

## I CAN CONTROL RESOURCES

### Chapter 191 - 174: The Situation Escalates, Infinite Resurrection

"What do you mean by 'don't bring it into the open,' Sister Ning'Er?" Fang Tangtang asked again, confused.

"Heh... it's complicated. To put it simply, there's infighting among the alien races, and the Human Alliance isn't a single, solid bloc either. Anyway, we're at the military academy." Shen Ning'Er chuckled.

"Sister Ning'Er, don't go back tonight, okay? Have a sleepover with me?" Fang Tangtang looked at Shen Ning'Er reluctantly, her face full of anticipation.

"Not today. I still have things to take care of at the Military Department." Shen Ning'Er shook her head.

"Okay..." Fang Tangtang pouted.

Gao Neng and Fang Tangtang got out of the car together at the military academy's entrance.

But Shen Ning'Er didn't drive off immediately. Instead, she gave Gao Neng a thoughtful look. "Tangtang said you built a Number 4 Electromagnetic Cannon at the Celestial King Group?"

"Mhm, yeah. Just standard procedure," Gao Neng didn't deny it.

"Oh, so it's just 'standard procedure,' is it? My strength has recently broken through to the next level, so my old alloy spear isn't suitable anymore. You can make me a new one. I'll have Chen Bai send over the materials and the blueprint." After speaking, Shen Ning'Er didn't wait for a reply and just drove away.

"Wait, aren't we going to discuss the manufacturing fee? Ten million! I'll give you a twenty percent discount... fifty percent! Fifty percent is fine too!" Gao Neng shouted at the departing military jeep.

But Shen Ning'Er's jeep was already getting farther and farther away.

Gao Neng was a little speechless.

Shen Ning'Er must be jealous, right?

Otherwise, with the Shen Family's power, would she really need to go out of her way to ask \*him\* to make an alloy spear?

Women... They really are that simple.

"Gao Neng, I'm telling you something very seriously. The Celestial King Group owns 49% of the shares in your workshop. If you don't get paid for making Sister Ning'Er's alloy spear, then based on the ten million manufacturing fee you just quoted, you'll have to put in 4.9 million of your own money!" Fang Tangtang said with a straight face.

"If I recall correctly, didn't you smack me on the head while I was sleeping earlier?" Gao Neng ignored her and raised his palm.

"Ah, are you trying to get revenge? Don't hit me! I have a reputation to uphold, you know?! This is the entrance to the military academy... Wuwu, please, Gao Neng, spare me..."

...

By the time he got back to his dorm, it was already eleven at night.

Gao Neng was completely exhausted. The moment he entered the room, he flopped onto his bed and fell fast asleep, snoring softly.

He slept quite comfortably.

In his dream, he felt someone help him take off his clothes, and he even dreamed that someone had crawled into his blankets.

"..."

He slept until broad daylight. When Gao Neng opened his eyes, the sun was already high in the sky. He was about to get up to wash up when he discovered that his clothes had really been taken off.

He was completely bare.

"Huh? Did I take off my clothes before sleeping last night?" Gao Neng was surprised. Then, his hand felt something.

Ah!

There's someone in my bed!

It's Fang Tangtang!

What the hell! That loli Fang Tangtang actually climbed into my bed in the middle of the night? What is she trying to do? Did she see my incredible talent for crafting and now she wants to claim me for her own?

No way. I absolutely cannot let Fang Tangtang's wicked scheme succeed.

I didn't do anything!

"Fang Tangtang, why did you climb into my bed?!" Gao Neng suddenly shouted, and in one motion, ripped the covers off the bed.

"Meow..." A cat's cry sounded.

Gao Neng's expression froze.

He was indeed stark naked, but there was no girl in his bed, no Fang Tangtang—only a cat with silver-white fur.

Its fur was smooth and fine, its eyes a deep color.

"Gao Xiaomeng?!" Gao Neng was absolutely stunned.

Gao Xiaomeng came to his bed?

I'm not dreaming, am I?

He rubbed his eyes again and saw that it was indeed Gao Xiaomeng sleeping on the bed. There was no mistaking it, because Gao Xiaomeng's appearance was just too distinct.

"Meow, meow, meow..." Gao Xiaomeng continued to meow, rubbing her eyes with her two paws as well.

"Use your words!" Gao Neng was speechless. Was she trying to act cute in front of him?

"I'm hungry. I want breakfast. Pancakes... I want five, and milk!" Gao Xiaomeng said. Then, she stretched out a paw and pulled the covers back over herself.

"Such high demands, huh? How did you get to the City of Hope? Didn't you say you were staying in the Forgotten Land? And how did you even find me?" Gao Neng had a string of questions he wanted to ask.

And more importantly, he had clearly felt a girl sleeping in his bed just now...

It made no sense.

Could it really be that spring is here, and what a person thinks by day, they dream by night?

Ten minutes later.

Gao Neng had changed, washed up, and started making breakfast for himself and Gao Xiaomeng.

According to Gao Xiaomeng, she had run into a girl—an incredibly cute girl—who had taken an immediate liking to her and brought her to the City of Hope.

However, they got separated after getting off the plane.

So Gao Xiaomeng had wandered around, asking the local stray cats for information, and eventually made her way to the Eastern Capital and found Gao Neng's place.

Gao Neng didn't quite believe her story, but he didn't press for details.

He finished making breakfast.

Gao Xiaomeng began to wolf down her food. After devouring five large pancakes, her belly was bulging, but she still stared at the pancake in Gao Neng's hand, blinking.

"So, are you going to live here from now on?" Gao Neng swallowed the pancake in his hand in one bite, wiped his mouth, and asked casually.

"I'll stay once in a while," Gao Xiaomeng replied noncommittally.

"Heh, aren't you going to recruit stray cats as your underlings anymore?" Gao Neng smiled. He knew Gao Xiaomeng's personality; she loved being the Cat King.

And she actually had been one.

In the Forgotten Land, Gao Xiaomeng had three thousand stray cats as her underlings. The sight was even more epic than something out of a movie.

"I'm currently forming an army. I plan to divide it into a Warrior Group, a Logistics Group, and an Intelligence Group. The Warrior Group has over 200 members now, and each one can basically take on ten opponents, no problem. The Logistics Group is a bit weaker, but they're fine for gathering food and whatnot. The Intelligence Group is made up of the faster ones..." Gao Xiaomeng replied leisurely.

"Wait, what did you say? An army?!"

"Yeah, there are about five thousand of them now. I'm planning to expand to fifty thousand. Then I'll divide them into five divisions, and those five divisions will form a corps. What do you think?"

"You think I'd believe that?" Gao Neng slapped her flat, turning Gao Xiaomeng into a pancake.

"Believe it or not," Gao Xiaomeng said, unfazed.

She rolled over a couple of times, and the pancake-cat returned to her silver cat form.

It had to be said, Gao Xiaomeng's ability was pretty incredible. She could be round or flat, just like a ball of water, changing her shape at will.

After breakfast.

Gao Neng called Gui Zian to ask about the day's classes, but Gui Zian said he was still at the military district, so it seemed the matter was still under discussion.

If they found the 'Source' of resurrection, could people really be revived indefinitely?

Thinking about what Shen Ning'Er had said yesterday...

Gao Neng was lost in thought. For some reason, he found the whole thing rather incredible.

In the past, he definitely wouldn't have believed such a thing.

But Ye Ying really had been resurrected.

Besides that, there was Gao Xiaomeng, right here in front of him.

Even now, he could still remember the liquid lifeform that had emerged from the magnetic core, the civilization hidden within the magnetic pile, and the secret of the aliens' resurrection. Could there be a connection between them?

## **Chapter 192 - 175: The "Loophole" of the Silly System**

Gao Neng looked at Gao Xiaomeng.

'A wild idea suddenly popped into his head. If Gao Xiaomeng was really a being from the magnetic pile civilization, would killing and stewing her in a soup give him a chance to gain an infinite resurrection skill?'

'Maybe braising her would be good too?'

'Braised cat meat...'

'The more I think about it, the better it sounds.'

"What are you looking at?" Seeing the look in Gao Neng's eyes, Gao Xiaomeng felt a strange sense of unease and almost instinctively waved her paws.

"I don't have class today. I'm going to the studio to make some things. Want to come along?" After a moment's thought, Gao Neng decided to temporarily suppress the idea.

After all, there was no precedent for this kind of thing.

'Who knew if eating Gao Xiaomeng would actually trigger infinite resurrection or just make him drop dead from poisoning.'

"Make things? Let's go!" Gao Xiaomeng's eyes lit up.

Gao Neng said no more. He scooped Gao Xiaomeng up, placed her on his shoulder, and walked out the door.

He didn't go get Fang Tangtang, because the creation of the internal armor was his own little secret. As for Gao Xiaomeng, it didn't matter. She was a secret herself anyway.

He left the campus.

He called a car, heading for the address Guan San had given him.

About fifteen minutes later, he arrived at the foot of a twenty-story skyscraper.

Unlike the Celestial King Group's manufacturing plant, this place was in the commercial heart of the Eastern Capital. It was bustling with all sorts of pedestrians.

'The feel of a big city.'

Gao Neng found it a little novel but didn't linger for long.

His studio was on the eighteenth floor. The entire floor was his. There was no need to look for a door; you could see it as soon as you stepped out of the elevator. The interior was already furnished.

However, to his surprise, the studio door was open. And, at the reception desk, sat a familiar person.

"President Gao, you're here." The beautiful woman stood up.

"Hua Quanquan? What are you doing here?" Gao Neng was genuinely surprised. 'Isn't she in charge of the Celestial King Group's archives?'

"I was demoted, so this is the only place I could come," Hua Quanquan said with a smile. Then, her gaze fell on Gao Xiaomeng. "Wow, what an adorable cat!"

"Demoted?" Gao Neng was a bit dumbfounded.

"Yes, because there was a problem with the archive management..." Hua Quanquan nodded.

As Hua Quanquan explained, Gao Neng got a rough idea of the situation. Hua Quanquan had indeed been demoted by the Celestial King Group, the reason being a lapse in archive management.

And this so-called lapse...

