

Elite Mages' Academy Novel

Chapter 251 - An Unexpected Discovery in the Command Room (Part 2)

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Searching for something from all those scraps of paper was even more difficult than in those complete documents. Xiao Lin spent more than half an hour at it and finally gave up.

The shreds were far too many and Xiao Lin did not bother to tidy them up. When he realized it was getting late, he simply lay them on the stone table and was about to leave. As he went to blow out the oil lamp, he subconsciously noticed the bumpy floor near the edge of the table from the corner of his eye. A torn piece of paper had fallen there.

Initially, it was not something that was worthy of much attention. Xiao Lin glanced briefly at it before blowing out the oil lamp and leaving the room. Barely a few steps later however, the paper's contents flashed quickly in his mind like a slide projector, as if a flash of lightning struck him. He suddenly halted his footsteps as his expression changed in the darkness. Something appeared to have popped up in his mind.

Xiao Lin hurriedly turned around back and hurriedly re-ignited the foul-smelling oil lamp. He carefully picked up the paper from the floor near the table edge and wiped the dust off of it. He observed it closely with the dim light closely. The paper was not that large and there were few words on it, but it was those incomplete and completely unfamiliar words that caused Xiao Lin's expression to become more complicated as he looked at them.

After a long time, Xiao Lin sat down on the leather-covered stone bench. Amidst the orange glow, his expression was rather dull and he seemed to be overcome with shock.

"How is this possible?"

"This can't be!"

"What kind of joke is this!"

...

Xiao Lin muttered repeatedly to himself. He held the piece of paper in his hand and read over it countless times. The piece of paper was clearly already torn by the orcs, but the command room was basically untouched after the siege of the fortress. He therefore searched every nook and cranny in the command room, even in the corners full of garbage and dust. More and more pieces of paper were soon found.

The endeavor lasted half a night, and it was already very late when Xiao Lin walked out of the command room again. Everyone had fallen asleep in the silent fortress, except for a team of patrollers. Based on the headquarters' joint decision, patrol work would be carried out in shifts according to turns, and it was probably the fifth shift who were doing their rounds.

Xiao Lin was able to gradually gain a certain degree of popularity during the two days of fighting, even among those from other classes. The patrol team quickly came over when they saw a silhouette, but they soon recognized that the person was Xiao Lin. A girl led the patrol team, and she tried talking to Xiao Lin after greeting him with a smile.

"Haven't you slept yet, Monitor Xiao? Are you still worrying about the situation? Hehe, why don't you come join us for a walk!"

The woman's enthusiasm soured the expressions of the men behind her. They were supposed to patrol, yet she took it for a night walk?

Xiao Lin ignored the woman's warm greeting and suddenly asked, "Where is the girls' dormitory?"

After entering the fortress, the students naturally borrowed the orcs' barracks, but everyone was faced with an awkward problem. There was no distinction between men and women in the barracks. Although a small number of people felt that this was a matter of course during the war and it was not the time to be worrying about these minor details, most of those who held that view were men.

That opinion was immediately met with extreme dissatisfaction from the women, who were headed by Han Manman. The orcs did not mind, but they were all humans. Many were unmarried women, and it was unacceptable to have them live as mixed genders. In a rare show of support, Xiao Lin sided firmly with Han Manman's.

Xiao Lin's question stunned the woman. For a man to suddenly ask about the girls' dormitory in the middle of the night was a weird enough question regardless of how one looked at it, but he had the authority to question it because he was the acting class monitor. After the woman pointed the way, Xiao Lin thanked her and went straight away.

The woman felt inexplicable and muttered to the person behind her, "Could Monitor Xiao be bored with such a long night ahead?"

"You're the one who's feeling lonely in this long night!"

"Sigh, it's a pity that Monitor Xiao doesn't fancy me."

"I think you're a love-struck idiot!"

"Don't you think Monitor Xiao was really handsome this afternoon?"

"For f*ck's sake! We're men!"

...

Of course, Xiao Lin didn't hear the complaints from the patrol team behind him. At that moment, his emotions were a mess and he did not realize how bad of an idea it was to be going into the girls' dormitory at night. His heart was getting very anxious and he could not wait until the next day.

Xiao Lin's appearance finally broke the calm and tranquil night. Fortunately for him, his brave fights in the past two days had won over a lot of ordinary students. In particular, many young female students have always admired heroism, just like the girl from the patrol team. Many found him to be very handsome and even hoped that some spark might appear between them.

However, they all left in disappointment after hearing that Xiao Lin came only to Gu Xiaoyue, who had not gone to bed yet. She looked as though she did not care about anything, but her thought processes were very meticulous. She had taken up the responsibility of caring for a family and her younger sister from a younger age, and she usually had much more on her mind as compared to her peers.

She was equally as surprised when Xiao Lin came to see her in the middle of the night, especially when the girls all around her looked at her with strange and teasing looks. Gu Xiaoyue did not like that kind of feeling and atmosphere, so her slightly irritated reaction was to be expected. Regardless of how one put it into perspective, looking for a woman in the middle of the night was far from normal, and her initial thought was to refuse without hesitation.

For some reason however, the words Xiao Lin said before leaving the fortress in the afternoon came back to Gu Xiaoyue's mind: I won't let you die here, even if it means fighting with all my life!

Gu Xiaoyue always believed that she was a very calm person whose emotions did not fluctuate too much at any given time, but that sentence alone tugged at her heart when it popped up in her mind again. She vaguely understood why Xiao Lin gave it his all that afternoon.

Finally, Gu Xiaoyue sighed, then got out of bed and got dressed.

The door to the barracks was closed, but Xiao Lin did not need to look inside to know that there must be countless gossip mongering women who were listening in on them. He did not intend to let anyone else hear their conversation.

"Let's take a walk around the fortress wall," Xiao Lin suggested.

Gu Xiaoyue froze, then nodded in agreement and followed Xiao Lin obediently to the top of the wall.

The seascape of Planet Norma was very beautiful at night. The bright moonlight shone down and shimmered on the surface of the sea. About ten or so meters above the sea was a layer of light blue firefly-like lights, adding even more charm to the night. When they were on the battleship, Xiao Lin asked the sailors about them and found out that those were the elemental floating fish that Song Junlang made into soup and fed him. The occasional appearance of elemental floating fish was unsurprising given the high concentration of water element in the sea.

Chapter 252 - An Unexpected Discovery in the Command Room (Part 3)

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The two bright moons reflected one after another, and Gu Xiaoyue—despite her aloofness—looked beautiful as she stood in the cold moonlight.

Gu Xiaoyue pushed up the spectacles on the bridge of her nose and tilted her head slightly. Her tone was cold and concise as always, “What is it?”

She was only wearing a single coat at the moment instead of the thick mage robe, but it displayed her slim figure to the fullest. Xiao Lin lost himself in her slightly and quickly coughed to cover up his embarrassment after realizing that she was frowning very faintly.

However, his expressions soon became a little convoluted after recalling his reason for calling Gu Xiaoyue out. After a moment’s silence, he spread out his tightly-clenched right hand, and revealed a nearly sweat-soaked piece of paper in his palm. He said, “I just found this in the orc’s command room.”

When the orcs realized that they could not defend the fortress, they destroyed a lot of things in advance. Gu Xiaoyue knew that, and she had also guessed why Xiao Lin suddenly went to the command room. It was definitely an attempt to find out a thing or two about the orcs’ actions. What she could not understand was why Xiao Lin called her out in the middle of the night.

“What’s this?”

“See for yourself.”

Xiao Lin stopped talking despite having more to say and eventually handed the piece of paper to Gu Xiaoyue. Then, without blinking, he stared at every possible change in expression on the girl’s delicate face.

Gu Xiaoyue was even more confused. She took the paper, squinted her eyes, and looked at it carefully under the moonlight.

The city wall fell into a brief silence again, with only the sound of waves roaring in the distance. What disappointed Xiao Lin was that, apart from being a little surprised when she first saw the piece of paper, she still remained very calm after that. However, for more than ten minutes after that, Gu Xiaoyue remained silent. She simply stood still like a sculpture.

Xiao Lin did not believe that she had not finished reading that piece of paper, since it was less than 30 characters. Seeing as Gu Xiaoyue refused to speak, he could only wait for her response.

“This is impossible!” Gu Xiaoyue finally spoke, with her tone sounding much colder.

Xiao Lin shook his head. “I don’t have any idea. I couldn’t believe it when I first saw this piece of paper. After all, you asked me to bring the letter to your sister, and at that time, I just gave it a couple of casual glances, so I’m not really very sure. I can’t understand it no matter how much I thought about it, so all I could do is look for you in the middle of the night. Can you tell me what you discovered?”

Gu Xiaoyue’s face was a little confused, and such an expression appeared very rarely for someone who had always been calm and confident. She opened her mouth and said, “Yes, the text on this piece of paper is the same as that used by my sister and I since we were kids. That special font is almost the same, but that can’t be possible. It’s just a code between me and my sister. How could it have appeared here!”

Xiao Lin sighed. The results he was expecting had been confirmed, but did not know whether it was a good thing or a bad thing. When he returned to Earth some time ago, Gu Xiaoyue had told him to forward a letter to her sister Gu Chengyun. She stated the letter was written in a code that only she and her sister could understand. No one else could make sense of it even if they read it.

When Gu Chengyun was reading the letter, curiosity drove Xiao Lin to glance secretly at it. The code was indeed written in a very special and complicated font, and it was utterly impossible for any outsider to understand it.

Xiao Lin did not care much about it at the time because he felt it was a little quirk between two sisters. However, if the code’s special font actually appeared in the orc’s command room on a torn piece of paper, the logical explanation was that the document was very important. After all, it was the first thing that the orcs tried to destroy.

