guest was likely connected to Gao Neng?'

...

「By noon.」

Gao Neng walked out of the Manufacturing Academy, completely satisfied. Then, he ran right into a murderous-looking Gui Zian, who was waiting at the academy's gate.

"Gao Neng, where are you going?" Gui Zian's words were ground out through clenched teeth, his rage barely suppressed.

"To eat... Teacher Gui, is something wrong?" Gao Neng blinked.

"It's not me who has a problem, it's you! And it's a serious one!" Gui Zian clenched his fists, his face as black as thunder.

A sudden chill ran down Gao Neng's spine.

'He had no doubt Gui Zian was itching to beat him up right now.'

'Could it be because I went to class at the Manufacturing Academy...? Is it that serious? Does he have to beat me up in broad daylight? Has he no shame?'

"My wife is Shen Ning'Er! Shen Ning'Er's grandfather is the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Capital Military District! The Eastern Capital Military Academy is subordinate to the Eastern Capital Military District! Teacher Gui, think carefully before you act!" Gao Neng shouted.

'I have to remind Gui Zian that I have powerful connections. If you dare hit me, I'll go tattle on you.'

"No need to think twice, Vice Director Gui. If I were you, I'd give this brat a good beating right now. Teach him the consequences of being an imposter!" Just then, a voice rang out.

"Who dares say I'm an imposter?" Gao Neng was stunned, then turned to look. He quickly saw two people standing not far behind Gui Zian.

One he recognized.

Song Tianyun, the principal of the Eastern Capital Military Academy.

And the other...

He didn't recognize him, though.

The man had a distinctly masculine air about him, with sharp brows and piercing eyes, and he was dressed in a military uniform.

But that wasn't important. What mattered was the man's rank insignia—it was quite high. If Gao Neng wasn't mistaken, he saw two bars and four stars.

'An Alliance Major General?!'

'So, this was a... Division Commander?'

A strange Division Commander had suddenly appeared behind him and was bluntly calling him an imposter. 'No matter how you look at it,' he thought, 'this isn't going to be simple.'

Gao Neng thought it over. 'I'm in deep trouble this time...'

Chapter 149 - 142: Another Calamity... Where to Run?

If he guessed correctly, the news of Shen Ning'Er staying in his dorm for three days and three nights had blown up.

In fact, this was well within his expectations. After all, the entire Eastern Capital Military Academy knew about it. It would be truly bizarre if *that person* still hadn't heard.

Gao Neng studied the man carefully. He didn't look too old, perhaps under forty. 'Is it because of his training? That must be why he looks so young.'

'A love rival?'

'I hadn't considered that.'

'Besides, I'm not afraid of any love rivals. Who would dare to openly march into the Eastern Capital Military Academy and cause trouble for me? If that were the case, Song Tianyun would never have brought him to me in the first place.'

'Of course, the most important thing is that this Alliance Major General in front of me bears a slight resemblance to Shen Ning'Er.'

"Uncle, it's a pleasure to meet you!" Gao Neng reacted instantly. Before the man could speak again, his attitude did a complete one-eighty as he offered a polite greeting.

"What do you mean, 'Uncle'? I'm Ning'Er's fourth uncle!" The man shot Gao Neng a look, his brow furrowed. 'What's wrong with this kid's eyes? I'm only thirty-seven. How could I have an eighteen-year-old daughter?'

"Oh, so you're her fourth uncle... Are you here to see Teacher Gui? I'll let you two talk. I'll just be on my way!" Gao Neng said, feeling a bit awkward.

'I guessed wrong!'

'He's not even Shen Ning'Er's father.'

'What a waste of a perfectly good 'Uncle'.'

"So *now* you decide to call yourself my student? Then how come I've never seen you in one of my classes at the War Academy?" Gui Zian sneered. He'd been stewing over this for days.

Gao Neng was a little speechless.

'Gui Zian has changed. He's become so petty.'

'Or was he always this petty to begin with?'