...was, of course, the incident where Gao Neng obtained the manufacturing manual for the No. 4 Electromagnetic Cannon.

Because of this incident, Hua Quanquan was demoted at the Celestial King Group. Then, also because of this incident, she was "promoted" to be the receptionist and secretary for Gao Neng's studio.

Gao Neng wasn't an idiot. 'What a bullshit demotion!'

'Fang Yuan and Guan San obviously did this on purpose.'

However, he quickly understood Fang Yuan's intentions.

Hua Quanquan handled archive management at the Celestial King Group, which meant she was one of the people most knowledgeable about which manufacturing manuals the company possessed.

Moreover, Hua Quanquan had made this point very clear herself.

In the future, if Gao Neng's studio needed any manufacturing manuals, she could contact the Celestial King Group directly on his behalf. This was to be considered technical support from the company.

To put it bluntly...

...the Celestial King Group had sent him a living "catalog of manufacturing manuals."

After some thought, Gao Neng decided to keep this "catalog." After all, what he lacked most right now were all sorts of manufacturing manuals.

With the support of Hua Quanquan and the Celestial King Group, his future manufacturing enterprise could really flourish.

"Alright, since you're here, you can stay. By the way, what was your salary at the Celestial King Group?"

"My salary isn't high, only fifty thousand Alliance Coins a month."

"..." Gao Neng was speechless.

'This catalog...'

'...is a bit expensive!'

He didn't say anything more. Although it was indeed quite expensive, Gao Neng figured that he was now a multi-millionaire, more or less. Sometimes, you just had to spend the money that needed to be spent.

At the very least, the coffee Hua Quanquan made was pretty good.

Next, under Hua Quanquan's guidance, Gao Neng toured his studio. It had a client reception room, a conference room, administrative offices, and so on.

In addition to all that, there was also a massive workshop.

Eighty percent of the entire floor's area was dedicated to the workshop. It was filled with all sorts of equipment and tools, and there was even a performance testing laboratory.

It was completely decked out.

After listening to Hua Quanquan's introduction, Gao Neng learned that his studio had originally been a showroom set up by the Celestial King Group.

Then, they had added some equipment and converted it into a studio.

"President Gao, would you like something to drink?"

"Do you have any juice?"

"We do. Would orange juice be alright? It's quite hot today, so orange juice would be very refreshing. Plus, I've also made some small snacks that would go perfectly with it." Hua Quanquan was clearly talented at hospitality. Instead of rattling off a bunch of options, she directly offered a suitable recommendation.

"Orange juice it is, then. And I'll have a double portion of the snacks." Gao Neng nodded. 'This fifty-thousand Alliance Coin salary is starting to feel worth it.'

"Of course. President Gao, you can take a look around the workshop first. If you need anything, I will contact procurement," Hua Quanquan said before leaving immediately.

Gao Neng entered the workshop.

He took a look around. There was no surveillance equipment installed inside. Furthermore, the windows were covered with thick curtains, clearly a measure to prevent technology leaks.

Just as he was looking, Hua Quanquan walked in carrying a glass of orange juice and two servings of snacks.

Gao Neng took a bite. The taste was amazing.

## **Chapter 193 - 175: The "Loophole" of the Guapi System**

As for Gao Xiaomeng...

She was staring longingly at the pastries, gulping down saliva. But she couldn't reach out her paws, so all she could do was let out a few soft meows.

"President Gao, this cat is just adorable. What's her name? Do you need me to look after her?" Hua Quanquan's feminine side quickly emerged.

"Her name is Gao Xiaomeng. There's no need to watch her; just let her stay by my side," Gao Neng said with a smile. Gao Xiaomeng didn't exactly have the best temper.

"Understood. Here is the list of manufacturing prices for the high-end weapons I've compiled." Hua Quanquan spoke as she took out a price list she had prepared in advance.

Gao Neng gave it a quick glance.

What a ripoff!

The lowest manufacturing fee on the list was over five million Alliance Coins, with most falling between ten and twenty million. Was being a Manufacturing Master this profitable?

"These are all high-end custom weapons, so their prices are relatively higher. However, with the Celestial King Group's brand backing us, I'm confident there will be no shortage of clients. President Gao, how many clients do you think would be appropriate per month?" Hua Quanquan explained while taking out a small notebook to take notes.

"Since it's custom work... about three, I guess," Gao Neng estimated.

At an average manufacturing fee of ten million per piece, three a month would mean thirty million in profit. That would put the annual net profit at over 200 million!

Even if he only took a 51% stake, his annual income would still be well over 100 million.

It was incredibly lucrative!

However, these were high-end custom products, and their success was partly due to the Celestial King Group's brand recognition. Other workshops would be lucky to get a single high-end custom order in a year.

Meanwhile, Hua Quanquan showed no intention of presenting a price list for lower-end custom products...

Fang Yuan must have instructed her beforehand.

After all, Fang Yuan was, at his core, a businessman.

He was all about investment and return.

If he saddled Gao Neng with a pile of low-end clients, his investment of tens of millions and his selfless technical support would truly go down the drain.

"Alright, I'll let you get back to it, President Gao." Having confirmed the work details, Hua Quanquan tactfully excused herself from the workshop, gently pulling the door closed behind her.

Gao Neng wasted no more time.

He directly opened the grand treasure chest of inner armor materials gifted by the system.

**BUZZ!**

A huge pile of manufacturing materials and a blueprint landed on the workshop's crafting table.

Gao Xiaomeng's eyes lit up instantly at the sight.

"Gao Neng, what is all this stuff?"

"I'm going to make a piece of inner armor. These are the materials. Don't touch anything, or I won't bring you next time." Gao Neng first opened the blueprint to take a look. It was rather complex, and would take at least three days to complete.

"Oh... What's the big deal? I, the great Xiaomeng Queen, can do it too!" Gao Xiaomeng waved her paw, picked up a pastry, and tossed it into her mouth. CHEW, CHEW. Her attention was soon completely captivated by the snack.

Gao Neng ignored Gao Xiaomeng and continued to study the blueprint.

After the battle in the small building, he had truly come to realize the power of the other races.

These spies who had infiltrated the City of Hope weren't fundamentally strong in combat. Or perhaps they had sustained injuries on the battlefield that prevented them from breaking through to higher levels.

But even so, these aliens were still this powerful.

Just how strong were the ones on the actual battlefield?

'Without a Seed Burst Pill, my strength is only enough to kill a Tier Three Late Stage at best. It would be extremely difficult to kill even a Tier Four alien. If I ran into a Tier Four alien prodigy, I'd probably die even in a one-on-one fight!' Gao Neng was still thinking about going to the battlefield, unaware that Chen Yichuan had instructed Gui Zian to remove his, Fang Tangtang's, and the others' names from the list.

'My strength needs to increase.'

'I have to forge this inner armor, too.'

'And my combat techniques need to be reinforced.'

Before Tier Four, energy can't be projected outward, so combat techniques are mostly close-quarters. After Tier Four, energy can be projected, allowing one to form their own "magnetic field energy range" and learn new combat techniques.

'If I could just reach Tier Four!'

'With my hidden talent, it would be a quantum leap!'

'But I don't have much time left...'

'There's no way to break through to Tier Four in such a short period.'

'So, I can only focus on strengthening my combat techniques. Given the time I have before heading to the battlefield, I can learn one more technique at most. What should I learn?'

'Hmm, a footwork technique!'

'So I can run away!'

As Gao Neng thought about this, he began to craft the 'Thornmail'.

Crafting Thornmail was a bit different from making the Electromagnetic Cannon.

There's a saying: "A hundred refinements forge true steel."

For the Thornmail to be hard enough, each component had to be repeatedly tempered.

...

For three days, Gao Neng basically lived in the workshop. He didn't go out or return to the military academy, and Hua Quanquan didn't disturb him much either.

She only came by to deliver food at mealtimes.

Gao Xiaomeng, on the other hand, was uncharacteristically quiet during these three days. She watched Gao Neng craft the Thornmail the entire time, not taking a single step away.

「Three days later...」

The Thornmail was complete.

Only now did Gao Neng realize just how absurdly good the system's gifts were. This Thornmail was golden in color, fit his body perfectly, and was made of an extremely light and breathable material.

When he wore it, it felt just like a thin layer of clothing; he could barely feel it at all.

'This stuff from the stupid system is actually pretty good. If only it would give me a super-duper weapon too?' Gao Neng thought as he admired the Thornmail. But he quickly dismissed the bold idea. 'Trigger another mission? Nah, better not. The stupid system is a bit of a scammer!'

However, after dismissing the idea...

An even bolder thought bubbled up in his mind.

In fact, this idea had been lingering in his mind for the past few days.

He could indeed live a peaceful life if he gave up on the stupid system's missions. But with aliens all around, how long could that peace truly last?

A year? Or two?

Ye Ying escaped.

But she definitely wouldn't let things go.

He couldn't count on having a Seed Burst Pill every time he was in a tough spot. Those things cost twenty million Alliance Coins a piece; only a whale like Fang Tangtang could afford them.

Besides, three days ago Shen Ning'Er had said she'd gotten stronger again!

She was going to craft a new weapon!

But he was still stuck in the same place.

Still at Tier Two Mid Stage. His progress... was slow?

Gao Neng made a rough calculation. At his current cultivation speed, under normal circumstances, it was possible for him to reach Tier Four, or even Tier Five, within a year. In that case, when the war with the other races began in two years, what level would he reach?

Tier Six?

Or Tier Seven?

Maybe!

Gao Neng couldn't be sure. The higher one cultivated, the harder it became. Many people were stuck at Tier Six their entire lives, unable to break through.

Reaching Tier Seven was no easy feat.

He had already started much later than most.

Fang Tangtang was only sixteen this year, but her strength had already reached Tier Two Late Stage. Plus, Fang Tangtang was rich. If she really started chugging potions, her cultivation speed would probably be even faster than his.

As for Shen Ning'Er...

She was even more terrifying.

Even Lin Ying might not be her match.

At this rate of progress, what level would Shen Ning'Er reach in two years?

Gao Neng felt a heavy pressure. Even if he was a genius, if he slacked off midway, he would eventually be reduced to a nobody.

The path of the strong is like rowing a boat upstream; if you don't advance, you fall back.