Likening Xiao Lin’s shock to mere turbulent waves was a gross understatement. His mind had been sent into complete chaos, but the cool sea breeze blew past and calmed him down slightly so he could try his best to sort out his thoughts.

First of all, the font was undoubtedly a special language originating from Planet Norma. It was certainly not Orcish, because Xiao Lin had compared the paper with the other complete orc documents. The font was very different and so was the handwriting. Orcs had poor handwriting with crooked fonts, but the other font was quite beautiful.

Secondly, Gu Xiaoyue and her sister Gu Chengyun have never entered the Dawn Academy before, let alone go to Planet Norma, but from what Gu Xiaoyue had confirmed, she and her sister seemed to have used it as a kind of code since childhood.

Xiao Lin did not suspect Gu Xiaoyue to deceive him, especially not when he had seen the lively and optimistic Gu Chengyun. None of that seemed to be a farce. He asked softly, “Who taught you this code?”

“I taught myself. Since I had to take care of Chengyun from when we were both very young, there were times I felt really bored at home. During that period, I accidentally discovered a book detailing this code. Back then, Chengyun and I treated this font as some kind of code. We both found it very interesting. It was mainly just to pass the time and learn from each other.”

As Gu Xiaoyue said that, she was also feeling a little distressed. “But it’s hard to learn. It took Chengyun and I many years to thoroughly master this code. We didn’t think much about it at the time and just treated it as a little secret among us.”

Xiao Lin believed Gu Xiaoyue’s words, and followed up by analyzing, “So the book used to study that code must have been left by your parents or one of your elders, which means—”

“Which means that someone in my family was once selected into Dawn Academy, and for some reason, they translated this Planet Norma language book into Chinese and left it at home.” Gu Xiaoyue was a very smart woman, but her emotions were all over the place when she muttered to herself.

Xiao Lin could understand Gu Xiaoyue’s feelings and was even feeling some sympathy for her. It was very likely that the language book was left by her father or mother, and from Gu Xiaoyue’s earlier statements, her parents had left her since she was very young. It would make perfect sense if her parents were in Dawn Academy or the New World. After all, according to the rules of the Supreme Council, those who reached Gold-rank were not allowed to return to Earth.

That was the most reasonable explanation. Although plenty of questions still remained, such as why her parents only left them that particular language book or why they disappeared without saying goodbye, it was their family’s affairs and Xiao Lin should not be interfering.

“Then what kind of language do you think this is? It can’t be Orcish, or Normese, or Mermish.” Xiao Lin asked.

“What other answer could it possibly be if it appeared at this particular time in the orc command room?”

Both their gazes shifted simultaneously to the distance and landed on the silver fleet that was quietly floating on the sea surface. That was probably the most spot-on answer.

It was Elvish!

Chapter 253 - The True Goal of The Orcs?

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“Do you understand these words?” Xiao Lin asked.

Gu Xiaoyue started to nod softly, but quickly shook her head as she said, “I can understand the words, but the texts are quite damaged. From the few sentences I can see, there seems to be a deal between the elves and the orcs, but it’s very vague. Are there any more papers?”

The two of them had temporarily put aside Gu Xiaoyue’s problems, and chose to focus on the examinations for the time being. Xiao Lin brought Gu Xiaoyue into the command room, bringing out all the Elvish texts.

Those must have been letters to the orcs from the elves, but after trying to compile them, there did not seem to even be 10% of the originals remaining. Xiao Lin brought the lamp closer to Gu Xiaoyue to help her read the contents in detail. It took a while before Gu Xiaoyue finally raised her head, furrowing her eyebrows before slowly starting to speak.

“It’s impossible. There’s too much content missing, and there are a lot of specialized words that are hard to understand, especially since Elvish is not my best language.”

Pausing for a moment, Gu Xiaoyue added hesitantly, “However, this word appears very often. I just regretfully don’t recognize it. It looks like an abbreviation of a few words.”

Gu Xiaoyue pointed at a set of words, and Xiao Lin gave up on trying to read it after just one glance. Those words were even harder to recognize than Ancient Normese.

Gu Xiaoyue was still trying to dissect the meaning of that abbreviation. “Based on just the words, the phrase has a lot of different meanings, but it could be referring to something evil. No, it could also mean demons. After that, those other words should mean some sort of building. Evil building? Demonic building?”

Xiao Lin had a strange look on his face before slowly saying, “Resurrection tower!”

Xiao Lin recalled that the high priest kept on talking about some demonic power when he was in The Final Land. It was quite easy to imagine that the power to resurrect people would make them seem like demons when the resurrection towers were first built.

With those words, their expressions started to change.

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Considering the fact that they could be facing an attack from the orcs the next day, they did not linger too late, and went to bed quite early. That night, both Gu Xiaoyue and Xiao Lin had heavy thoughts in their heads, even if the two of them were not thinking about the same things.

Surprisingly, the fortress was completely peaceful the next day, which was their eighth day defending the fortress. The remaining orcs were all camped out far away, not looking like they had any intention of attacking.

The acting class monitors all breathed sighs of relief. They had been worried after failing to completely eliminate the orcs thanks to elven interference. Currently, it seemed that even though there were some surprises, the results had been satisfactory still.

Since the orcs were not attacking, everyone took the opportunity to rest and reorganize. As they kept an eye on the orcs, the engineers started to repair the towers outside the fortress. At the same time, they started to build even more archer towers. Spell towers took a lot longer, and there were not that many spellcasters among the new students, so they were set aside for the moment.

The archer towers actually put a lot of pressure on the orcs. Everyone had begun to realize the difference between those large arrows and the bows they had. When the towers were utilized in volume, the rain of arrows that covered the skies with darkness had a devastating impact, both physically and mentally.

The engineers did not lack resources thanks to the materials in the warehouse, but the problems arose with manpower. The acting class monitors requested that the engineers focus all their men on building the defense towers, but were rejected.

“You idiots! Don’t you know what the resurrection tower means for this battle? If we finish building the tower, those orcs will stand no chance!”

The academy sent the engineers on this mission in order to construct the resurrection tower. That was the basis of colonization, which placed any territory influenced by the resurrection tower under the control of Dawn Academy. So long as the Law of Immortality existed, their defense of the fortress and even the entire area would become a lot easier.

If not for the papers they found last night, Xiao Lin would have felt the same way as well. That unsettling feeling he had at the back of his mind since the start of the examinations started to rear its head. He still could not confirm anything, which was why he took the chance to raise a question to Captain Yu during their next meeting in the command room.

Captain Yu represented the engineers for that meeting. Even though the students could pitch in when it came to physical labor, the technical aspects still required supervision by the engineers, which was the cause of their current dilemma.

“Captain Yu, I wish to ask something that isn’t related to the main topic of our meeting.” Xiao Lin considered his words for a moment before continuing, “If, and I’m saying if, we fail to defend the fortress. What would happen to the resurrection tower if the orcs take the fortress?”

“What would happen to the resurrection tower?”

“Xiao Lin, we’ve already defended this place for eight days. Why are you trying to destroy our morale?”

They started to chatter among themselves. No one seemed happy with Xiao Lin’s pessimistic words, but Captain Yu seemed to have understood what Xiao Lin meant, motioning for everyone else to keep quiet before saying, “I understand. You’re trying to ask what the orcs can do if they had the resurrection tower in their hands, right?”

“That’s right, the Law of Immortality should have just been established, and it’s quite obvious that the various races of Planet Norma have no way to deal with it. They would definitely be afraid of it, but the more afraid they are, the more they would want to understand how we revive ourselves, whether it is caused by certain spells or by the power of demons. They might want the resurrection tower for that purpose!”

That was the conclusion Xiao Lin had arrived at after a whole night of deliberation. Following that train of thought led to even more horrifying conclusions.

The orcs and the elves might be allying themselves in order to get a hold of the resurrection tower. It was possible that this entire war against the orcs was a ploy by the orcs, and their main goal had always been to obtain a resurrection tower from the war.

However, those questions had already exceeded the scope of the examination, and Xiao Lin was not too concerned with a war that had happened almost a hundred years ago. What happened had

already happened, and he could not do anything about it, neither could he do anything to change Dawn Academy's strategy for the war, so Xiao Lin could only speculate all that by himself.

That was why Xiao Lin only had one question he needed answered, which was if the orcs could actually do anything if they got their hands on the resurrection tower.

Chapter 254 - Attack at Night

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What disappointed Xiao Lin was that Captain Yu failed to give a clear answer, vaguely brushing the question aside. "You don't have to worry about that. They can't do anything with the resurrection tower even if they had it!"

He was very confident, but the answer was still quite vague. Xiao Lin could not question him any further either, since Xiao Lin did not understand much about the resurrection tower himself.

The resurrection tower needed to be used with the Law of Immortality in order to be effective, and the other class monitors felt like Xiao Lin was worrying needlessly. Even if the orcs obtained the resurrection tower, it did not concern them at all. Xiao Lin did not want to reveal those papers either, since he did not wish to expose the fact that Gu Xiaoyue knew Elvish.

The meeting was originally held to convince Captain Yu to assign more men to build the defensive towers, but in the end, everyone else was convinced by Captain Yu instead. The resurrection tower's importance trumped everything, and with that in mind, not only did they decide not to increase their production of defensive towers, they had even agreed to assign more students to assisting the construction of the resurrection towers in order to hurry up the process.

There was still a puzzling question: if the resurrection tower was really completed, then the Law of Immortality would allow them to prevent themselves from dying, only needing to trade some of their lifespan to revive themselves.