"Not so fast, kid. Why don't you first explain what you meant earlier? Since when is Ning'Er your wife?" the man said, cutting straight to the chase.

Gao Neng groaned inwardly.

'He came out swinging with a barrage of questions right from the start.'

'I wasn't prepared for this at all.'

'Still, judging by this fourth uncle's posture, he's definitely here for me. But the Eastern Capital Military Academy is one of the four great military academies of the Alliance. They wouldn't just stand by and watch me get beaten to death, would they?'

'I'm a genius, for crying out loud! A freshman who already made it onto the combat rankings!'

At this thought, Gao Neng immediately looked over at Song Tianyun, who was standing beside the "fourth uncle."

"Ahem. Gao Neng, allow me to introduce you. This is the commander of the Alliance's Third Army, Fourth Division, Shen Fei." Song Tianyun deliberately emphasized the name "Shen Fei." Then he proceeded to tilt his head back and stare at the sky, putting on an air of complete detachment, as if this had nothing to do with him.

'Sure enough, this old fox is completely unreliable.'

'And Gui Zian has changed, too.'

'Now he understood completely. In this world, if you wanted something done, you had to rely on yourself.'

"Fourth Uncle, a dignified Division Commander of the Alliance military wouldn't stoop to arguing with a junior like me, would he?" Gao Neng tried again. Even though Shen Fei hadn't stated his purpose outright, Gao Neng had a pretty good idea of what was going on.

'This Commander Shen Fei is here to call me to account, but he must not have gotten a straight answer out of Shen Ning'Er. Otherwise, he would've just had me arrested by now.'

"You've guessed wrong on that one," Shen Fei sneered at Gao Neng. "When it comes to Ning'Er, our Shen Family absolutely holds people accountable. And while I didn't come here specifically for you today, you've been running your mouth all over the Eastern Capital Military Academy, claiming Ning'Er is your wife and that the Shen Family is your backer. You owe me an explanation for that, don't you?"

"Fourth Uncle, do you want the truth, or a lie?" Gao Neng's mind raced. Shen Fei hadn't made a move, which suggested he really might have other business to attend to.

'However, it's clear I've become a loose end for him to tie up while he's here.'

'That leaves me with two options: deny everything, or stick to my story. I've thought it through, and both are dangerous.'

'Since that's the case...'

'I might as well confess and hope for leniency.'

"What do you think? If you tell me a single lie, I'll kill you, and no one will even be around to collect your body." Shen Fei's aura shifted subtly. He spoke with absolute confidence.

Gao Neng didn't doubt for a second that Shen Fei could back up that threat.

This whole affair wasn't earth-shattering, but it was by no means a small matter either.

Even though they were at the Eastern Capital Military Academy, if Shen Fei decided to pin him with the crime of tarnishing the Shen Family's reputation, probably no one in the entire Alliance could save him.

'What do I do?'

'Getting beaten to death by Shen Fei here would be such a raw deal, wouldn't it?'

"Since you want to know, Fourth Uncle, I'll tell you the truth," Gao Neng said, gritting his teeth and deciding to come clean. "Ning'Er and I met in the Forgotten Land. We went through life and death together, and I even saved her life. We also worked together to eradicate the three great underground factions of the Forgotten Land. After all that, we got together."

Of course, his story was a mix of truth and lies, but he wasn't afraid of an investigation. After all, his deeds in the Forgotten Land were on record with the military.

He and Shen Ning'Er really were responsible for the incident with the underground factory. He'd even received 1,000 Merit Points for it and attended a commendation ceremony.

As for the part about them getting together...

Unless Shen Fei asked Shen Ning'Er herself, no one else would know the truth.

"So, you're saying... there really is something going on between you and Ning'Er? You weren't lying, and you weren't just faking it?" The smile never left Shen Fei's lips.

But inwardly, he was taken aback. He had been ninety percent sure that Gao Neng would deny everything. After all, he couldn't imagine Shen Ning'Er actually having feelings for someone like Gao Neng...