You can only press forward!

Therefore, the most correct choice was to find the system's loopholes and seek the fastest shortcut to a breakthrough.

Gao Neng had thought a lot over the past few days, carefully analyzing the stupid system's mission-issuing function.

The normal mission-issuing process was: Mission Name + Mission Description + Mission Objective + Mission Reward.

Of these, he could define the 'Mission Name' and 'Mission Reward', while the Mission Description and Mission Objective were adjusted by the stupid system based on the reward.

The most treacherous part was the Mission Objective.

'So, could I change my approach?'

'Do it in reverse!'

'For example: what if my Mission Name also included the Mission Objective? That way, wouldn't it be much harder for the stupid system to screw me over?'

## **Chapter 194 - 176: Sortie**

As Gao Neng was thinking this, his phone started ringing.

He glanced at the screen. It was Fang Tangtang.

'It's only been three days. Does absence really make the heart grow fonder?'

He casually answered, and was immediately met with Fang Tangtang's earth-shattering, ear-splitting shout...

"Gao Neng, get back to the academy, quick! Something big has happened!"

"How big?"

"Really big!"

"..."

He hung up the phone.

Gao Neng thought about it carefully. The matter of issuing a mission could be put on hold for now. After all, he still hadn't decided what kind of mission objective to set.

'I should head back to the academy first.'

After giving Hua Quanquan a heads-up, Gao Neng took Gao Xiaomeng and returned to the military academy.

As soon as he reached his dorm, he found Fang Tangtang waiting for him.

"Huh? You bought a cat?" Fang Tangtang spotted Gao Xiaomeng at once, her big eyes sparkling. She reached out, ready to pet her.

"MEOW!" Gao Xiaomeng cried out.

"We can talk about the cat later. First, tell me what happened." Gao Neng slapped away the hand Fang Tangtang was about to use to pet Gao Xiaomeng and plopped down onto a chair.

"Our Invincible Team has been abandoned! Bald Shark is kicking us out of the battlefield observation group!" Fang Tangtang immediately snapped back to the matter at hand.

"Eh... Why?" Gao Neng was stunned. They weren't being allowed to go to the battlefield? Hadn't the list for the observation group just been announced a few days ago?

He had even gone out of his way to get a suit of inner armor just for this!

To put it bluntly...

He'd already dropped his pants.

And now they weren't letting him go?

Is there no justice in this world?!

"Bald Shark said our strength is too low, and that he can't guarantee our safety once we enter the battlefield, so he adjusted the list," Fang Tangtang replied.

"Too weak? Do you believe that?" Gao Neng didn't buy that nonsense for a second.

If that were the real reason, they never would have been selected for the observation group in the first place. After all, the Invincible Team wasn't at the bottom of the list.

'Something must have gone wrong somewhere.'

"Of course I don't believe it! But those two cowards, Kong Kun and Feng Qingqing, actually bought it. I talked to them before you got here, and they both said we should obey orders!"

"You don't want to obey?"

"Hehe, who am I? I'm Death God Fang Tangtang! I'm not scared. It's not like I've never been to a battlefield. I went to one right after I reached the second tier, and I even earned a commendation. Otherwise, how do you think I got my rank as a Lieutenant?"

Fang Tangtang had a proud look on her face. Seeing Gao Neng's disbelief, she continued, "Ever heard of Zhao Zilong of Changshan? Well, I, Death God Fang Tangtang, have a nickname too: In-and-Out-Seven-Times. I can't brag about much else, but when it comes to survival, if I, Death God Fang Tangtang, claim to be second, no one would dare claim to be first!"

"Heh heh..." Gao Neng could only laugh dryly.

He remembered what Fang Tangtang was like back at that small building. If he hadn't forcefully suppressed those three mid-tier enemies, she would probably be long dead by now. 'In and out seven times? Yeah, right.'

"Just tell me if you want to go to the battlefield or not!" Seeing Gao Neng's expression, Fang Tangtang's lips pouted and her face flushed with anger.

"I think since the academy isn't letting us go, it might not be a bad thing to just play it safe and steady," Gao Neng said, voicing his thoughts.

"Play it safe? Gao Neng, don't you get it? We're already a reserve team in this 'revolution.' The Human Alliance's real focus has always been on cultivating fifth and sixth-tier elites. If we miss this chance to go to the battlefield, we'll definitely be excluded from the 'revolution plan'!" Fang Tangtang was getting anxious.

"It's just one observation mission. When we reach the third or fourth tier and go to the battlefield then, won't we be able to perform even better?" Gao Neng naturally knew Fang Tangtang was trying to provoke him.

'As for opportunities?'

'There'll be plenty more in the future!'

To be frank, this trip to the battlefield was just for observation. With their group's strength, mostly third-tier, there wouldn't be many chances for actual combat.

'And they'd be cut from the revolution plan just because of this one time?'

'Is that even possible?'

Gao Neng had always understood the principle of "sharpening the axe won't delay the cutting of firewood."

Building up strength first, then aiming to prove himself once he reached the third or fourth tier—in a way, it was a much safer approach.

Although he didn't know why the military academy had suddenly gone back on its word and kicked them from the battlefield observation group, he figured it wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

"You're really not going?" Fang Tangtang seemed a little disappointed.

"We don't have a spot anymore. How could we go?" Gao Neng retorted.

"Actually, I dug up some information. If you really don't want to go, then forget it. But I can tell you for sure, this trip is definitely not as simple as just going to the battlefield to watch. Do you remember what Sister Ning'Er said? Maybe... we'll be able to learn the secret of the other races' resurrection this time."

"You think I'll believe that?"

"It's true! I, Fang Tangtang, swear on my reputation! If this information is false, then I'll... I'll give you a hundred million, how about that?"

"A hundred million? Alright, I'm listening." Gao Neng's eyes lit up slightly. 'Classmate Fang Tangtang really gets me,' he thought. 'It's all about money with her.'

'So willful!'

"This time, we're going to the battlefield for a real fight!" Seeing Gao Neng nod, Fang Tangtang immediately leaned her head in and whispered.

"A real fight? You mean they were fake fights before?" Gao Neng was a bit speechless. 'What kind of news is that?'

"What do you know? The other races and humans have a tacit understanding. To put it simply, there are restrictions on the combat zones. For example, the other races won't lead an army to attack the Human Alliance's City of Hope, and likewise, the Human Alliance won't attack the core territories of the other races!"

"Are you saying this time they're going to attack a core territory of another race?"

"Right. And I even know where they're attacking and for how long."

"Where?"

"The territory of the Dark Night Elf Clan. The attack will last for three days. In other words, we'll have three days to venture deep into the Dark Night Elves' core region, and there's a lot of good stuff in there."

"What good stuff?"

"The Spring of Life, the fruit of the Elf Tree, and ores... Magnetic Crystal Ores! Do you know why Lin Ying is known as the number one student at Eastern Capital Military Academy?"

"Why?"

"It's because he once obtained Blood Essence from a Blood Pool—a thumb-sized vial of it!"

"A thumb-sized vial of Blood Essence is enough to become the number one student at Eastern Capital Military Academy?"

"Of course! The fruit of the Elf Tree, the Blood Essence from the Blood Pool, the Holy Water from the White Tower—these are all treasures that come from the 'Source.' And you know about the Spring of Life, right? The Seed Burst Pills contain Spring of Life, but the amount is pathetically small. Even so, you've seen how powerful they are, haven't you? The Spring of Life is even rarer than Magnetic Crystal Ore, and I hear they have it in the Elf Race's core territory!"

"..." Gao Neng fell silent.

'This is good stuff!'

'He wanted it all...'

But the reality was definitely not as simple as Fang Tangtang made it sound.

If it were really that easy to get, Lin Ying wouldn't have become the number one student at Eastern Capital Military Academy with just a small vial of Blood Essence. The danger involved was easy to imagine.

"If you want to get stronger, there's always going to be some danger. But with me, Death God Fang Tangtang, around, you can relax. I'm very familiar with the battlefield, and I even have a perfect plan!"

"Your plan?" Gao Neng didn't think it sounded reliable at all.

"That's right! Even though we're going to the battlefield, we'll wait for the main force to arrive before we move. All we have to do is get to the battlefield ahead of time and wait. When Bald Shark and his people get there, we'll show ourselves. He can't possibly kick us out then, and we can follow behind and fish in troubled waters. How about that? A perfect plan, right?"

"Follow the main force?"

"Of course!"

"If it's such a perfect plan, why are you so insistent on dragging me along?" Gao Neng asked the crucial question.

"Because there's one problem with the plan. The period when we enter the battlefield early, before the main force arrives, is a bit risky."

"So, you want me to be your bodyguard?"

"I, Death God Fang Tangtang, am a ranged fighter, you know? I can't go alone. If we really run into danger, you just have to tie them down, and I can finish them with one shot. How about this: I'll throw in a Seed Burst Pill? If we run into a fourth-tier, you eat the Seed Burst Pill. If we run into a fifth-tier... well, we'll leave it to fate. How does that sound?"

"Besides the Seed Burst Pill, you must have other things, right?"

"Of course! I also have a Life-saving Pill, and... uh... I'll give you another Life-saving Pill. They're worth eight million Alliance Coins each on the market! They can heal injuries quickly!"

"Two Life-saving Pills and two Seed Burst Pills!"

"Gao Neng, I thought we had a pure friendship that didn't need to involve money, but I never expected you to be this kind of person... I, Death God Fang Tangtang, was wrong about you!"

"Three Life-saving Pills, three Seed Burst Pills."

"Fine, two it is! We have a deal then. It's not like I'm short on money anyway. Oh, right, there's something else I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"Do you have any life-saving escape skills?"

"A life-saving escape skill? Hmm... Not at the moment, I don't think." Gao Neng thought for a moment and shook his head.

"Oh, then I'm relieved!" Fang Tangtang immediately broke into a smile. She then headed for the door, but turned back as she reached it to add, "It's a deal, then! Whoever backs out is a puppy!"

"Deal my ass! When did I say I agreed? I only said I'd consider it. We'll talk about it in a couple of days. I might just change my mind." Gao Neng wasn't falling for that.