There came the real problem—a simulated space which did not actually exist, would the Law of Immortality still apply here? Even if it was in effect, having their lifespans deducted was not something everyone could accept.

However, Cheng Ming and the others had a reasonable explanation as well: the resurrection tower would take two to three months to complete at the earliest. According to the missions, that was the longest they would have to defend the fortress. After that, if the fortress was still in their hands, Dawn Academy would send their reinforcements to attack the supply-starved orcs. If they failed to defend the fortress in that timeframe, then they had failed their missions anyway.

Basically, no matter how they considered it, the completion of the resurrection tower would mark the completion of their examination.

When they were not fighting, everyone was in a constant state of alert, but it was still more relaxed than during battle. After a few days of battle experience, they were all a lot more battle-ready and experienced than they had been before.

What they did not expect was for the peace to last for four whole days. As they entered the twelfth day of occupying the fortress, Chen Dao from Class Twelve finally gave his suggestion, “We should seize the initiative and launch an attack!”

The orcs had been too quiet. Even though the two days spent assaulting the fortress had left them with a lot of casualties, given the bloodlust on their faces, the losses were not the reason for them stopping.

Even though everyone wanted to believe that the orcs had been scared away by them, the majority of them knew there had to be some sort of trick being played. Their opponents might have been planning a larger scale war, or even waiting for reinforcements.

That was why going on the offensive was necessary. They could not afford to watch on as the orcs regrouped with reinforcements, which would make defending the fortress all that much harder.

Xiao Lin did not agree to that plan for a very simple reason: they were very likely to fail if the elvish warships decided to intervene, leading to unnecessary deaths.

However, there were even more of them who agreed. Thanks to the majority vote, the plan was quickly put into motion. The attack would be done at night to take advantage of the orcs’ poor eyesight.

Xiao Lin would participate in the attack himself. He did not do it to show off; his only intention was to help avoid any unnecessary casualties. The ambush would consist of four hundred of them, taking up basically half of their forces in the fortress. If they were to lose everyone from this attack, then there was no way they could continue defending the fortress.

The battle a few days ago had likely filled everyone with confidence, maybe even thinking that the orcs had lost the will to fight. At least eighty percent of the acting class monitors would be participating in the battle, which caused Xiao Lin a great deal of concern. He discussed the matter with Cheng Ming and concluded that Cheng Ming would have to stay behind.

They were all too idealistic, but even they understood that they could not put all their eggs in one basket. The students with talents were undoubtedly more important, so they could not afford to not have a few on defense.

Xiao Lin picked out about thirty students from Class Seven, including Zhou Feng. Qin Chuan had been forced to stay behind by Xiao Lin since Xiao Lin needed someone to maintain control over the class, which Qin Chuan was definitely more suited to than Gu Xiaoyue. Of course, Xiao Lin had also forced Gu Xiaoyue to stay behind.

The weather was not great that day, with torrential rains falling the whole day. Even during the evening, the sky was filled with dark clouds that covered up the two moons.

“It looks like God is on our side! I can’t believe anyone could disagree with the ambush!” Han Manman was very happy with the weather, and could not resist mocking Xiao Lin.

Xiao Lin shrugged, retorting, “I’m sorry, but this is Planet Norma. Your God probably can’t help you here.”

“You!”

“Alright alright, stop it. Everyone is after the same thing. There’s no difference between right and wrong. We should hurry up. The weather here is erratic, so we should stop delaying.” Sheng Guo of Class Eight said. He was a man with a very noble face, and his words often carried a noble air, which led everyone to suspect he held some sort of position of power back on Earth.

Xiao Lin eyed Sheng Guo, no longer saying anything. He had been interacting with the other acting class monitors more during this time, and Sheng Guo was very smooth when dealing with people. He would always play the mediator when anyone quarreled, being careful not to offend anyone. However, compared to Cheng Ming, Xiao Lin felt that Sheng Guo dealt with things a lot more slyly.

The team left under the cover of night. Considering the lack of vision, their movements were slow, and they moved extremely close to each other to prevent getting lost.

The entire way, Xiao Lin constantly looked toward the sea. Even though he could not see anything in those conditions, everyone understood what he was looking out for.

The mysterious silver warships remained unmoving. Ever since they made their alignments clear after the sudden attack that day, the ships once again fell into silence. If the warships really belonged to the elves, then Xiao Lin could still not figure out what their plan was.

They were only two hours away from the orc encampment. The orcs did not build any defensive towers, likely not expecting that the humans would attack them with their numbers.

The camp was quite open, lacking any form of defensive structures. They had simply pitched up dozens of tents on the plains and left two squads of orcs to keep patrol.

Xiao Lin and the others did not prepare any special tactics for the assault, and naturally were not very good at stealth either, which was why they were noticed by the patrols the moment they got within a few hundred meters.

With that, the battle erupted.

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According to the casualties from a few days ago, the orcs lost about half of their soldiers, but even so, there were still over a thousand combat-ready orcs at the camp. However, war was not fought with just numbers. The new students felt like they had hit a really good stride after their battles. In comparison, the orcs did not even have the will to attack. They would definitely fall apart when met with a sudden assault.

It was actually quite surprising that the orcs did not attack them. With their lack of defenses, their night assault started out very promisingly. Even the two orc patrols were very quickly eliminated by them.

Xiao Lin felt like, in an outright battle such as that, personal skill would greatly influence the outcome. Even though most of the students were not as strong as the orcs, their excellent acting monitors and instructors were more than enough to tip the scales in their favor, and among them, Chen Dao had a very important role to play.

Spell-casters were an existence equal to military tanks on Planet Norma. Mages had very obvious weaknesses, such as long casting times and potentially having inexperience, causing their spells to fail. To top it off, it was mentally taxing and they usually had weaker constitution, leading to a lot of limitations for the class. However, Chen Dao's talent greatly made up for those deficiencies.

Chen Dao currently only had one spell that he had truly mastered, which was the Black Iron-ranked Flame Ball. It seemed very bland, but mastering a Black Iron-rank spell to its peak in just less than a month was something only Chen Dao and Gu Xiaoyue had done among the first-year students.

Of course, Gu Xiaoyue was currently a support caster, so she was no less important than Chen Dao, but based on kill counts, Chen Dao was far ahead of Gu Xiaoyue.

More and more orcs were charging out of the camps. A lot of them were woken up from slumber, not even having a chance to put on their armor as they ran out with their naked and muscular bodies. The orcs were very strong, possessing arms as thick as tree trunks and explosive muscles. It was practically impossible for humans to ever be as muscular as them.

Chen Dao's Flame Balls burned through the chaos, drawing many screams of pain as the flames burned through the orcs' flesh.

He was using a red double-handed wand. Xiao Lin had heard him bragging about it more than once. The wand was made using special materials that made it easier to gather flame elemental energies. He had used two whole months of his savings to buy it, but the results were worth it.

The Flame Balls also quickly set the tents that were made from dried animal skins aflame. Xiao Lin also used his Flame Bullets to help set the camp ablaze. Even though his destructive power did not lose to Chen Dao if he had his Miracle active, he did not want to use up the skill just like that.

The flames shot through the sky as the other casters started to follow their lead. The night assault's main goal was to chase away the orcs, and killing them off was a secondary mission. As such, the students started to pick up the torches on the floor, and even the casters who had wind-based spells started to help fan the flames.

The orc camp immediately fell into chaos as the orcs panicked, attempting to put out the flames while still defending themselves against the human attack. Even in the heat of battle, it was obvious that the orcs would be greatly advantaged if not for the acting class monitors and instructors, but based on the situation, it was obvious that their night time assault was very successful.

"It's not enough!" Xiao Lin muttered to himself. He had not used his full power since the start. He did not dare fight an orc face-to-face without his Miracle skill, so he persistently disrupted them with his Flame Bullets. If any orcs rushed toward him, he would use his Phantom Steps to dash away, finding a new spot to cast his spells.

A few of those who were focused on his performance were rather disappointed. It was a far cry compared to his fearsome performance a few days ago. Han Manman, who never liked Xiao Lin, started to mock him when she saw that.

Han Manman was also a mage. Even though she had a talent, she was still far away from Gu Xiaoyue and Chen Dao. At best, Han Manman was just a little better than ordinary students.

Xiao Lin did not feel like bothering with Han Manman. His eyes scoured for something in the chaos of the battlefield. In order to completely rout the orcs, their best option was definitely to kill the commander.

They needed to cut the hydra off at the head. In their first assault on the fortress, Xiao Lin had learned from Qin Chuan that the orc commander's death had greatly weakened the other orcs' morale, which made him realize that Planet Norma followed a chain of command just like Earth did.

He had experienced how stubborn the orcs could be, so if they did not get rid of the commander, their opponents would still be a threat to the fortress as long as they had enough troops remaining.

Xiao Lin noticed that the orcs were beginning to calm down in the chaos, and in the dancing flames, he could vaguely make out an orc shouting at the back, as if it was giving out orders.

Xiao Lin hesitated because that orc was obviously different from the others. It did not look like it was stronger, but rather a lot weaker than the other orcs, which contrasted with his understanding of them. The orcs worshipped strength, and their ranks were determined by individual strength and results. To Xiao Lin and the others, the simplest way to tell them apart was to assume that the stronger the orcs were, the higher their rank.

Every moment mattered in battle, and any hesitation could be costly. Xiao Lin had only stopped for a moment before he made the decision and rushed forward. No matter how he was planning on defeating the orcs, it had to be a lot simpler since the opponent appeared to be weak.

The orc did not wear any armor, but was instead in white-colored robes. He could see clearer as he closed the distance; the orc looked to be quite old. Even orcs could not escape the grasp of age. His face was filled with wrinkles, but his expression was still spirited.