That was why he had accused Gao Neng of posturing from the very beginning.

However, Gao Neng's composure surprised him. Not only did he not deny the claim, but he had even recounted the story of how he met Shen Ning'Er.

And his story sounded logical and well-substantiated. 'They met in the Forgotten Land? Went through life and death together? He even saved Ning'Er's life?'

'All of this...'

'I did look into some of this before I came.'

'Gao Neng had indeed earned military merit in the Forgotten Land, and Shen Ning'Er herself was the one who reported it. However, the report never mentioned anything about Gao Neng saving her life.'

"Well, I suppose I was getting a little ahead of myself... After all, Shen Ning'Er hasn't officially married into the family yet, right?" Gao Neng grinned. Seeing that Shen Fei had no intention of getting violent, he knew his gamble had paid off.

'Shen Fei didn't come here just to bust me.'

'That makes this a whole lot easier...'

'Maybe I can even get another backer out of this. The Commander of the Third Army, Fourth Division... How impressive!'

"You're a sharp kid; you know when to push and when to pull back. Let me ask you one last question. What did the two of you do during the three days Ning'Er was here at the Eastern Capital Military Academy looking for you?" After a moment's thought, Shen Fei went ahead and asked.

It was an awkward question for him to ask directly.

But the news of Shen Ning'Er's visit to the Eastern Capital Military Academy was common knowledge now. Even the old man, far away on the battlefield, had heard about it.

If he didn't get an explanation, the old man would probably charge straight back from the front lines.

"Fourth Uncle, that's not a very appropriate question! You, of all people, should know Ning'Er's character. Do you really think she would do anything to cross the line with me *now*?" Gao Neng deliberately emphasized the word "now." In doing so, he was also telling Shen Fei that while nothing had happened yet, that didn't mean nothing ever would.

Of course, this was also his way of salvaging the reputation Shen Ning'Er had put on the line by staying in his dorm for three days and nights.

Shen Ning'Er might not care about such things.

But Gao Neng, on the other hand, cared a great deal. He'd only used the situation to complete a mission; he never actually wanted Shen Ning'Er's reputation to be damaged.

Besides, the mission was long over. Clearing Shen Ning'Er's name was the right thing for him to do.

"So you're saying nothing happened between you and Ning'Er?" Shen Fei's eyes lit up at his words. This was, in fact, the answer he had been hoping for.

"Of course not," Gao Neng said immediately. "Ning'Er is pure and innocent. There is nothing between us but the purest of love."

"Alright, you're done here. Scram," Shen Fei said, waving a hand to dismiss him.

"Heh heh... Fourth Uncle, there's just one more thing I wanted to ask," Gao Neng said, not leaving just yet. He had one more thing to confirm.

"What is it?" Now that Shen Fei had the answer he wanted, his attitude was much better.

"Do I have any love rivals? What I mean is... are there any political marriage alliances? An arranged betrothal from birth or something like that?" Gao Neng asked tentatively.

"I have no idea if you have any love rivals or not. While the Old Master is extremely strict with Ning'Er's training, he dotes on her in all other matters. As for arranged betrothals and political marriages, the Shen Family scorns such things. There are very few people in the entire Alliance that the Shen Family would bother currying favor with at the cost of Ning'Er's happiness!" As he spoke the last sentence, Shen Fei radiated an immense confidence.

"That's a relief... Fourth Uncle, since this is our first meeting, please accept this small token of my respect!" Gao Neng nodded, then quickly fished out a piece of Magnetic Crystal Ore.

It was the very piece he had dug out of the magnetic core in that underground factory.

'How does that saying go again?'

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained. This Fourth Uncle wouldn't look twice at an ordinary gift, but Magnetic Crystal Ore was a different story. The Military Department would definitely need it.'

'Besides, Gao Neng understood a simple principle.'

'The more valuable the gift I give...'

'...the more valuable the gift I get in return!'