"Gao Neng, you've changed! You weren't like this before!"

"SLAM!"

Gao Neng shut the door directly in her face.

That girl Fang Tangtang's pitch was all bells and whistles, but her last sentence revealed her true nature.

'You're relieved that I don't have a life-saving escape skill?'

'Hmph!'

'We'll see who runs faster when the time comes!'

Since he had decided to go to the battlefield to fish in troubled waters, it was time to put "learning an escape skill" on the agenda. Otherwise, he might really get sold out by that girl Fang Tangtang.

And so, the question was...

Should he ask Gui Zian for an escape-type combat technique and then evolve it with the 'Wordless Celestial Book' skill, or should he issue a mission to obtain an escape skill?

(I celebrated Chinese New Year so hard I ran out of stockpiled Chapters. I got a bit of writer's block, so this update is late! I really need to keep some Chapters in reserve from now on...)

## Chapter 195 - 177: Devil's Sorrow

Gao Neng carefully weighed his options and quickly came to a decision.

'The skills from the system are definitely good. But usually, you get them randomly from a lucky spin. There's no guarantee I'd even draw an escape skill.'

'Most importantly, even if I did draw one, there would be restrictions.'

'For example: money!'

'And while I have a workshop and future earnings, I have no cash on hand...'

'So, for now, it's more practical to learn an escape-focused Body Technique!'

'After all, once I've learned a Body Technique, it's not just for escaping. In a fight, I can also use it for positioning, positioning...'

Having made his choice, Gao Neng called Gui Zian.

After confirming Gui Zian was in his office at the War Academy, he ran over.

"I've already submitted the application for your military merit. Vice Commander Chen personally approved it. I've thought about this carefully, and I think the path I was on before might have been wrong..." Gui Zian said the moment he saw Gao Neng.

"Wrong?" Gao Neng hadn't expected Gui Zian to bring this up.

"Yes. I used to think the Alliance's resources were limited. If everyone was scrambling to report military merit for every small contribution, how could the Alliance ever build up its reserves? But I understand now. Resources aren't meant to be saved; they're meant to be seized. To seize them, we need to become stronger! It's just like this current reform—a few people aren't enough. We need everyone to grow stronger together. And if that's the case, we might as well distribute the resources." Gui Zian's eyes lit up as he reached his conclusion.

"So, I'm getting the military merit?"

"Mhm, if all goes well, you should get a personal Third-Class Merit. The Military Department will also give you some resource-based rewards. With a Third-Class Merit, your military rank might change as well. I helped you push for all of that," Gui Zian said, then took another sip of water.

"Thank you, Teacher."

"Don't thank me. You earned this by risking your life. Anyway, what did you come to see me about?" Gui Zian shook his head.

"Teacher, my heart... it's broken! Shattered into a thousand pieces!" Gao Neng suddenly clutched his chest, his face a mask of unbearable pain.

"???" Gui Zian.

'What the hell?'

"Teacher, as you know, I'm practically a celebrity at the Eastern Capital Military Academy now. But the academy announced that our Invincible Team could go to the battlefield, and now we're not allowed! All the students are talking, saying our Invincible Team is afraid to die, that Fang Tangtang used her connections to get her grandfather to beg the Military Department, and some are even saying Shen Ning'Er did it to protect me... and that's why I can't go to the battlefield. This is an outrageous injustice..."

"Nonsense. Removing you from the roster was a decision from the Military Department. I couldn't do anything about it. Besides, weren't you told not to make this public?" Gui Zian's brow furrowed slightly.

"But you can't wrap fire in paper! Someone already knows, and now it's spreading all over the academy. On my way here, at least a dozen people were pointing at me," Gao Neng continued to wail.

Inwardly, however, his mind was already turning.

'So it really was the Military Department?'

'It seems that what Fang Tangtang said was true, nine times out of ten.'

'The Military Department is making a big move this time. They might actually be attacking the core territory of the Dark Night Elf Clan. This is an opportunity I can't afford to miss.'

'Of course, the precondition is that I have to survive.'

"The matter is settled. There's nothing I can do, even if you ask me," Gui Zian said with a sigh of resignation.

Gao Neng knew, of course, that Gui Zian couldn't possibly get him back onto the battlefield. But as the saying goes, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. He was the aggrieved party now, so he had to cry about it.

"But I won't accept it! What gives the Military Department the right to take away our spot? We earned our place on that battlefield through our own merit! This is unfair! I'm going to take it up with them!"

"Don't cause trouble. The Military Department did this for your own good. Your strength is still a little lacking. Once you're stronger, the academy will naturally arrange for you to go to the battlefield." Gui Zian was rather surprised to hear this.

In his mind, Gao Neng should have been happy that the Military Department had removed his name from the list. 'Could it be? Is this kid's resolve really that high?'

'Is he already thinking about slaying enemies to serve the Alliance?'

"Teacher, I want to kill our enemies! I'm willing to make the ultimate sacrifice!"

"Do you really mean that?"

"Of course! I'm a member of the Alliance! Even though I can't go to the battlefield this time, I understand that opportunities are for those who are prepared. I hope Teacher Gui can teach me a real fighting skill! Even if I can't go to the battlefield this time, I will absolutely kill the xenos on the battlefield in the future and defend the Alliance with my life!"

"Gao Neng, you seem to have... matured!" Gui Zian's eyes lit up.

"One has to grow up eventually. What happened in that small building made me realize how weak I am. I also understand that to get stronger, the only way is to learn, and to never stop learning!"

"It seems you've truly become a soldier."

"Then will you teach me, Teacher? I want to learn the strongest fighting skill to kill enemies on the battlefield. I don't want to miss the next chance. I want to protect the Alliance and protect humanity!"

"Yes, of course, I'm willing to teach you!" At this, Gui Zian finally stood up. "Gao Neng... to be honest, I used to be a little disappointed seeing you run off to the Manufacturing Academy every day. While the Manufacturing Academy can also contribute to the Alliance, how can that compare to the thrill of slaying enemies on the front lines? A man with ambition should be galloping across the battlefield! You have great talent, but without a heart that does not fear death, you can never become a truly strong warrior!"

There was one more thing Gui Zian didn't say.

He had been looking for an opportunity to teach Gao Neng fighting skills, but Gao Neng had never brought it up himself. Besides, even the Seven-Step Kill he had given him had been turned into the Half-Step Kill...

So, how could he bring himself to swallow his pride and offer again?

"Teacher..."

"Enough. What fighting skill do you want to learn? I can teach you anything!" Gui Zian's eyes burned with intensity.

"One for escaping!"

"..." Gui Zian.

Hope, as they say, can come in a flash and vanish just as quickly.

That was exactly how Gui Zian felt right now. He stared daggers at Gao Neng, looking like he wanted nothing more than to reach out and strangle him on the spot.

'So after all that talk about slaying enemies, the first thing you want to learn is how to run away?!'

'Could you be any more afraid of death!'

"Only by staying alive do you get the chance to kill more enemies. Isn't that what you taught me, Teacher? I'm still too weak. Even if I reach the Third Realm, I'll still be too weak for the battlefield. If I learn a life-saving skill first, I can kill more enemies in the future!" Gao Neng explained hurriedly, seeing Gui Zian's face, which was as black as thunder.

"Hmph, you're not wrong..." Gui Zian mused for a moment, then seemed to make up his mind. "Escape techniques are a type of 'Swift Movement' fighting skill. These skills focus on maximizing your speed in the shortest possible time. They can also be used for surprise attacks!"

"Do you know any, Teacher Gui?"

"I know a few, of course. However, the person at the Eastern Capital Military Academy who truly masters 'Swift Movement' fighting skills is not me," Gui Zian explained.

"Then who is it?"

"The dean of the Logistics Academy, Gu Yi."

"Him?" Gao Neng recalled that Gu Yi had been the host of the freshman orientation assembly. 'Didn't I manage to offend him pretty badly back then?'

"Don't worry, leave it to me. I'll go get it from him. In addition, I plan to teach you another fighting technique, one that can be used to complement your... Half-Step Kill!"

"Complement my Half-Step Kill?"

"Correct. Your Half-Step Kill is fast and quite powerful. It can be considered a decent Mid-Tier Fighting Skill. In terms of the skill itself, there's not much room for improvement. If you want to increase its power, you have to work on the wind-up before the strike. Therefore, I plan to teach you Iaido!"

"Iaido?"

"Correct. Iaido is a technique for building up power before drawing the blade. This way, the power of your first slash will be two or even three times stronger than your second!"

"Two to three times stronger? Then couldn't I take down a Third Realm opponent with a single slash?" Gao Neng's eyes lit up instantly when he heard this.

"Mhm, more or less. Drawing the blade and striking happen in an instant. Even a Fourth-Order expert could be wounded by your first slash if they're caught off guard."

"Only the first slash?"

"Of course. You build up power while the blade is sheathed. Once it's unsheathed and you've delivered a slash, that built-up momentum is gone."

"I see. Thank you, Teacher!" Gao Neng nodded.

「Ten days later, it would be time to head to the battlefield.」

A mere ten days...

Mastering a Swift Movement-type escape skill and Iaido was already going to be extremely difficult. Being greedy and trying for more would likely be pointless.

He got his hands on the Iaido technique quickly.

That evening, Gui Zian called Gao Neng over again. This time, Gu Yi was also present, and on the table lay a secret manual for a fighting skill.

"Gao Neng, go on and call him Teacher Gu. At the Eastern Capital Military Academy, if Dean Gu claims to be number two in escaping, no one would dare claim to be number one!" Gui Zian said with a laugh.

"Old Gui... you really have a way with words, don't you?" Gu Yi's previously calm face instantly darkened.

"Hahaha..." Gui Zian chuckled.

Gu Yi ignored him and turned his gaze to Gao Neng. "Gao Neng, while you may not be my student, since Old Gui asked me, I, Gu Yi, won't be stingy. This Swift Movement technique of mine is called 'Ghost's Despair.' It is divided into four realms. Take it and read it yourself."

"Dean Gu, may I ask, what realm have you cultivated 'Ghost's Despair' to?"

"The Third Realm."

"And... do you have any glorious... uh... accomplishments with it?"