Noticing Xiao Lin's intentions, the orcs started to head toward him. Chen Dao seemed to have noticed what Xiao Lin was trying to do and sent a few Flame Balls over, clearing the path for Xiao Lin.

Xiao Lin started to activate Miracle, using his Phantom Steps to speed past the orcs. The heavy axes of the orcs could only hit his afterimages.

Those orcs seemed to tense up, proving that the weak orc's status was quite high. When Xiao Lin was less than a hundred meters away, the old orc suddenly extended his finger, sending a streak of electricity right at Xiao Lin.

Chapter 256 - Priest Shaman

Chapter 256: Priest Shaman

At such a close range, Xiao Lin had no way to dodge the streak of electricity, but as he was struck and a surge of numbness coursed through him, he could not help but feel elated.

Jackpot!

The orc in front of him was not just a simple commander; he was an orc priest!

Orcs were naturally strong, allowing their race to wield incomparable strength, but Planet Norma was fair. With their immense strength, they also had an extremely poor affinity for the elements. However, there were a small number of orcs that lacked the strength, and instead had magical abilities that rivalled other races.

Those orcs were often priests, and on Planet Norma they were called priest shamans. Shamans were what the orc magicians were called, while priests represented a high rank in orc society.

The fact that the troops were being led by a priest shaman completely surprised Xiao Lin, causing him to change his initial intentions. Killing the priest would only cause the troops to scatter, but if they captured it alive, then Dawn Academy would have another asset in the war.

Xiao Lin had greatly increased his knowledge of the orcs thanks to the various NPCs on the warship and the fortress. No matter how inexperienced he was in war, he still understood that he needed to know as much about the enemy as possible, which was something Xiao Lin was far ahead of compared to everyone else.

Shamans were extremely rare among the orcs, with their numbers far below what the humans had. There was also a rumor among the orcs that priest shamans were able to communicate with the dead, and even look into the future. Of course, Xiao Lin viewed that information with a grain of salt, believing to be an exaggerated myth, but it was still clear how much importance the orcs placed on the shamans.

Capturing a shaman alive was definitely much more valuable than killing one!

Xiao Lin had wanted to inform everyone else, since he felt that he would need help to capture the target alive. At the very least, he would need help preventing the other orcs from interfering.

However, that shaman did not give him a chance to as he continuously fired bolts of lightning at Xiao Lin. If not for his Phantom Steps, Xiao Lin would probably have been crippled by that point.

The feeling of being hit by lightning was not pleasant. Putting aside the pain in his body, his entire body was numb, affecting his movement. That was the most annoying thing, which led to him taking a few hits that he could have easily dodged.

He was wearing a Bronze-ranked armor that he had picked from the warehouse in the fortress. Even though it was quite ugly, the quality was decent, reducing quite a bit of the damage that he had taken.

Other than the numbness from the orc shaman's lightning, Xiao Lin actually did not sustain too much damage. The dragon blood that Song Junlang fed him before had given him a basic resistance to magic, allowing him to have a 20% resistance to F-rank spells and a 10% resistance to E-rank spells.

Xiao Lin estimated that the shaman's lightning bolts were only F-rank, which meant that the damage was not really significant after a 20% reduction.

Flame Sword Aura!

Xiao Lin decided to quickly finish the battle, not caring about the massive burden that the flame sword aura had as he waved his sword around. Two flaming blades started to dance around his body as the intense heat pushed away the orcs that were rushing toward him. Since he did not know how much the shaman could take, he did not dare guarantee that the flame sword aura would not kill it instantly, which was why he was using it on other orcs.

Realizing that an extremely rare priest shaman was in command did not stop Xiao Lin, and when the other acting monitors started to realize that they had caught a big fish, they started to rush over to help.

Xiao Lin was worried the others would make a mistake, so he hurriedly shouted, "Don't kill that orc. Try to capture it alive, it will be very useful to us!"

However, it was not clear how many of them actually heard him in the heat of battle. Following the change in everyone's target, the orcs also started to head toward their direction, and the chaotic battle quickly shifted its focus into that area.

After the initial chaos, the orcs' bloodlust had slowly been rising. Even though Xiao Lin's side had managed to eliminate quite a few orcs, the opponents still held the numerical advantage. Now that the battlefield had shrunk, it would not be good if they were surrounded.

The priest shaman seemed to have the same thought as well, using himself as bait to attract most of the humans here. Furthermore, after the number of people surrounding him started to increase, it started to use Chain Lightning spells. That was an area of effect type spell, and much more devastating than his earlier spells. It was powerful enough to strike down upward of ten people with each cast.

The acting class monitors wanted to concentrate the attacks, but it seemed to have backfired. They had fought hard to seize the advantage despite their numbers, yet the shaman's Chain Lightnings had managed to cause dozens of the students to sprawl on the floor. Even if the damage was not fatal, the other orcs would quickly kill them off with their axes.

There were at least twenty orcs surrounding the priest shaman. They possessed strong bodies and top-notch armor and equipment. Those orcs had never participated in the defense of the camp, quietly standing next to the shaman, which made it obvious they were the bodyguards for the priest shaman.

The few students who managed to get close were easily cut down by those bodyguards, causing a great deal of fear. Normal students would not be able to get close easily, but the monitors and

instructors were busy dealing with the shaman's Chain Lightnings, especially since the numbness would greatly affect their maneuverability.

The orc shaman seemed to be quite mentally taxed, signifying that it could not continue with its use of the Chain Lightning spells.

However, if the situation continued, it was quite possible that the students would not be able to break through the surrounding orcs.

That was why the moment the priest cast Chain Lightning again, Xiao Lin did not hesitate to activate his Replicate skill, which marked the first time he had used it in the examination; he never found the right time to use it.

[Replicating priest shaman, replicating skill Chain Lightning, grade E+!]

When the skill succeeded, Xiao Lin obtained all the information he needed about it. It was just like he expected: such a destructive spell was definitely at rank E!

Chapter 257 - Capture

Chapter 257: Capture

Chain Lightning!

Xiao Lin brandished his Peakfire Staff. Even though the staff was meant for flame spells, the staff still innately increased the speed that the elements were gathered.

A light-blue surge of electricity erupted from the staff's energy stone like a snake slithering in the air, targeting the bodyguards surrounding the shaman. The moment the electricity landed on the first orc, it immediately spread. Since the replicated spell maintained the mastery from the original caster, the power of the Chain Lightning was quite impressive.

The lightning quickly wrapped the orcs in its web. Those orcs were not prepared to defend themselves at all—not that they would have been able to avoid it if they were. They used their bodies to stop the lightning from reaching the shaman behind them.

It would be troublesome if they did not remove those bodyguards quickly. Xiao Lin quickly shouted, "Anyone who can still move, come over to help. Chen Dao, we'll both concentrate our attacks."

The inexperience of the new students was, once again, obvious. When faced with such a difficult situation, a lot of the students did not know what to do. They started to ignore their orders, frantically fighting whatever foes that were in front of them. Thankfully, Zhou Feng had been beside Xiao Lin, and once he realized Xiao Lin's intentions, he immediately brought over a few others that he could trust.

Chain Lightning was a complicated spell; if there was any interference in the casting process, the success and strength could not be assured. Chen Dao hurried over to help as well, but even if his Flame Balls were impressive, it still paled in comparison to Chain Lightning.

Being protected, Xiao Lin could finally move his attributes to Intelligence with Miracle, not having to worry about being attacked while his strength and physique were low.

The priest shaman was shocked that Xiao Lin could use the same spell as himself, but he did not show any surprise on his old face. He was confident that he would be able to defeat Xiao Lin with so much experience under his belt.

The battle quickly turned into a magical standoff. The humans were in a state of disarray after the orcs started their counterattack due to their individual skills being lower. The orcs might have been strong, but the advantages the humans earned for themselves at the start of the attack were holding firm. The flames that burned across the camp could not be easily dealt with in a short time.

Xiao Lin and the priest shaman were absolutely key to the battle. Their Chain Lightnings would determine which way the temporary standstill would shift toward. That served to highlight the importance of magic on Norma: magic would often decide the outcome of battles.

Chain Lightning was extremely potent on both sides. Each cast of that spell would usually take about ten to twenty seconds, but thanks to Miracle, Xiao Lin only needed seven to eight seconds to cast it.

The orc shaman quickly realized something was wrong. In the situation where both sides were not interrupted, he had quickly been suppressed. Each cast of his Chain Lightning would be met with two casts from the human.

Magical battles were usually determined by these small differences. Xiao Lin did not even have to wait for the Replication skill to end by the time he and Chen Dao eliminated all the bodyguards around the shaman, in which his Chain Lightning spell obviously contributed more.

Seeing no more obstacles in front of him, Xiao Lin immediately drew his sword, activating his Phantom Steps as he avoided various long range attacks with his afterimages and rushed toward the shaman.

He had wanted to summon the Holy Soul, but the skill needed a lot of blood as an offering, which meant he needed to use his Holy Soul Sword to kill enough orcs. He did not have enough time to do that. Judging by how powerful the shaman's Chain Lightning was, most of his companions would have been felled by the time he had enough to offer as tribute.

More importantly, Xiao Lin had some doubts in his heart after the elves attacked the holy spirit last time. He had yet to figure out why, but if the elves really hated the spirit that much, then summoning it again and incurring their wrath was not a wise decision.

Even though there were many problems that arose, based on the result, their night assault had earned them quite a surprising win.

When Xiao Lin's sword pointed at the priest shaman's throat, the battle was thoroughly over. None of the orcs dared to even move. Xiao Lin's guess was right. With how important the priest shaman

was toward the orcs, they did not dare toy with the shaman's life, no matter how brave or ferocious they were.