Sure enough, the moment Gao Neng produced the Magnetic Crystal Ore...

Shen Fei's eyes visibly lit up. And it wasn't just him; even Song Tianyun and Gui Zian were gaping at Gao Neng.

'This kid actually has Magnetic Crystal Ore on him?!'

"Where did you get this?" Shen Fei didn't reach for it, but he didn't refuse it either.

"A Magnetic Core appeared in the Forgotten Land, remember? Fourth Uncle, you must have heard about that, right?" Gao Neng paused. Seeing Shen Fei remain silent, he knew he was on the right track. "That night, when Ning'Er and I found the underground factory, I dug this out from beside the magnetic stack. Ning'Er knows about it. In fact, it was because she detonated the stack that I got the chance to save her life."

"You really saved Ning'Er's life?" Shen Fei hadn't believed him at first, but now that Gao Neng had produced a piece of Magnetic Crystal Ore, he didn't know what to think.

"Of course it's true!" Gao Neng affirmed.

"Fine. In that case, I'll accept this gift. The Military Department needs this, and you don't have a use for it yet. But I won't take such a valuable gift for nothing. When the time comes that you need one, I'll find you another of even higher quality... I hear you have five talents, and one of them is Silver?"

Chapter 150 - 143: A 20-Year Cycle

"Yeah, but unfortunately I can't use it... Fourth Uncle Shen, you know I come from a poor background... Training costs money, and so does fighting. It was Ning'Er who came up with an idea for me, adding a monetary wager to my D-Rank challenges. Otherwise, I'd be completely..."

"Hahaha... Your background doesn't mean a thing. You have great talent. My Shen Family judges people based on potential and nothing else!" Shen Fei laughed. He then casually pulled out a hyper-dimensional capsule. "There are two tons of silver ore in here. Take it and refine it yourself!"

"Thanks, Fourth Uncle Shen!" Gao Neng beamed.

Two tons!

'Even though it's just silver ore, I wonder how much it's worth?'

'Based on the price of silver...'

'One gram of 'silver' goes for about 3.5 Alliance Coins on the market. Even at 3 coins per gram, one ton would be 3 million, and two tons would be 6 million...'

'And that's just the price for regular silver. Pure silver would be even more expensive.'

'Of course, two tons of silver ore isn't the same as two tons of pure silver. But even so, these two tons of ore must be worth between one and two million.'

'Gao Neng remembered that when he'd used the system's recycling feature to assess the Magnetic Crystal Ore, the price was just over 300,000. Now, he'd multiplied its value by four or five times in a single trade.'

'What a freaking windfall!'

'Looks like my perspective has been too limited. Real rich people give gifts by the ton. I'd better get a lot closer to this Fourth Uncle Shen in the future.'

While Gao Neng was thinking this, Shen Fei juggled the Magnetic Crystal Ore in his hand and then waved dismissively at him. "Cut the pleasantries. I don't like all that polite talk."

"Okay, Fourth Uncle Shen. You wouldn't happen to be looking for a chief of staff, would you? My advanced math is insanely good. You can rest easy and just hand over the 'financial authority' of your division to me..." Gao Neng said without a shred of modesty.

"Get the hell out! You're a goddamn rookie who hasn't even graduated, and you want to be the chief of staff for my Fourth Division?! You want to snatch my

financial authority, too? Why don't you just ask me to give you my job as Division Commander?"

"Hehe, I wouldn't dare... I wouldn't dream of snatching your position as Division Commander, Fourth Uncle Shen. But maybe a Deputy Division Commander spot... Huh? Fourth Uncle Shen, I'll be taking my leave!" The moment Gao Neng saw Shen Fei's expression darken, he bolted.

Shen Fei's kick hit nothing but air.

"Damn it! If you'd run a second slower, I'd have kicked you into next week!" Shen Fei cursed, then muttered to himself, "That kid's got some nerve. Did I just get played?"