"Ahem. When I was at the Fifth Order, I once outran a Seventh-Order opponent. Any other questions?" Gu Yi coughed twice. He naturally saw what Gao Neng was trying to ask.

"Nope! Thank you, Teacher Gu!" Gao Neng immediately changed his tune.

'Amazing! A Fifth-Order outrunning a Seventh-Order!'

'That's not just a two-level gap, that's a leap from Mid-Tier to High-Tier! No wonder Gui Zian said that when it comes to escaping at the Eastern Capital Military Academy, if Gu Yi calls himself number two, no one would dare call themselves number one.'

'Could it be that the rumor that upperclassman nurse from the Logistics Academy once mentioned was actually true?'

## **Chapter 196 - 178: Drawing a Blade to Cut Water, the Most Terrifying Evolution**

Gao Neng still remembered what a kind upperclassman at the Logistics Academy had told him after the freshman orientation: Gu Yi had gone missing on the battlefield for several months and even came back with a non-human wife.

Of course, Gao Neng didn't really believe the part about the non-human wife, but he figured the part about disappearing for several months and then returning from the battlefield alive was probably true.

Impressive!

That's my Teacher Gu!

'If I use the system to enhance "Gui Jian Chou," who'll be able to outrun me?'

Gao Neng immediately snatched the martial arts manual from the table and tucked it into his clothes.

Just before leaving, he remembered something else.

"Teacher Gui, during that fight in the small building last time, my sword... it broke, didn't it?"

"Sword? Go to the logistics department and exchange some Merit Points for a new one. I've already transferred the Merit Points from the battle at the small building to you." Gui Zian's eyes narrowed. He knew Gao Neng was up to no good.

There was no way he'd fall for that.

"Sigh... I bled and shed tears for the Human Alliance, and when my sword breaks, they won't even compensate me? So cheap!" Gao Neng left resentfully, thoroughly annoyed.

"That kid actually called you cheap? Old Gui, you paid a hefty price for my 'Gui Jian Chou' manual. Want me to tell him?" Gu Yi replied with a laugh.

"Shut up!" Gui Zian snapped. "If you tell that kid about this, you can forget about getting that thing from me."

"Fine, fine. If you, Old Gui, want to be an unsung hero, I, Gu Yi, have nothing more to say." Gu Yi shook his head.

"I just hope the kid is truly motivated. I heard the Military Department is initiating reforms, and there are already dissenting voices among the higher-ups." As Gui Zian spoke, a worried look returned to his face.

"That's completely normal. It's like snatching food from a tiger's mouth. Do you really think it's that easy? Those few at the very top won't say anything to their faces, but what about the people under them? The Human Alliance's resources are limited. Whatever is given away is lost. To put it bluntly... this is a battle between Immortals. It all depends on whether the top brass in the Military Department can hold their ground!"

"Haven't those people controlled the resources for long enough?! It's been eighteen years! Have any Strongest emerged? So many resources have been poured in, but producing a Strongest isn't that easy!"

"That may be true, but you have to admit, without those few, the Human Alliance would have probably been wiped out eighteen years ago. Their sacrifices... were actually immense. Moreover, over these eighteen years, their contributions have

also been enormous. Without those Strongest standing guard, where would we get our resources?"

"Sacrifice is one thing, and contribution is another, but look at the situation now! If we keep dwelling on past merits, can the Human Alliance survive the great war two years from now?"

"Several of them have already hit a bottleneck..."

"They hit that bottleneck ten years ago, and they're still stuck there ten years later! Do you really think another two years will be enough for them to break through? A Strongest... It's not that easy!"

"Indeed, becoming a Strongest is too difficult. In any case, they've at least made a concession for now. Next, we'll have to see the results of the Military Department's reforms. If the reforms fail, things will probably get really difficult."

"What could go wrong? Reform is imperative!" Gui Zian stood up, his gaze shifting to the window. "Old Gu, I hear you're a swordsman too?"

"Get lost! Don't even think about it. The fact that I, Gu Yi, was willing to give him 'Gui Jian Chou' was already giving you immense face. Now you want my sword too?"

"Heh heh, just a thought. No need to be so tense." Gui Zian chuckled, then added, "You're the dean of the Logistics Academy now. You don't have much use for a sword, do you?"

"..." Gu Yi said no more.

But for some reason, he felt that Gui Zian had changed. The old Gui Zian was upright and open, never competed for things, and would never gossip about the higher-ups.

But today, he had said so much...

And most importantly, he was actually eyeing his sword?

'That's *\*my\** sword, okay? What does he mean, I don't have much use for it? Of course I have use for it! I look at it every morning when I wake up, and it puts me in a great mood!'

...

...

Gao Neng, of course, didn't hear Gui Zian and Gu Yi's conversation. His mind was solely focused on returning to his dorm to upgrade the martial arts manual, and he walked very quickly.

The moment he got to his dorm, he shut the door.

"Meow..." Gao Xiaomeng lifted her head from the bed and cried out.

"I'll make you something to eat in a bit," Gao Neng replied, pulling out the "Iaido" and "Gui Jian Chou" manuals.

'Evolve two manuals at once?'

'I wonder how many Alliance Coins it will cost.'

Gao Neng opened his system panel and tapped the Wordless Celestial Book skill.

"Notice: Evolving Iaido requires one million Alliance Coins. Do you wish to evolve?" A mechanical voice rang out.

"One million?!" Gao Neng was stunned.

He remembered that when he evolved Seven-Step Kill into Half-Step Kill, it only cost two hundred thousand Alliance Coins. This Iaido technique actually cost one million?

Seven-Step Kill was a low-rank martial art that became mid-rank after evolving.

'This Iaido must be at least mid-rank, then...'

'I only have a little over a million in cash. If I evolve this, won't I be unable to perform Lifeform Transformation later? And the transformation of the Second Magnetic Core costs money too!' Gao Neng had spent a lot recently. The money he had now was what he had saved up from fighting on the D-List.

'But every Lifeform Transformation costs money.'

'The battle at the small building alone cost me tens of thousands.'

'This isn't fighting, it's burning money!'

'Whatever, I'll evolve it first...'

"Evolve!"

In an instant, the text and illustrations in the Iaido manual began to change.

When it was complete, Gao Neng began to flip through it.

Gao Neng was always very focused when studying, so he didn't notice that Gao Xiaomeng was now squatting beside him.

Her deep blue eyes were fixed on the text and illustrations in the martial arts manual.

'It simplifies the drawing time. According to the original Iaido description, you had to build up power for at least a minute beforehand, but now you can complete it just by drawing the sword. This can't be called Iaido anymore, can it? It should be called the Sword Drawing Technique! It's just like the ancient phrase: "A drawn blade to sever the waters!"' Gao Neng's eyes lit up.

More importantly, this Sword Drawing Technique could be used infinitely. As long as he returned the sword to its sheath, he could draw it again. It was the ultimate killing skill.

'As long as I have a sheath...'

'I can use the Sword Drawing Technique infinitely!'

'So strong!'

'As expected, the system's lucky prize wheel is full of good stuff.'

Gao Neng currently had several skills: Eye of Deprivation, Infinite Energy Infusion, Lifeform Evolution, and the Second Magnetic Core. All of them were quite good.

But among them, only when he acquired the Wordless Celestial Book did the system give a notification: Super Skill.

'A skill that can evolve any martial art?'

'If that's not 'super,' what is?'

"Now let's see what Gui Jian Chou evolves into!" After he finished looking through the Sword Drawing Technique, Gao Neng's gaze focused on the "Gui Jian Chou" manual.

And Gao Xiaomeng's gaze also shifted over.

"Notice: Evolving Gui Jian Chou requires eight million Alliance Coins. Do you wish to evolve?" Before long, the mechanical voice sounded again.

"Eight million?! You damn scammer, why don't you just rob me?!" Gao Neng almost cursed out loud. This thing was actually eight times more expensive to evolve than the Sword Drawing Technique?

'Definitely a high-rank skill!'

'And a super-duper high-rank one at that...'

'Eight million!'

'That's enough to buy a villa!'

Gao Neng was truly shocked this time. He hadn't expected the manual Gu Yi gave him to be of such a high rank. He had no idea how Gui Zian had managed to convince Gu Yi.

'Could there be some secret, unspeakable bromance between the two of them?'

'Otherwise, how could he have given away such an incredible manual after just a few words?'

Gao Neng couldn't figure it out.

However, the most important question now was, where was he going to get eight million in the middle of the night? He was out of cash.

'That's right!'

'The rich girl upstairs has money!'

"Since Fang Tangtang wants to invite me to the battlefield, I should at least collect a deposit, right?" Gao Neng thought this was an excellent way to make some money.

Go upstairs!

Knock on the door!

All in one smooth motion!

A drowsy Fang Tangtang opened the door. The green frog onesie she was wearing was remarkably vibrant, even in the dead of night.

"I've decided to accept the offer you made during the day. I'll go to the battlefield with you." Gao Neng got straight to the point before Fang Tangtang could speak.

"Really?!" Fang Tangtang's eyes instantly widened.

"Mhm. But to prove you're not lying to me, regarding the two Seed Burst Pills and two Life-saving Pills you promised, I think I'll need to collect a small deposit as a show of good faith," Gao Neng spoke again.

"A deposit? Okay. Then I'll give you one Life-saving Pill first." As the future heir to the Celestial King Group, Fang Tangtang seemed unfazed by the concept of a deposit.

"Can you give it to me in cash instead?" Gao Neng tilted his head up.

"Then how about eight million, at market price?" Fang Tangtang thought for a moment before replying.

"Since it's a show of good faith, why not round it up to a nice, even number?" Gao Neng already had a number in mind.

"Okay, but you have to keep your word. No backing out! And you can't raise the price later, either. It's just two Seed Burst Pills and two Life-saving Pills. When we get back from the battlefield, you'll have to return my deposit." Fang Tangtang held out her pinky finger toward Gao Neng, wanting to make a pinky promise.

"Deal!" Gao Neng linked pinkies with Fang Tangtang.

"Pinky promise for a hundred years, no changing!"

"..."

The pleasant transaction was over quickly.