"Quickly, knock this guy unconscious. Stop him from committing suicide!" Han Manman moved over and tried to take the valuable prisoner away from Xiao Lin, but was rejected. Compared to Han Manman, Xiao Lin was much more confident in his own strength. Even though the shaman was old and looked weak, Xiao Lin still did not dare to risk anything.

"Suicide? I think you should head back to history class. The shamans are figures that can speak to the dead among the orcs. Suicide is an insult to the dead spirits. Priest shamans are only allowed to die in battle—never by suicide!" Chen Dao marched over, looking furious.

Xiao Lin noticed that a part of Chen Dao's leg was bleeding and asked, "Are you injured? Isn't the battle over? Were some orcs really stupid enough to risk their shaman?"

"F*ck! I was hit by the idiots from Class Four!" Chen Dao glared at Han Manman, who was the monitor of Class Four, with rage in his eyes. He shouted, "How do you control your class?! Xiao Lin and I had already said to stop fighting. Why are your people still fighting! Do you know that, thanks to your class not stopping in time, setting aside my injury, a good number of our classmates are dead!"

Xiao Lin quickly understood the gist of it. Chen Dao's magical abilities were great, but he was different from Xiao Lin. Chen Dao had devoted all his attention to magic, which meant his strength and physique were very average. The attributes did not change much in three months, leading to him not being able to defend himself in close combat.

Class Twelve knew that as well, which was why there were always a few students around Chen Dao, protecting their monitor. That young man managed to use his impressive magic to gain the confidence of his entire class.

Chapter 258 - Back To The Fortress

Chapter 258: Back To The Fortress

The battle should have ended the moment Xiao Lin captured the priest shaman, and the orcs acted accordingly, not daring to put the shaman's life at risk, but a few of the students seemed to have gone crazy with bloodlust, or they might have thought that the orcs would be stupid enough to not retaliate.

The orcs were a wild and ferocious race, and so naturally their tempers flared, which resulted in a ferocious encounter that unfortunately involved Chen Dao. Even if he used his Flame Balls to eliminate a few of the troublesome orcs, he could not avoid being injured, and Class Twelve had lost a few students.

"Do you think the orcs will yield to you? Your arrogance will only hasten your own demise!" the priest shaman suddenly said, his voice strong and powerful with no trace of his age.

“You really don’t know how to read the situation! Since you know our language, hurry up and get the other orcs to drop their weapons and surrender!” someone immediately shouted.

The situation was quite awkward at that moment. Even though the battle had stopped, the orcs were still around, their superior numbers surrounding the humans with weapons in hand. The occasional orcish shout could be heard, but no one knew what they were saying.

The shaman closed his eyes, ignoring them and seemingly goading them to kill him.

“Chen Dao was right; he doesn’t dare commit suicide!” Xiao Lin waved, exhaustion clearly written on his face. The Chain Lightning spell had been extremely taxing. He said, “Let’s bring him back first.”

“What about the other orcs?”

“There’s no need. As long as the shaman is in our hands, the other orcs won’t dare touch us! We’ll walk out just like this. I want to see if any of them dare stop us!”

Xiao Lin did not let down his guard, getting a few stronger men to guard the shaman and even getting Chen Dao to observe his movements. The lightning spells required some time to cast, and were thus easily interrupted if noticed, which meant it was not a big cause for concern.

It was not the first time Xiao Lin had held a hostage; a similar thing had happened during the first monthly examination after all. Xiao Lin was in the zone, and the shaman being able to speak their language made things a lot easier.

“Don’t even think about pulling any tricks! You’ve tasted my combat ability! If you do anything funny, I might not be able to guarantee that all my men will survive, but I assure you every single one of you orcs will meet the same fate!” Due to his fatigue, Xiao Lin sounded quite winded, but his words were extremely threatening.

Acting soft would only let the orcs think he was weak, which meant the best way to deal with them was to force his way into their throats.

The shaman fell silent; he had a deep impression of Xiao Lin. During the battle a few days ago, his troops had been able to force a way through the defensive towers, but Xiao Lin’s sudden burst of strength had completely stifled their advance.

Chen Dao was so furious at Han Manman that he practically ignored the woman, but the two of them still knew what had to be done. It was not the time to fight, and they quickly arranged for everyone to get ready. The wounded were carried by the healthy as they started to return.

The students left behind a lot of corpses at the orc encampment; some of the bodies had even been completely chopped up by the orcs and thrown into the fire. Even if they knew that it would only result in a loss of 10 years in their lifespans, they were still comrades. Watching your own comrades die in front of your own eyes was enough to make anyone pale with fright.

With some of the students heavily injured, they could not travel fast. Thankfully, they had a hostage in hand, and the few acting monitors made sure that none of the students would cause any trouble. The orcs did not dare to advance, and the two sides basically passed one another—shoulder

to shoulder. At the closest distance, Xiao Lin could even smell the stench of the orcs, causing him to tense up, gripping his blade tightly. He was not afraid to take action if he saw any movement whatsoever.

The journey was filled with anxiety, but no actual danger. It was only when the fires on the orc encampment left their vision and their scout reported that no one was behind them did they all start to breathe a sigh of relief.

Xiao Lin did not forget to tell the orc shaman, “You’ve lost!”

It was true; no matter how the actual battle went, those troops would not be able to continue fighting after they lost their commander. It was even possible that they would be heavily punished for failing to protect the shaman if they went back.

The priest shaman blinked before uttering, “Orcs never surrender! We only die in battle!”

“It’s a pity you can’t kill yourself. Are you hoping your elf allies will help you?” Xiao Lin could not help but ask.

“Hmph! Those cunning elves are just as despicable as humans. They are not...” The shaman stopped mid-sentence, not willing to say more.

Xiao Lin silently sighed. Those actually were elf warships. Even though he had been certain of it, it was now a hundred percent verified. What exactly was it that could lead to the orcs agreeing to ally with the elves?

The students had too many questions which could all be answered by the shaman. Even though a lot of them were grieving their lost comrades, they were also filled with hope and excitement.

The elves still did not make a move, which surprised Xiao Lin. Han Manman had tried to use that as proof of Xiao Lin’s cowardice, but she was quickly shot down by Chen Dao.

That young man could really hold a grudge. He never had any problems with Han Manman, but Chen Dao would not let her off easily for what Class Four did that ultimately led to the death of a few students from his class.

Chen Dao held it in when they were at the orc encampment, but his temper flared right back up the moment they got back to the fortress. It was already late in the night when they made it back, but their shouting pretty much ensured that no one was getting any sleep.

“I can’t help but feel like something is off. I asked the shaman earlier if he was hoping the elves would help him, and I can’t help but think about his words.” Xiao Lin temporarily ignored their bickering as he discussed what happened with Cheng Ming and the other acting class monitors, voicing his concerns at the same time.

“Priest shamans are the intellectual representatives of the orcs; if the elves were working with the orcs, the shaman would definitely be the best point of contact.”

“So you think that the shaman had communicated with the elf warships?” Cheng Ming asked.

“The letters confirmed as much!”

Chapter 259 - Interrogation

Chapter 259: Interrogation

The shaman was obviously a big fish, which was why everyone excitedly anticipated extracted information from him. After resting and preparing for the night, the acting class monitors immediately got up at the crack of dawn, bringing their trusted classmates and heading right into the interrogation process.

It was like everyone had anticipated; the shaman exhibited the typical orc stubbornness. It would take a lot of effort to get him to speak, and they could not avoid employing certain unsavory methods.

That included Xiao Lin and Cheng Ming. The two of them did not mind what methods were used as long as the shaman remained alive. They had already done similar things in past examinations, so they were already used to it.

However, the moment the interrogation started, the shaman seemed to be quite accommodating when faced with the interrogation team formed by the twelve classes. He answered most of their questions, even if his words were laced with contempt for humans. However, it did not matter as all they cared about were answers. Thanks to the fact that the shaman spoke their language, the process ended up being relatively easy.

“Your name!”

“Lightning.”

“Lightning? Then I’m called Thunder! If you’re not willing to be honest as our prisoner...”

“Ahem, the orcs name themselves differently from us humans. They usually name themselves based on their appearances, weapons or spells, or even family history. This guy uses lightning-based spells, so his name is quite normal. Don’t be surprised.”

“Fine. Gender.”

“Ahem...”

“Ah, we can just skip that question.”

Thanks to how accommodating the target was, the interrogation went quite smoothly. Some of them that had certain unique hobbies suddenly found the tools that they had specially prepared to be useless. As more and more people jumped in with their questions, it suddenly turned into asking about the orcs in general. Even though they had learned about the orcs in their history lessons, details were scarce, so everyone was quite interested in the orcs, especially for someone like Chen Dao who loved gaming back on Earth.

They had managed to ascertain the background of the shaman named Lightning. He claimed to be the second-in-command of the 13th Orc Legion. The students did not know what that meant, so they had to ask Captain Yu of the engineers about it.

Among the orcs, the second-in-command would always be the strategist, which meant it was a rank usually held by their priest shamans. Even though he was only the second-in-command, the importance of shamans amongst the orcs meant that he held a lot of power.

However, that made it all the more stranger. The fact that the second-in-command only had three thousand orc foot soldiers to lead, and the fact that he was so easily captured made Xiao Lin and the others suspicious.

Lightning's explanations were quite reasonable. The fact that this supply depot had a large amount of resources and was a necessary part of their route toward Dawn City meant that the supply depot was extremely important.