"I doubt it. The kid is a model student," Song Tianyun chimed in casually. "Besides, the real value of Magnetic Crystal Ore isn't its price, but the fact that it's in such short supply."

But inwardly, he was speechless.

'You're only just now realizing you were played?'

'From what I've observed, Gao Neng has fought six challenge matches in a row recently. They were all flawless victories with zero casualties, and he'd won no less than a million Alliance Coins.'

'Yet so far, he hasn't spent a single coin.'

'But the moment you, Division Commander Shen, show up...'

'The kid immediately manages to pull off a major score. And a huge one at that! What does that tell you? Even an idiot could figure it out!'

'Of course, Song Tianyun wouldn't say any of this out loud. At the end of the day, it was the Shen Family's private affair and had nothing to do with an outsider like him.'

Meanwhile, Gui Zian watched Gao Neng disappear and shook his head with a feeling of helplessness.

'He knew why Shen Fei had come to the Eastern Capital Military Academy, but that didn't guarantee Gao Neng was out of the woods. I was quite worried about Gao Neng because of this.'

'And what was the result?'

'Gao Neng was perfectly fine, and even managed to snag two tons of silver ore in the process?'

'Am I falling behind the times?' Gui Zian felt mentally exhausted. 'I can never seem to get a sense of accomplishment from Gao Neng. No matter how outstanding he is, it feels like it has nothing to do with me, his teacher.'

'This won't do!'

'I need to show him some of my real skills. Otherwise, if this kid becomes the Shen Family's grandson-in-law, it's hard to say whether he'll even acknowledge me as his teacher.'

"Old Gui?"

"Old Gui!"

"Hm? Principal Song, what is it!" Gui Zian snapped back to his senses.

"Vice Principal Wang and the others are still waiting in the conference room. Let's go have a meeting," Song Tianyun suggested, glancing at Shen Fei.

"Okay!" Gui Zian nodded.

"I heard the Military Department has a new resolution. Is there a problem on the battlefield, or is it something else?" Song Tianyun knew Shen Fei had come with orders, but as for what those orders were, even he, the principal of the Eastern Capital Military Academy, wouldn't know until Shen Fei made an official announcement.

"There are some problems on the battlefield. The old man hasn't been back for two months... However, I'm not here entirely because of the battlefield. It's about... reform!"

"Reform?!" Song Tianyun's expression changed.

"We have no choice but to change... Uncle Song, you should know very well what kind of enemy we're facing. A twenty-year cycle... A great war every twenty years!" As he spoke, Shen Fei's expression grew somber.

Song Tianyun fell silent as well.

At the start of the Great Cataclysm...

Humanity had a population of six to seven billion. With their advanced technology, they had become the masters of the world, holding an absolute advantage at the time.

But in less than a hundred years, the total human population had shrunk to only five hundred million.

A twenty-year cycle, a great war every twenty years!

This was not empty talk.

It was fact!

Song Tianyun was silent.

Gui Zian was also silent.

While the new generation was growing up strong, the earth-shattering war from eighteen years ago still surfaced in the minds of the older generation.

"Yes, it's time for reform!" Song Tianyun sighed after a long silence.

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「The periphery of the City of Hope, several thousand kilometers away.」

A mighty, ancient tree stood on the ground, its branches huge, soaring into the clouds.

This was no exaggeration.

The tree truly was tall enough to reach the clouds.

Because this was the Elf Tree.

Light flickered on the Elf Tree. Under it, rows of men and women with pointed ears were praying. They were prostrated on the ground, as if worshiping a deity.

Just then, a crystalline, soul-like bird fell from the tree, plunged into the spring below, and a moment later, a stark naked woman walked out.

The woman was exceptionally bewitching.

Her eyes were like two abysses connected to space itself.

If Gao Neng were here, he would have easily recognized this woman as the pointy-eared Dark Elf who had attacked him in the Forgotten Land.

"Nightingale, the Lord has been waiting for you for a long time."