Fang Tangtang transferred the money on the spot, sending Gao Neng ten million Alliance Coins.

Normally, such a large transfer would take time, but Fang Tangtang's card obviously had access to some special channels. The ten million arrived in less than a minute.

A look of delight spread across Gao Neng's face.

Now, he could evolve Gui Jian Chou.

Plus, he still had two million left over, which should be roughly enough to cover his expenses on the battlefield.

Returning to his dorm, Gao Neng once again picked up the Gui Jian Chou manual.

"Evolve!"

WHOOSH!

Eight million disappeared from his account.

At the same time, the text and illustrations in the Gui Jian Chou manual also changed. In terms of appearance, there didn't seem to be too many changes.

But the realms within had increased by one and were now divided into five levels.

Gao Neng began to read through it seriously. 'Eight million... What kind of evolution does that buy?'

## **Chapter 197 - 179: Joining Hands for a Grand Enterprise**

According to the description in the manual.

The minimum requirement to learn Ghost's Bane was to have magnetized legs.

Gao Neng happened to meet this condition. During his second stage, he had magnetized his legs, not his torso, which meant he could cultivate Ghost's Bane.

He continued flipping through the pages...

The First Realm was called the Ghost Step Realm.

Legend has it that when ghosts walk, their heels never touch the ground.

The Ghost Step Realm was just like that.

You channel energy to the soles of your feet, lifting your heels off the ground so that only your toes are in contact with it. Once you start sprinting, you'll be as fast as a pandemonium of ghosts!

The Second Realm was called the Ghost Foot Realm.

This realm was far more impressive, but it had a prerequisite: you had to be able to project your energy externally. In other words, the minimum requirement was reaching Tier Four.

You project your energy to form two "ghost feet."

This allows your toes to lift off the ground completely.

Instead of walking on your own feet, you would move entirely on these ghost feet, gliding along without a sound. And since you're detached from the ground, your speed is even greater than in the First Realm.

As for the third realm, the Ghost Shadow Realm...

...it wasn't just impressive; it was terrifying.

Your body becomes like a ghostly shadow, ignoring all ground-level obstacles. You could float directly over mountains, rivers, and even the surface of water. It was the ultimate escape art.

Of course, the requirements were even higher...

The Fourth Realm: Ghostly Nether Realm.

The Fifth Realm: Ghost Void Realm.

The further Gao Neng read, the more shocked he became.

'Ghost's Bane is really powerful!'

'This eight million was completely worth it.'

'No wonder Gu Yi said he outran a Tier Seven expert when he was only Tier Five. And that was with the pre-evolution version of Ghost's Bane. Now that it's fully evolved, it must be even stronger.'

Gao Neng read through the entire Ghost's Bane manual in one sitting and made up his mind.

He would start cultivating immediately.

"MEOW..." Gao Xiaomeng let out a cry, then backed to one side. Her two deep blue eyes stared out the window, lost in thought.

Gao Neng paid her no mind.

'First, I'll practice the ghost steps.'

'As for the Second Realm, the Ghost Foot Realm, I'm not sure if I can cultivate it yet. Can Infinite Energy Infusion be applied to my own feet?'

'It's worth a try.'

'If I can cultivate the Second Realm directly, that would be incredible.'

No sooner said than done.

Gao Neng put the manual away and began to experiment with his Infinite Energy Infusion ability.

Energy gathered bit by bit around his feet. Then, following the cultivation method described for the Ghost Foot Realm, he started to condense the ghost feet beneath them.

Half an hour later...

Gao Neng felt two phantoms forming under his feet.

'It seems to be working!'

But they seemed a little different from the ghost feet described in the manual. According to the manual, once the ghost feet formed, the energy drain wasn't supposed to be that high.

Yet the phantoms under his feet were draining his energy at a terrifying rate.

'Looks like it's because Infinite Energy Infusion is an energy-draining ability in itself. There's still a difference between it and true external energy projection,' Gao Neng realized.

Infinite Energy Infusion was one drain, and maintaining the ghost feet was another. If this energy couldn't form a self-sustaining cycle, the total drain would be horrifying.

Gao Neng did a rough calculation.

If he forced himself to condense the ghost feet, he could only maintain them for two or three minutes at most. Even if he used his second magnetic core, it would only extend the time to five minutes.

'I can only use it at the most critical moments.'

'As I thought, only reaching Tier Four will bring a true qualitative leap! I'll be able to project energy externally, revealing the true value of my hidden talent. I'll be able to form ghost feet at will and move with phantom-like speed. Who could possibly stop me then?' With his mind made up, Gao Neng began to review the First Realm again.

'I'll cultivate the First Realm for now. That's the practical escape skill I'll use regularly.'

'As for the Second Realm...'

'...I'll save it as a little surprise.'

...

「The next day.」

Gao Neng received a "gift."

Chen Bai delivered it personally. Inside was a pile of crafting materials, as well as two blueprints: one for a long spear, and one for a Horse-Cutting Saber.

He didn't need to guess to know it was from Shen Ning'Er.

'Two blueprints? Does she think sending two blueprints means I won't charge her? Hmm... I guess it does.' Gao Neng gave them a quick look. His judgment was pretty sharp now, so he could tell the quality of this Horse-Cutting Saber at a glance.

Besides the blueprint for the Horse-Cutting Saber...

...the pile of materials also included everything needed to craft it.

To put it bluntly, Shen Ning'Er hadn't just sent him a blueprint, but a whole blade—one that he had to craft with his own hands.

'I have the blade, but I'm missing a scabbard! A good blade deserves a good scabbard... I'll head to the Logistics Department and exchange for some Healing Elixirs and other life-saving pills while I'm at it.' Gao Neng sent Chen Bai away and headed to the Logistics Department with Gao Xiaomeng.

He had a good amount of Merit Points now.

He had earned a huge amount when he was challenging the D-List, accumulating nearly 2,000 Merit Points. Adding the 70% share he received from the battle at the small building...

...Gao Neng now had a total of 4,560 points to his name.

He was a bona fide big spender.

"Well, look at you, little Gao Neng. It's only been a few days, but you've already changed so much," the old woman in charge of exchanges said, her eyes, hidden behind her glasses, lighting up as she saw the Merit Points on his account.

Gao Neng had gotten somewhat familiar with the old woman over this period.

He knew her surname was Zuo and her name was Zuo Jialan.

The head of the Logistics Department.

As for her strength, he had no idea.

However, if this were a typical story, since Zuo Jialan was in charge of the Logistics Department—the academy's entire "household"—she had to be a hidden powerhouse.

'She's either a decorated veteran retired from the battlefield...'

'...or she has some special connection with Principal Song Tianyun or someone even higher up.'

'Otherwise, why would the Eastern Capital Military Academy entrust its assets, worth hundreds of billions, to her?'

"Grandma Zuo, do you sell scabbards at the Logistics Department?" Gao Neng never called Zuo Jialan Teacher Zuo, always addressing her as grandma.

"You want to buy a scabbard? We have them, but where's your blade?" Zuo Jialan smiled, not minding the familiar address.

"I don't have the blade, just the blueprint." Gao Neng pulled out the last page of the blueprint.

Zuo Jialan glanced at it, her gaze sharpening for a moment before her eyes lit up again, a smile spreading across her lips.

"How's the blade?" Gao Neng asked immediately, seeing her expression.

"Well, our Eastern Capital Military Academy's Logistics Department certainly doesn't have a blade like this for sale," Zuo Jialan said, handing the blueprint back. She thought for a moment, then added, "A good blade deserves a good scabbard. I happen to have a fine one here, but the price is a bit steep..."

"That's fine. I have plenty of Merit Points." Gao Neng puffed out his chest.

"Alright. The scabbard is 500 Merit Points."

"Five hundred points? That's equivalent to two million Alliance Coins! For a scabbard?! So expensive?!" Even though he was mentally prepared, Gao Neng was still shocked.

"A good blade can only be paired with a good scabbard, naturally," Zuo Jialan said noncommittally.

"Do you have any less-good scabbards? Something around 100 Merit Points?" Gao Neng didn't want to spend the equivalent of two million on a scabbard. Even four hundred thousand would be an extravagant expense.

"Nope. There's only one. Are you buying it or not?"

"..." Gao Neng was speechless.

'This is a hard sell!'

'A hard sell with no other options, at that!'

'No wonder Zuo Jialan is the head of the Logistics Department.'

"I'll buy it! And while you're at it, I'll take 100 mid-grade Energy Pills, some Healing Medicine, a pair of Goggles, and a Night Travel Garment..." Gao Neng rattled off a long list.

"That comes to 4,500 points in total. Are you sure you want to exchange for everything at once? If your Merit Points aren't high enough, you won't be able to get promoted," Zuo Jialan reminded him after tallying up the cost.

"It's fine. I have a Third-Class Merit award!" Gao Neng waved his hand dismissively. 'Relying on Merit Points for promotion is what normal people do. I, Gao Neng, am not normal.'

'I rely on actual combat merits!'

"..." Zuo Jialan didn't say anything more. She quickly gathered the items. After handing them to Gao Neng, she gave him another look. "Are you planning to leave the academy?"

"Nope," Gao Neng denied immediately.

"I heard your name was... never mind, it's nothing. I just wanted to remind you that with your current strength, if you go on a long trip without protection, your chance of dying is at least ninety percent!" Zuo Jialan added, "And that's a conservative estimate."

"Yes, thank you, Grandma Zuo. I'll be careful." Gao Neng nodded. He knew exactly what she meant by "going on a long trip."

Still, he would be going with the main forces this time.

The only danger...

...lay in the period of time after he arrived at the battlefield but before the main forces did.

'At that point, as long as I find a place to hide and don't move a muscle, and just wait for the main forces to arrive, there shouldn't be any major problems, right?'

'Fortune favors the bold, after all.'

'Besides, I've already accepted Fang Tangtang's deposit.'

'If things get really bad, it'll just come down to who can run faster, me or Fang Tangtang.'

Gao Neng didn't feel this was a betrayal.

Fang Tangtang herself had said that if they ran into someone they couldn't beat, like a Tier Five expert... it would be every man for himself.