The orcs had invested too much on the advancement of their vanguard, leaving them strapped for resources, which meant that Lightning could only afford to bring 3,000 foot soldiers over when the supply depot was captured. He mentioned that he had underestimated the humans, and his words felt a little like praise, which led to everyone happily accepting that answer.

The next questions were related to the orc army which led Lightning to get quieter. There was no way he would willingly expose things like the 13th Orc Legion's movements and strength, which was all within expectations, leading to those who had prepared special tools to jump up in hope.

However, they were ultimately not used. After a simple beating and a few threats, the shaman started to spill everything.

The 13th Orc Legion was the only army stationed nearby. They numbered above 30,000, including almost 10,000 wolf cavalries. However, the cavalry had been sent to the frontlines, and the other 20,000 troops were scattered around various key points and supply lines, making it hard to gather them.

The 3,000 troops was the most amount of soldiers that Lightning could gather up in that half a month, and now that they had been defeated, with even the second-in-command captured, they would either need to organize some troops from the main orc camp or have their vanguard turn back.

The interrogation lasted for almost a whole day, but they did not neglect keeping up their defenses. However, after losing the priest shaman, the remaining orc troops had started to retreat, lending more weight to what Lightning had said.

The interrogation had left everyone quite happy. If Lightning's words were true, then they would not have to worry about being attacked for quite a long time because the main orc camp was at least two months away. With that long a period, the orcs were unlikely to send anyone from their main camp.

If it was the vanguard that turned back, then their last objective for the examination would be accomplished, signalling the start of the end of the examination.

The week that followed, there was no movement from the orcs at all. The elves sat quietly on their warships as well, serving to confirm their thoughts.

The interrogation of Lightning did not stop, but with the changing of the situation and more and more questions being answered, their interest in the shaman started to wane. When it came to the third week, some of the monitors even started asking what hobbies and books the orcs liked.

Lightning's straightforwardness saved a lot of time, even if some of them were sad that they could not use their interrogation techniques, so they started to treat Lightning better. He got three meals a day, and they made sure he got enough water and meat. Of course, they could not kill or let him go; no matter what, having a hostage like him at hand was a form of insurance.

After half a month of peace, everyone had started to get restless, and the construction of defensive towers was once again a priority. After witnessing the power of the towers while they were defending the fortress, everyone placed a lot of importance on their construction. Some of them had even painstakingly drawn out maps for strategic placement, which drew Chen Dao's mocking comment likening it to a tower defense game.

However, the defensive towers were indeed not limited to just the foot of the hill. The monitors in the command room realized that they needed to expand the battlefield, but they once again started to argue over whether or not to construct the towers on the beach.

Having the towers on the beach would obviously be to target those silver warships that had unclear motives, but some of them were worried it would anger the elves and cause them to make a move.

Chapter 260 - Temporary Peace

Chapter 260: Temporary Peace

The acting monitors were still nervous despite the relaxed atmosphere, especially since this examination could influence the selection of the year leader, but the regular students were all quite relaxed.

That was because with the end of the third week, everyone left alive had pretty much covered all their bases. Three weeks on top of accomplishing the first task meant that they had earned enough redemption points to buy Lifewater, which meant they would not lose anything even if they died.

With that in mind, everyone was visibly less tense, and even the construction of the towers had slowed down. There were more and more students who started to slack off. After all, compared to working hard, sleeping until they whatever time they felt like, then heading to the beach to enjoy the breeze and the sea was much more enjoyable.

Captain Yu was naturally furious at that, accusing them of underestimating the orcs, but everyone ignored the NPC. Even if they looked at military structure, that man had no right to order them around, so Captain Yu ended up getting so frustrated he made all the engineers focus on building the resurrection tower instead.

The elven warships remained in observation, the only difference being that their ships had moved a little in the last half a month.

Xiao Lin failed to feel happy about their peaceful situation. Ever since he learned from Qin Chuan that the war ended up in failure in actual history, he could not help but have doubts. If it really were that simple, then Dawn Academy could not have failed to such a degree.

A group of them that had Han Manman at the helm felt like they had caused a miracle after that night attack, and Han Manman even advertised that she was the one who pushed for the attack. Xiao Lin did not want any quarrel with her on that topic, and only held on to his own suspicions.

There were way too many questions in this war. First of all was the uncertainty of the elves, then the orcs being too weak.

It was indeed weakness. As ferocious the orcs appeared on the battlefield, Xiao Lin felt like the battles they had fought were too easy. He refused to believe that the team Dawn Academy sent those years ago could not even compete with these new students, and he refused to believe that no one thought about attacking at night.

In actual history, the orcs had made Dawn Academy suffer a huge loss. Even if the academy had won the war in the end, the losses were still immense.

There was also the shaman, Lightning. Xiao Lin felt like he was being too accommodating. Even with a little pressure, the shaman spilled everything, but a lot of the key details were very vague.

When Xiao Lin voiced his concerns about the orcs and elves allying with each other, Lightning only said that the two sides were indeed engaging in talks, but their differences were too big, and they failed to agree on a lot of points. He then said he was not cleared to participate in those discussions.

Remembering those suspicious letters found in the fortress, Xiao Lin felt that Lightning was lying. He could be hiding an agreement with the elves, but Xiao Lin had no proof.

In the end, it was all just speculation from Xiao Lin. Even he could not say where his doubts came from.

It started to approach a month, and with them managing to hold onto the fortress for a month, everyone managed to earn additional credits on top of their redemption points, which was good news. That night, they once again had a bonfire banquet in the fortress. The female students that were the minority to begin with were hotly fought over, being invited to various dances which served as their only source of entertainment.

Xiao Lin had mustered up the courage to ask Gu Xiaoyue, but had been rejected coldly by that moment. Even if he had anticipated it, it still left him feeling disappointed.

The banquet was held on the training grounds. The fortress was not that big, and one could see the entire fortress just by standing at the entrance. That was how Xiao Lin saw the crowd that was busying themselves not far away. He walked over in surprise. He realized it was Captain Yu and his engineers. The students had invited them to attend the banquet, but was rejected by Captain Yu.

“The construction of the resurrection tower cannot be delayed! This peace is only temporary. The orcs just don’t have enough troops at the moment. They will come back soon enough!” Captain Yu was quite unhappy with how easygoing everyone was acting, but as an NPC, he had no right to command them.

Xiao Lin showed a hint of remorse on his face, and nodded in acknowledgement. He then looked over at the silver tower. The resurrection tower was taking shape nicely. He had seen one in New Washington before, and could therefore make out an approximation.

“Does the resurrection tower need to be completely finished for it to take effect?”

“Of course, don’t underestimate the smooth exterior; the inner mechanisms are extremely complicated. Not even a single error is permitted.”

“How long do you still need to complete it?”

“A month at most! At that point we would have nothing to fear from those filthy orcs. As long as we still have our lifespan left, we’re invincible!” Captain Yu said with confidence.

At that moment, a thought entered Xiao Lin’s mind, leading him to widen his eyes in shock. He stared at the resurrection tower, not even listening to what Captain Yu was saying.

“I have something urgent to handle!”

Xiao Lin hastily departed, pulling Cheng Ming and the others who were happily partying around into the command room. Under their unhappy looks, he breathed deeply before saying, “Everyone, I had a sudden thought just now. The orcs and the elves might actually be waiting for us, which is why we had it so peaceful for such a long time!”

“Waiting?”

“They are waiting for the resurrection tower to finish being built! They need the completed resurrection tower. I’ve asked Captain Yu, and the resurrection tower’s inner mechanisms are extremely complicated. No other race could possibly replicate it. If they took back the fortress now, they would never be able to finish the tower, so they have to wait until the resurrection tower is complete!”

Han Manman laughed in exaggeration, mocking, “You’ve said that before; why are you still saying the same thing? I think you’ve had too much to drink! Don’t you think there’s something wrong with your guess? If they wait until the tower is completed, then we would be under the Law of Immortality, which means the orcs won’t be able to take back the city that easily!”

“It’s not that simple.” Cheng Ming had caught on to Xiao Lin’s train of thought. He might be honest, but he was not stupid. He said hesitantly, “If the enemies only crippled us and not killed us, then captured us alive, they can just bring us out of the resurrection tower’s radius and kill us then.”

Class Eight’s Sheng Guo then said, “Surely that’s not possible. First of all, if we can always kill ourselves to ensure resurrection if we’re crippled. Taking a step back, if the orcs really are aiming for the completed tower, can’t we just destroy the tower itself when the time comes? Surely the orcs considered it as well.”

Chapter 261 - A Strange Feeling

Chapter 261: A Strange Feeling

Xiao Lin's guess once again embroiled them in an intense debate, but most of them felt that it was not very possible. Just like what Han Manman and Sheng Guo said, even if the orcs wanted the completed resurrection tower, there was no way they could eliminate all of them instantly. As long as they had enough time, Dawn Academy could choose to destroy the resurrection tower before leaving.

Of course, Cheng Ming and Chen Dao, plus a few others, felt like Xiao Lin's suggestion should be taken very seriously. This was Planet Norma after all: a world filled with magic. If the orcs had deliberately placed certain traps in the fortress, it was not a stretch to imagine that they could all instantly be immobilized.

That was why in the days that followed, the students who had relaxed for over half a month were once again mobilized. They were made to search every corner of the fortress, looking for anything that could be remotely suspicious, and the debate that happened in the command room started to spread among the students.

There were quite a lot of complaints among them, and most of them had a lot of private discussions that mostly ended up with the conclusion that Xiao Lin was trying to make a scene out of nothing. Some of them even had intentions to retaliate.

Xiao Lin's hypothesis was that the entire amphibious assault had been part of the orcs' plan from the start, or even a ploy done with the help of the elves to lure Dawn Academy there. Based on their usual actions, Dawn Academy would start building a resurrection tower after taking over the fortress, which was the end goal of both the orcs and the elves.