"Yes, I'll go at once." The pointy-eared Dark Elf nodded. She took a leather garment from a companion, slipped it on, and turned to leave.

But as she left, her hand unconsciously strayed to her rear.

'That searing pain...'

'It's so... stimulating!'

"Gao Neng, I will kill you!"

"Kill him? My ass. You've already died once. How could you possibly recover without twenty years to do it? Can't you resurrected elves come up with a new line?" An elven guard at a crossroads heard Nightingale's words, the corner of his mouth lifting in a disdainful smirk.

"..." Nightingale.

'Son of a bitch!'

'I may have died, but I used to be incredibly strong, all right?'

'I just got tripped up by an amateur.'

Nightingale didn't argue. She knew perfectly well that the only reason she was resurrected now, instead of in twenty years, was because she possessed intelligence that the Lord required.

'But being resurrected now...'

'...doesn't mean my strength is back.'

Nightingale walked quickly, passing through the jungle and heading steadily westward. An hour later, she arrived in a region where there was no Elf Tree, only a huge white tower.

The white tower seemed to stretch ten thousand zhang into the sky.

On every level, there was a huge Angel.

"Nightingale, requesting an audience with Lord Mu Feifei!"

"Lord Mu is performing her midday scripture recitation. Wait fifteen minutes, then go in." A guard in silver-white armor glanced at Nightingale, his tone icy.

"Yes." Nightingale stepped aside.

「Fifteen minutes later.」

Nightingale was led into a magnificent room. In the seat at its head, Mu Feifei, dressed in ice-blue armor, was placing a golden scripture on the table.

"My Lord!" Nightingale half-knelt on the ground.

"Who killed you?" Mu Feifei's tone was icy.

"Gao Neng."

"Mm." Mu Feifei was silent for a moment. Then she stood up, her huge, snow-white wings unfurling. "Hand over the intelligence on the Forgotten Land. Then, you can go to the City of Hope and be an ordinary human."

"An ordinary human..." Nightingale gritted her teeth and touched her pointed ears, but quickly nodded. "I understand. I will go to the City of Hope now!"

"An Elf Tree seed can't be wasted like this. Since you were resurrected early, go to the ninth floor and pick a few things. That way, when your power awakens again in twenty years, you'll probably be close to becoming a Great Elf."

"A Great Elf?! Thank you, my Lord!" Nightingale was overjoyed, and immediately prostrated herself before retreating.

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「Eastern Capital Military Academy.」

「Inside Gao Neng's dorm room.」

Fang Tangtang, Kong Kun, and Feng Qingqing gathered here in advance as usual. This afternoon, they would once again challenge the team ranked twelfth on the D-Rank list.

"Tangtang, what did you mean earlier when you said the Military Department was going to implement reforms?" Kong Kun's curiosity was piqued by Fang Tangtang's vague hints.

"What else could it mean? Reform means change and innovation. Gao Neng should know all about it. Didn't you just talk to Fourth Uncle Shen today? He's the one who brought the orders!" Fang Tangtang shot Gao Neng a meaningful look.

"Gao Neng, you know?" Kong Kun's gaze immediately turned to Gao Neng.

"Of course I know," Gao Neng said, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "My fourth uncle is the commander of the Third Army's Fourth Division. He's the one who delivered the orders, so how could I not know?"

"You really know? Then tell us what the reforms are!" Feng Qingqing's eyes lit up.

"It's a military secret. How could I just go blabbing about it? You'll find out when the new policies are officially announced. What happens if I leak it now and they trace it back to me?" Gao Neng said with a dismissive wave.

'He knew jack shit!'

'Heaven only knew what orders his so-called fourth uncle had actually brought.'

'But as the captain of the Invincible Team, he naturally had to act like he knew everything.'

"I can't talk about the official reforms, but I can share a little bit of gossip," Fang Tangtang chimed in again, leaning closer and successfully recapturing Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing's attention. She continued, "I heard... that powerful fighters who died twenty years ago have started reappearing on the battlefield!"