'Besides, as the heir to the Celestial King Group, Fang Tangtang must have plenty of treasures on her. If she dares to go to the battlefield, she must have ways to protect herself.'

'Time is short. First, I need to craft the blade and the spear. Cultivation can't be delayed either. I'll craft and cultivate at the same time. I need to reach Tier Two Late Stage before heading to the battlefield, and breaking through to Tier Three would be even better. I also need to practice the Sword Drawing Technique and the ghost steps...'

After leaving the Logistics Department, Gao Neng began to lay out a ten-day plan for himself.

Meanwhile, Gao Xiaomeng grabbed some of the Healing Elixirs from Gao Neng's bag, examining them from all angles but showing no sign of wanting to swallow them.

"MEOW, MEOW..." Gao Xiaomeng called out, holding up a red pill.

"This is a Blood Creation Pill. If you lose too much blood, it accelerates your body's blood production. This one is Healing Medicine; you apply it to a wound for rapid recovery... And this one is an antidote. You eat it if you're poisoned..." Gao Neng explained them to Gao Xiaomeng one by one.

"Can you make these?" Gao Xiaomeng asked suddenly.

"Of course I can, but I need materials," Gao Neng replied casually.

"Materials?" Gao Xiaomeng seemed pensive.

"I hear the core region of the Dark Night Elf Clan is a forest full of materials for making elixirs. What do you say? Want to team up and build an empire?" Gao Neng's eyes narrowed slightly.

## **Chapter 198 - 180: Public Call for Suitors**

"Team up? Hmph!" Gao Xiaomeng lifted her chin, looking rather disdainful.

"Heh. Give it some thought." Gao Neng didn't press the matter. He was planning to take Gao Xiaomeng to the battlefield one way or another. After all, she was basically a human water balloon.

'You can't squash her!'

'If nothing else, I can at least drag her along to scout ahead.'

「...」

Several thousand kilometers outside the City of Hope.

A white tower soared to impossible heights.

After Mu Feifei finished reading the intelligence report in her hands, her gaze turned icy. She rose slowly and walked over to the fireplace in the room.

The bright flames illuminated her flawless face.

Cold, noble, and radiating a sacred aura.

"So the Human Alliance is going to attack the Dark Night Elf Clan?" Mu Feifei tossed the report into the fire. Her gaze drifted out the window, her expression lost in deep thought.

"My Lady, since we have confirmed the target of the Human Alliance's attack, should we make arrangements in advance?" a cloaked, shadowy figure emerged from the darkness.

"Mm, what do you suggest?" Mu Feifei asked, her back to the figure.

"The Dark Night Elf Clan has always been under the protection of our Celestial Race, so we naturally cannot sit by and do nothing. However, protecting them too much also poses a threat to us. Furthermore, we must also consider the other races... Therefore, your subordinate suggests we wait until the two sides are at war. Then, we can lead our army in a surprise attack on the rear of the Human Alliance's forces. This way, the Dark Night Elf Clan will have nothing to complain about."

"An excellent strategy," Mu Feifei nodded.

"Thank you, My Lady!"

"There's just one problem. This plan might have worked a few years ago, but now... it's not feasible." Mu Feifei quickly shook her head again.

"Not feasible now? My Lady, are you saying..."

"Mm. You are only considering the relationship and the current situation between our Celestial Race and the Dark Night Elf Clan. But the full-scale war begins in two years. We must adopt a more long-term perspective."

"What do you mean, My Lady?"

"We've heard back from Nightingale. Her cover has been blown. If I'm not mistaken, the Human Alliance's sudden, large-scale offensive is aimed at the Seed of Resurrection. Since they're coming with a purpose, this won't be a simple attack. I'm afraid the Human Alliance may even have one of the Strongest overseeing the battle this time."

"One of the Strongest? Aren't they afraid that..."

"It's just a guess. For the sake of the Seed of Resurrection, the Human Alliance might not have a Strongest participate openly, but it's entirely possible they'll use some back-door means. On their own, I fear the Dark Night Elf Clan won't be able to defend it."

"Then should we immediately request instructions from..."

"There's no need. The Seed of Resurrection is not a matter for just our Celestial Race and the Dark Night Elf Clan. Other races are also involved. Since that's the case, they will naturally have to put in some effort."

"But the Human Alliance's target this time is the Dark Night Elf Clan. Will the other races even come?"

"Under normal circumstances, they wouldn't. But if the Dark Night Elf Clan's Seventh Princess were to publicly seek a husband, the other races would have no choice but to attend," Mu Feifei said with a placid expression.

"The Seventh Princess?! But wasn't it the Clan King's intention for the Fourth Prince to marry her? If a member of another race marries the Seventh Princess, wouldn't that mean the Dark Night Elf Clan would be forming a marriage alliance with them? At that point, our Celestial Race..."

"It doesn't matter. It's just a public courtship. The outcome is not yet certain."

"But how will we explain this to the Fourth Prince? And will the Clan King even agree?"

"Father will have no choice but to agree. He favors Fourth Brother, but he cannot show his favoritism openly. Fourth Brother wants to marry the Seventh Princess because she is the Elf Queen's most beloved daughter. Whoever marries her will gain the support of the Dark Night Elf Clan. However, Fifth and Sixth Brother want to marry her too, so they will naturally persuade Father to approve this decision."

"I understand... In that case, should we keep the news of the Human Alliance's attack on the Dark Night Elf Clan a secret from the other races?" the shadow asked, nodding lightly.

"No need. We Celestials have our eyes and ears in the Military Department, and it's likely the other races do too. There's no need to keep this a secret. You can tell them directly: in ten days, the Human Alliance will attack the Dark Night Elf Clan. Let them know that the Celestial Race plans to sit back and reap the benefits. The Elf Queen, forced into a corner, has no choice but to hold a public courtship for her daughter. If they want to marry the Seventh Princess of the Dark Night Elves, they'll have to rely on their own abilities!"

"Yes, your subordinate will see to it at once!"

"..."

「...」

「Ten days passed in a flash.」

During those ten days, Gao Neng successfully forged the spear and the Horse-Cutting Saber. He then gave the completed spear to Chen Bai to deliver to Shen Ning'Er.

Additionally, three days prior, he had officially broken through to the Tier Two Late Stage.

He was now on the cusp of Tier Three...

Just one step away.

As for his two combat techniques, he had more or less mastered the basics of the Sword Drawing Technique. When he drew his blade, it was with a speed that could startle gods and demons.

And as for the movement technique, Ghost's Woe, there was even less to say. Gao Neng had spent more than half of the last ten days practicing it.

Two days ago, he had officially entered the Ghost Step Realm.

The benefits of his second magnetic core were on full display now. With a 400% increase in his concentration, his ability to learn was truly off the charts.

「Night fell.」

The wind was a bit chilly.

According to the schedule, the students from the four major military academies were to set out for the battlefield at five in the morning, right at the crack of dawn.

Gao Neng had already made the most thorough preparations.

A day earlier, he and Fang Tangtang had requested leave from Gui Zian. They weren't spending the night in the Eastern Capital Military Academy dorms, but had gotten a room outside instead.

Yes, just one room for the two of them.

Because it was the presidential suite.

Midnight. Twelve o'clock sharp.

Fang Tangtang knocked on Gao Neng's door.

## **Chapter 199 - 180: Public Search for a Suitor (Part 2)**

"Meow!" Gao Xiaomeng meowed in protest.

"The time is right. We're leaving now!" Fang Tangtang paid no mind to Gao Xiaomeng's complaints. She had already changed into an outfit designed for moving at night.

Gao Neng glanced over and sighed with genuine emotion. 'It really is nice to be rich.'

Fang Tangtang was wearing a black, form-fitting Battle Garment. Even though she was flat-chested, the tailored cut of the garment made her look fantastic.

It truly brought to mind the phrase: light and lithe.

"This outfit is for you. Get changed, quickly." Fang Tangtang tossed him a Battle Garment made of the same material. It was black, but completely non-reflective.

Gao Neng felt the material. It was soft, light, and breathable. Plus, critical areas like the vitals, groin, and throat had special reinforcement.

'Nice outfit.'

And it was a perfect fit, too.

'If I'm not mistaken,' he thought, 'Fang Tangtang must have started preparing this a few days ago. It was probably a rush job to get it finished just in time.'

"Sure enough, going to the battlefield with a rich person means getting special treatment." Gao Neng didn't stand on ceremony. He first shooed Fang Tangtang out of the room, then started to change.

First, he put on his inner armor.

Then he pulled the black Battle Garment on over it.

Next, he slung the sheathed Horse-Cutting Saber across his back. Finally, he shouldered a large backpack filled with food and medical supplies.

Of course, just in case, he had already taken out some of the medical supplies and a few compressed ration bars, carefully stuffing them into his pockets.

That way, even if he lost his backpack...

...surviving for five or six days wouldn't be a major issue.

With everything ready, Gao Neng didn't forget to rinse his mouth and wash his face. It was a habit, and just because he was about to do something big didn't mean he should neglect the small details of life.

"Did you wash your face?" was the first thing Gao Neng asked when he walked out of the room.

"What do you take me for? I, Fang Tangtang, care about my appearance!" Fang Tangtang patted her own soft, delicate cheek and added, "I even did a face mask."

"Nice."

"Let's go. I've timed it out perfectly. It'll take us four hours to get to the battlefield. If we leave now, we can get there by four o'clock. The people from the four major military academies leave at five and will arrive at nine. That gives us a five-hour window. Once we get to the battlefield, we'll find a place to hide, get some sleep, and then everything will be golden," Fang Tangtang said, patting her chest in assurance.

"Mm," Gao Neng nodded.

Arriving five hours early was something he and Fang Tangtang had planned from the start. After all, it was easier to operate under the cover of darkness. Moving between six and nine o'clock would be a bad idea.

During that time frame, patrols would already be active on the battlefield.

Arrive at the battlefield before four, then spend an hour finding a hiding spot. That was their plan.

"I got two copies of the map, one for each of us. If something goes wrong and we get separated, we're on our own," Fang Tangtang said, handing a map to Gao Neng.

"Alright." Gao Neng accepted it without hesitation.

He took the map and glanced at it. It showed the territories of the various races. A red dot had been specially marked on it, with four words written above:

Dark Night Elf City!