Based on the current results, the possibility was not low, but there were way too many problems with the theory. First of all, the orcs had no way to guarantee that Dawn Academy would attack that place. The orcs also had very valuable resources stored in the fortress. Their cavalry was also definitely in the vanguard, and losing those resources would greatly tax their cavalry. Putting their entire army at risk for just the chance of getting a resurrection tower was not a very smart gamble.

Captain Yu was also not very happy. As the engineer in charge of the resurrection tower, the other students had no right to interfere with him, and Xiao Lin's suspicions infuriated him. If they listened to Xiao Lin, the construction of the resurrection tower would have to be halted.

That was why Captain Yu constantly visited Xiao Lin, emphasizing that the resurrection towers were a miracle unique to those of them for Earth, and the Law of Immortality would never work on the natives. Even if those orcs and elves got their hands on a completed resurrection tower, it would mean nothing.

At that point, they had finished investigating the fortress. The students had basically turned the entire fortress upside down to no avail, even the nearby beach and hills, which were filled with traces of their digging. They could not even find any tools that had a trace of magic, let alone any magical arrays or scrolls.

The ones supporting Xiao Lin started to dwindle. Chen Dao was still firmly on Xiao Lin's side, but Chen Dao's suspicions had shifted to Lightning. As the second-in-command of the entire legion, the shaman being so easily captured was extremely suspicious. That was especially true, since he was a mage, which meant no one could guarantee he did not have some mysterious spell that would cause them trouble when the time came.

That was why Chen Dao religiously kept his eyes on Lightning in the following days. Spells, especially large scale ones, always required long cast times: that was an unavoidable truth. Chen Dao was very confident he would be able to sense any spell being casted immediately.

Mages may be very threatening, but a mage that had been tied up and constantly being held with an arrow to his head was not threatening at all.

After that, Gu Xiaoyue started to guard Lightning as well, taking shifts with Chen Dao. Chen Dao chose to take the night shifts, while Gu Xiaoyue stood watch during the day. They had very simple responsibilities: if Lightning made any sudden movements, they would send an arrow right through his head.

Lightning only smiled coldly at that. Even though Xiao Lin tried to get more information from him, Lightning just said he had given everything he should, and stopped talking.

The investigation was once again stalled. Even though Xiao Lin's own prestige did not suffer much from it, especially since everyone had seen his contributions in the last few battles. Everyone had started to fall into the culture of admiring the strong in Dawn Academy, which naturally meant Xiao Lin had the approval of many, but Han Manman and some others were increasingly more hostile toward Xiao Lin. Some of them even wanted to remove him from the command room.

It was a week after that debacle when their fire signal towers were once again lit. They had noticed a new orc army advancing toward them thirty kilometers away. Compared to the orc foot soldiers they encountered before, this new army was without a doubt much stronger. They had failed to get any reports more detailed than that because all the scouts they had sent for all killed mercilessly.

That caused a lot of alarm among the acting class monitors, causing them to eschew their relaxed attitudes. Even if the orc troops needed a few days to reach them, the monitors had ordered all the students to start with intensive training in the hope that they could whip everyone back into shape.

However, everyone maintained a positive attitude. It was nearing the end of the examination. They only needed to hold on for about half a month before the wolf cavalry units in the frontlines would be forced to retreat for resources. At that point, Dawn City's reinforcements would arrive, signalling the end of the examination.

During this period of time, Xiao Lin had been hard at work trying to figure out what strategies their foes could employ. Even though his investigations had all led to dead ends, he did not give up on his theory. He got progressively more unsettled the nearer they got to the end.

Xiao Lin was very frustrated. He did not believe he had some sort of sixth sense that could sense danger, especially since he was inexperienced and did not even have any skills related to that.

However, that feeling was very strange. Ever since the night assault ended, Xiao Lin's heart felt like it had a strange pressure on it, causing him to have a strange sense of frustration. The feeling was so intense that he would even be awoken by it at night.

That was why Xiao Lin did not dare ignore his theory, no matter how skeptical everyone else was.

Chapter 262 - The Shaman's Death

Chapter 262: The Shaman's Death

The only thing Xiao Lin had been doing all this time had been to try to find out the source of his strange feeling. No matter how much he thought about it, the only clue he had was Lightning.

At that moment, the orc army was fast approaching. Xiao Lin hurried to the cells. The fortress's cells were underground and very narrow. There were only about ten rooms, but they obviously were not using any of the other cells other than the one for Lightning. It was very damp, and the light was dim. Coupled with the stench in the air, it was not a pleasant environment.

Gu Xiaoyue was in charge of keeping guard during the day. Xiao Lin had been reluctant to let that woman take up such a painful task, but Gu Xiaoyue did not mind, even though Xiao Lin had hinted to her that she could reject it. However, Gu Xiaoyue said that she was the only one who could take up the task.

It was true that Gu Xiaoyue was the best candidate. She had high intelligence and affinity for the elements, which meant she was very sensitive to the elements in the air, allowing her to be able to detect any strange movements from the shaman before anyone else. After all, no matter what the shaman wanted to do, he would first need to use the elements.

"How is it, has Lightning done anything?" Xiao Lin asked in the underground cells.

"Nothing has changed."

Gu Xiaoyue had some fatigue in her eyes. Xiao Lin squinted, finally noticing the exhaustion on her face through the dim light. He could not help but say with concern, "Let me get someone else to take your place today. You should avoid overtaxing yourself."

Gu Xiaoyue was about to say something when Xiao Lin immediately interrupted her, thinking she would reject it, "Don't even try, we will need you for the upcoming battle. This directly relates to our defense of the fortress."

Gu Xiaoyue pushed up her glasses. "No, I was just about to say that I've been feeling very uncomfortable for some reason these few days."

"Are you unwell? Why didn't you say so earlier."

“I’m not referring to my body!” Gu Xiaoyue furrowed her eyebrows, mulling over what to say before continuing. “It’s just something I can’t describe that well. It’s like I’m being pressured, and it’s hard to breathe sometimes. It feels like danger is fast approaching.”

Xiao Lin gaped in surprise. Gu Xiaoyue thought he did not believe her, sighing as she said, “I know it’s nothing concrete, but the feeling is way too intense, as if danger is right beside me.”

“You feel that way too!”

“Too?”

It was now Gu Xiaoyue’s turn to be surprised. The two of them immediately fell into silence. If it were just one of them, they could brush it off as a coincidental feeling, but two of them feeling the same way was far too strange.

“Let’s go see Lightning!”

After that moment of silence, Xiao Lin could not figure anything out, neither could he confirm that Gu Xiaoyue and himself were the only ones who had that feeling. Why would it be just the two of them? Were there others with the same feeling?

When they reached Lightning’s cells, there was a rusted pillar in between them. Lightning was tied up in a damp, dark corner. There was only a palm-sized window on the wall, which was the only place air could flow through. Lightning’s eyes were shut as he sat down, a posture he maintained most of the time.

“Lightning, I just received a report that your army is marching toward us. Do you have anything to say?” Xiao Lin’s voice echoed throughout the cell.

Lightning did not reply, and Xiao Lin repeated his question. He furrowed an eyebrow and suddenly had a foreboding feeling. He turned to Gu Xiaoyue and ordered, “Quick! Get the other monitors over, and remember to bring the keys!”

The keys to the cell were guarded by the monitors on a rotational basis. Gu Xiaoyue seemed to have realized something as well as she hurried away. After a few minutes, the monitors rushed inside.

Looking at the unmoving Lightning, the few of them were deep in discussion. About half of the monitors were all there, so their combat ability was assured, which meant they did not need to worry about any tricks from the shaman. After opening up the cell, Xiao Lin shot inside before Cheng Ming could even warn him to be careful. He reached out and touched Lightning, and the latter immediately fell over.

“He’s dead.” Xiao Lin said after checking his pulse and breath.

“Impossible! How could an orc be so weak? We did not even torture him, and even gave him three meals a day!” Cheng Ming refused to believe it.

“Let’s bring him out to investigate. Maybe we can find the cause of death?” Han Manman suggested.

Chen Dao immediately had a look of contempt, “What do you mean by cause of death? Lightning has been guarded by Gu Xiaoyue and I every day. I can assure you, nothing wrong happened while I was watching!”

“I can guarantee it as well.” Gu Xiaoyue added.

Han Manman replied coldly, “Then what are you afraid of?”

“Alright stop! Don’t fight. It’s just an orc. So what if he’s dead? Don’t let it affect our teamwork.” Sheng Guo once again tried to play the mediator.

“Let’s bring him out to investigate. This is way too strange.” Xiao Lin looked up after his own investigation, sighing.

Lightning’s corpse was quickly brought to the training field. The first thing they had to determine was time of death, which was easy enough to determine. Lightning still had some response when he was given dinner last night, so he had to have died during the night or earlier that day.

The next was the cause of death. There did not seem to be visible wounds, and the strange thing was Lightning had a strange smile on his hardened face, one filled with mockery.

Who was he mocking before he died? The most likely answer was the humans, which then brought the question of why. Why would he mock them as a prisoner?

“Oi, Xiao Lin, what are you doing?” Chen Dao had been arguing with Han Manman when he noticed Xiao Lin had his sleeve up, preparing to lift up Lightning’s clothes.

Xiao Lin was not in the mood to entertain him, “I’m obviously investigating! We need to know if he died of natural causes!”

Chen Dao was beside himself. “You are suspicious too!”

Xiao Lin was beginning to get annoyed. “Fine, let’s just call it something else. We’re just performing an autopsy. Happy now?”