The distance from the edge of the battlefield to the Dark Night Elf City was 800 kilometers in total.

Along the way, they would have to pass through three defensive lines.

The first was the main defensive line between the Human Alliance and the Alien Race Alliance Army on the battlefield's perimeter. Then came the outer defensive lines built by the individual races. Finally, there was the inner defensive line of the Dark Night Elf Clan.

Passing through all three defensive lines would allow them to successfully enter the Dark Night Elf City.

It sounded simple enough.

But in reality, the journey from passing the first defensive line to entering the Dark Night Elf City was a continuous stretch of over 600 kilometers, and no one knew what lay within.

"Here are your Seed Burst Pills and Life-saving Pills." Fang Tangtang produced the pills, then continued, "The Military Department's plan is to tear open the first two defensive lines and push straight to the Dark Night Elf Clan's inner line. Even so, we'll still be entering the core zone. As long as we can get inside the second defensive line, we'll find all sorts of good stuff. If we're lucky, we might even be able to get an Elf Fruit!"

"So we just need to get inside the second defensive line?"

"Of course. You're not thinking of trying for the third defensive line, are you? Don't even consider it. The third inner line is guarded by High-tier Elves, people

like Gui Zian. One of them could kill us with a single slap. We'll just hang back behind the second defensive line and pick up some scraps. We'll wait for them to break through the first line, then we'll make our appearance!"

"I thought we were showing up from the start?"

"I've thought it over. If we show our faces before they attack the first defensive line, a commander like Gui Zian might just send us packing. But once they've taken the first line, he won't have the manpower to spare to chase us off even if he wanted to."

"Doesn't that increase the danger?"

"I think it actually lowers it. Think about it: they'll be fighting on the front lines. If we were up there with them, we'd definitely have to get involved, right? But we'll be hiding far behind them, in a spot so remote a ghost couldn't find it. Who's going to randomly run our way? See?"

"Classmate Fang Tangtang, you can save that sweet talk. I think this new development calls for a price increase!" Gao Neng was no fool.

This was clearly just another trap she'd laid for him.

'Leading me this far...'

'...and only now telling me the plan has changed?'

Gao Neng didn't believe for a second that this was a spur-of-the-moment idea from Fang Tangtang.

She must have planned it this way from the start.

She was just banking on the fact that, having come this far, Gao Neng wouldn't back out now. That's why she chose this moment to reveal it.

"A price increase? We made a deal! Gao Neng, you can't do this! I even lent you an outfit... After I, Fang Tangtang, have been so sincere with you, how can you let me down?" Fang Tangtang immediately protested.

"But you changed the plan. You broke the agreement first, so our deal is off..." Gao Neng tilted his head back, then made a show of starting to take off the Battle Garment. "I think it would be better to just go back to the academy."

"Wait! What do you want? Name your price!"

"First, this outfit isn't a loan, it's a gift. Second, since you broke our agreement, the ten million deposit is forfeit," Gao Neng stated his terms.

"Fine! You're ruthless!" Fang Tangtang gritted her teeth.

Gao Neng didn't immediately get dressed again.

Instead, he thought it over carefully.

'I've wrangled the money out of her...'

'...but this new plan means we have to wait until the first defensive line falls before we can even show ourselves. The danger level has clearly gone up by a lot.'

'What should I do? Should I back out?'

'But I've come all this way. It would be a shame not to at least see the battlefield for myself.'

"So? You're not getting scared, are you? With an old pro like me, Death God Fang Tangtang, leading the way, what have you got to be afraid of?" Fang Tangtang coaxed when she saw Gao Neng remain silent.

"If there's danger, I'm running. We clear on that?" Gao Neng finally said after a moment's thought.

"Not from a Tier-Four. Well, not from up to three Tier-Fours. If there are more than three, or if we run into a Tier-Five, then you can run!" Fang Tangtang added.

"Fine. Let's go." Gao Neng nodded.

'Three Tier-Fours?'

'Not a huge problem.'

'And if we really run into a Tier-Five, I'm not so sure I'd be any slower at running away than she is.'

With the decision happily made once again, the two of them left the room, one after the other.

A black, heavily armored mecha-motorcycle was parked silently at the hotel entrance.

"You driving or me?" Fang Tangtang asked, pointing to the mecha-cycle.

"You're the old pro, you drive." Gao Neng was too embarrassed to admit he didn't know how. This thing was no electric scooter; it was ridiculously fast.

"Heh, just remember to hold on tight!" A smile played on Fang Tangtang's lips as she swung a leg over the seat. Her small frame was in command of the massive, heavily armored machine.

Gao Neng immediately got on the back.

The moment he was settled...

...the heavy mecha-cycle let out a roar and—WHOOSH—shot forward.

With no time to think...

...Gao Neng instinctively wrapped his arms around her.

'Yep...'

'...she's more than I can handle.'

(My head was splitting last night. Let's see if I can make up for it today!)

## Chapter 200 - 181: 2-World Mountain

"I'm going to tell Sister Ning'Er you took advantage of me!" Fang Tangtang shouted.

"What's there to take advantage of?" Gao Neng retorted. Then he put Gao Xiaomeng into a pocket of his backpack and put on his motorcycle helmet.

The black, heavy-armored mecha motorcycle tore down the road.

Along the way, they naturally attracted the attention of some late-night street racers.

Soon, a few other heavy-armored motorcycles closed in, their riders whistling, while a sports car weaved back and forth on the road ahead of them.

"Gao Neng, get 'em!" Fang Tangtang's eyes were filled with excitement, her expression showing she loved the drama.

"Isn't it wrong to bully the weak?"

"They have more people. We're the weak ones."

"Fair point." A smile tugged at the corner of Gao Neng's mouth. He took out a black capsule and crushed it, and a black shadow shot out.

CRACK!

The black shadow leaped.

It smashed down onto the weaving sports car ahead.

Two scythes, already evolving toward refined steel, slashed out and tore a gash in the sports car's hood. The car immediately slammed on its brakes.

"Energy materialization?!"

"Run!"

The street racers scattered in an instant.

Meanwhile, Gao Neng showed off his superb riding skills. He popped a wheelie, flying over the sports car, then hit the gas and continued to tear down the road.

"Hahaha, that was so thrilling! Gao Neng, after we get back from the battlefield, let's go racing again, okay?" Fang Tangtang's face was flushed with excitement.

"We'll see when we get back," Gao Neng said noncommittally.

"Sister Ning'Er likes to race too, and she's even better than me."

"I know." Gao Neng really did know. He had seen Shen Ning'Er race back in the Forgotten Land. She was even wilder than Fang Tangtang.

Fang Tangtang's racing style was the reckless, straight-line-speed kind.

But Shen Ning'Er was different...

Shen Ning'Er loved to push the limits when she drove: high-speed cornering, high-speed alleyway runs, high-speed jumps... The thrill wasn't something an ordinary person could handle.

RUMBLE!

The furious roar of the engine was incessant.

「Two hours later.」

They took a short break.

Then, they set off again.

Three and a half hours later, the black, heavy-armored mecha motorcycle finally reached the border of the Eastern District of the City of Hope.

When Gao Neng had arrived in the City of Hope, he had flown directly into the Eastern Capital Airport. This was his first time at the Eastern District's border.

To his surprise...

The Eastern District border wasn't desolate. On the contrary, it was quite prosperous.

"Each of the City of Hope's four districts has a defensive fortress. This is the Eastern District Fortress. Once you pass through it, you've basically entered the battlefield!" Fang Tangtang explained.

"Is there an inspection at the fortress?"

"Of course, but I came prepared." Fang Tangtang waved the passbook in her hand, evidently well-prepared.

The black, heavy-armored mecha motorcycle drove into the Eastern District Fortress.

Gao Neng's attention was drawn to the things inside. Though it was called a fortress, it was more like a supply base, filled with countless procurement shops.

"Once you're on the battlefield, as long as you kill some of the alien races, you'll always get some loot. You can turn this loot over to the Military Department or sell it directly to these merchants. Generally speaking, the merchants' prices are higher than what the Military Department offers, but the Military Department gives out merit rewards," Fang Tangtang continued.

"What are the prices for weapons and equipment here?" Gao Neng asked.

"The weapons and equipment sold openly are definitely more expensive than market price. But there's also a black market inside the Eastern District Fortress where prices are a bit lower. Not by much, though. It's still definitely more expensive than what the military academies sell to us." Fang Tangtang was quite familiar with these matters.

"I see." Gao Neng understood after a moment's thought.

The four major military academies were backed by the Military Department, so for their own students, the materials and equipment they sold were basically a perk.

But outside the four major military academies, that kind of subsidy didn't exist.

In the City of Hope, aside from the four major military academies, there were many other schools, as well as some special, smaller factions and teams.

When these people bought materials and equipment, it was naturally more expensive.

The two of them continued forward.

Seeing that Gao Neng and Fang Tangtang were heading straight for the main gate of the Eastern District Fortress, the various merchants didn't bother them.

The interior of the Eastern District Fortress was mostly built from bluestone.

The outer walls of the fortress, however, were forged from alloy. All over the fortress walls, one could see rows of heavy weaponry.

"I heard Grandpa Shen is stationed here at the Eastern District Fortress. Want to go say hello?" Fang Tangtang glanced at Gao Neng with a smile.

"Heh." Gao Neng returned the smile. "I think we could go see him. We could also mention that you're heading to the battlefield. Maybe he'll even get us some gear. What do you think?"

"The strong should be self-reliant! How can we covet handouts? Let's not go see him after all!" Fang Tangtang immediately corrected Gao Neng's erroneous thinking.

Gao Neng didn't mind.

Soon, the two arrived at the fortress gate.

Fang Tangtang handed over two passes.

The guarding soldier checked them carefully, then opened the gate to let them pass.

Gao Neng stepped out of the gate.

He could feel the scent of blood hanging in the air—an odor that had accumulated over years and years, one that not even the cold night wind could blow away.

Gao Neng glanced at the fortress wall.

The wall was over a hundred feet tall.

It was covered in all sorts of marks. Even the alloy-forged exterior was battered and broken, stained with numerous deep red bloodstains.