Some of them felt like Xiao Lin was making too big a deal out of it. Even though having the shaman as a hostage was great, it was not a big deal if he died. Trying to investigate was unnecessary, especially to the degree of doing something as disgusting as stripping that old and ugly orc naked.

Xiao Lin did not know how to perform an autopsy, even if he had seen it on TV before. It was regretful that he did not know how to do a professional job, but he could at least check for any injuries.

The other monitors probably felt too disgusted to do it and left the job to Xiao Lin. After checking the entire body a few times, the others started to get impatient when Xiao Lin suddenly exclaimed.

Chapter 263 - Danger

Chapter 263: Danger

There was a very dense red dot near Lightning's heart which could easily be overlooked if one did not make a careful observation. Xiao Lin had been examining carefully for a long time, and that red dot was the only thing that looked suspicious.

"This is a stain left by a blood clot." Xiao Lin stood up and had a gloomy expression on his face. Everyone else appeared similarly displeased.

"Lightning's death was a murder, then?"

"Is that argument still valid? At the time, this orc had its hands tied behind its back. How could he possibly be able to pierce such a small hole in his own heart? Now that you mention it, what kind of weapon could even cause such a wound?"

Chen Dao seemed very upset when he sensed other people's gazes. Just as he was about to explain himself, Xiao Lin spoke ahead of him, "I trust that this has nothing to do with Chen Dao and Gu Xiaoyue."

"How are you so sure?" Han Manman questioned. Her relationship with Chen Dao has been very rough those days, so she was certainly going to seize such an opportunity.

Xiao Lin glanced at the woman with a gaze that seemed to chastise her for being an idiot. He then said lightly, "It's simple. Because there's nothing to be gained out of it! Lightning is our hostage. We could have used a shaman like him to do something, especially in these moments when the orcs are approaching. If worse comes to worse, we can still delay the enemy somehow, but he just had to die at this time. Doesn't take much thinking to know who'll benefit from this!"

Cheng Ming's face changed slightly. "You mean, the elves!"

"I'm afraid so." Xiao Lin raised his head and looked at the silver fleet in the distance, but he was still a little unsure whether it was those elves that really did so.

Questions still remained. If it was the work of those elves, how did they kill Lightning without the humans knowing it? Why did they have to wait until then? Would it not have been better if they killed Lightning before the confession?

Lightning death was nothing too serious. After all, it was just an orc, and it did not matter if he died. Just as Sheng Guo said, once the orc army made their next approach, there was no need for a dead orc to cause internal disunity.

Although Han Manman accused Gu Xiaoyue and Chen Dao of failing to perform their duties several times, she had all but lost their bargaining chips. However, most of the acting monitors such as Cheng Ming adhered to the principle of downplaying major issues, and everyone soon turned their attention completely to how to defend.

However, the fact that those elves made another move left a lingering shadow over everyone's hearts. It was more than half a month before the exam was due to end, and that unexpected incident seemed to remind everyone that the exam could not possibly be that simple.

To everyone's satisfaction however, the defenses on the inner side of the fortress still remained strong. The number of defensive towers during that period has almost doubled to more than 50, of which nearly a quarter were spell towers. Judging from the previous battle situation, even the most pessimistic people felt that they might just be successful as long as they defended with all their hearts.

With that mood in mind, three days passed in a flash. With the help of the vision enhancing scroll, the orcs' front-line army was finally faintly visible. Some took a deep breath.

There were only a small number of orcs in the army and the total was roughly estimated to be around a few thousand individuals, but the key was composition of that army. On the forefront was a huge four-legged, tank-like, heavily-built monster on the plains. It was crawling slowly, followed by a fully armed orc infantry. The infantry was also completely different from the previous ones, as they were more than just a couple of ranks stronger in terms of equipment and ability.

Xiao Lin and the others knew nothing about orc soldiers like those, but the fortress' NPCs were slightly familiar with them. After receiving the information, the class monitors their expressions soured even more.

Those were sieging behemoth orcs, the most elite out of all the orcs. They not only possessed extremely high defensive power, but unparalleled collision strength too. Their speed might seem slow as of then, but as long as they surged forth in a burst, their instantaneous explosive power could destroy the sturdiest of walls in an instant.

Of course, this kind of behemoth siege orcs had plenty of weaknesses as well, such as weak stamina, slow movement speed, and various other things. The orcs did not bring along the behemoth when attacking Dawn City so as to prevent themselves from being slowed down. Moreover, few such behemoths existed within the entire orc race, but they were specifically utilized for that.

Captain Yu recognized the totem emblems of that orc infantry. It belonged to the orcs' most elite troops. Captain Yu did not specifically speak of the troop's strength, but he sighed continuously, which clearly signified that their combat power had reached a level that the humans could not handle.

According to the original plan, the orc's elite combat forces were all at the base and it was not possible to send them all there at one time. The students were therefore in a race against time with the orcs. Taking advantage of the orcs' lack of sufficient troops in the surrounding areas, the students could win as long as they could defend the fortress and forced both the orcs' front lines and wolf cavalry to retreat.

However, the orcs did not seem unprepared at all. All those dispatches could not have been made after the supply depot was lost, and the landfall operation plan formulated by Dawn Academy had never taken account of the orcs' elite troops even from the outset.

They had miscalculated.

Should they continue defending?

Could it be better to retreat?

Those ideas had already started surfacing in the hearts of many people. By then, the ever-silent elven fleet's loathsome plan was finally revealed.

If they retreated, they could only avoid the orc army by walking along the coast. In that case however, they would completely be exposed to the fleet's attack range.

The monitors in the command room quarreled over it, and the instructors also made an exception to join in the debate. After all, the next choice was likely to be the most critical part of the exam. They might have already had a vague realization that the real difficulty of that exam was during those final moments. Whatever decision they made after that would probably affect the final results, not to mention the year leader's evaluation too.

More surprisingly, Xiao Lin was the sole notable absentee during those few meetings at the headquarters. Although Cheng Ming called Xiao Lin several times, the latter refused politely and simply asked Qin Chuan to attend on behalf of Class Seven. Xiao Lin would then just glean some information from Qin Chuan later on.

In that regard, Han Manman either dismissed him for being a coward or chastised his irresponsibility for wanting to test their true capabilities during such a crucial moment.

Those who knew Xiao Lin very well, such as Chen Dao and the others, were well aware that Xiao Lin was not that kind of person. In fact, Xiao Lin had been acting very strangely since Lightning's death. He no longer cared about the orc army outside the fortress, nor did he attend any meeting among the monitors. It was as if he had already resigned himself to everything.

Chapter 264 - A Shocking Development

Chapter 264: A Shocking Development

What was Xiao Lin thinking?

Unbeknownst to the rest, even his classmates from Class Seven—such as Zhou Feng—returned without success after attempting to enquire further from Xiao Lin. Qin Chuan and the others even persuaded Xiao Lin not to beat himself up over it. Even if the situation had already reached the point of no return, simply doing nothing would affect the final evaluation nonetheless.

Xiao Lin merely smiled and said, “Don't worry. There's just something I haven't figured out yet.”

“But it's too late now!” Qin Chuan was getting anxious. His promotion to sophomore year hinged on that exam.

Xiao Lin shook his head and sighed, “If that battle really was a trap, I believe that the orcs and the elves must have been prepared for this, otherwise Dawn Academy's defeat wouldn't have happened in actual history. Instructor, do you really think we can rely on ourselves to change the course history?”

“No.” Qin Chuan said after a moment's silence. He was not underestimating those new students, because it was an indisputable fact that the freshmen's combat strength was quite commendable.

However, it was no longer a question of a one- or two-rank difference when facing the orcs' most elite troops.

Although they did very well at the beginning of the battle and defeated the orc infantry rather swiftly, their odds of winning were too low in terms of the overall situation.

At that point, Captain Yu, who was in charge of the resurrection tower, looked for the other acting class monitors. The resurrection tower must never fall into the orcs' hands, so he planned to install a self-destructing device near the resurrection tower. If the fortress really was breached, he could destroy the resurrection tower as a last resort.

The so-called self-destructing device was actually a high-strength magic scroll, the kind that could deliver great destructive power on the building. Basically, anyone who was responsible for making the resurrection tower would be in possession of it. Such a defense mechanism was very much necessary, and it was also why the captain did not seem to worry about the resurrection tower being snatched away.

Captain Yu's confident remarks snapped Xiao Lin back to his senses when he was told about it. It was as if he woke up from a big dream when he stood up with a look of horror on his face.

"What's gotten into you?" Qin Chuan was puzzled with Xiao Lin's reaction. He was responsible for relaying the content of the meeting to Xiao Lin despite his slight disappointment in Xiao Lin.

"I understand now! I keep having this strange feeling ever since Lightning's death. Plus, there was also that anxiety in my heart during that period of time. I finally understand what happened!" Xiao Lin's tone was urgent and low.

"What are you blabbering about?" Qin Chuan still did not understand.

Xiao Lin opened his mouth, as if wanting to say something, but then shut it again all of a sudden. He left the room and rushed to the top of the fortress. At that point, almost all the students were still defending their posts. The orcs were camping a few miles away, and although they had yet to commence any offensive action for the time being, no one dared to let their guard down.

"Where did Captain Yu go?" Xiao Lin found Chen Dao and asked.

"He went to install that so-called self-detonating device. I can't believe they had such a powerful magic scroll and didn't even take it out sooner. It might even be helpful to the battle!" Chen Dao had plenty of complaints.

However, Xiao Lin had already ran off, leaving Chen Dao with a baffled expression.

The resurrection tower was built in the centremost location. It was 70-80% complete as of then, and it was slated to complete in a few days at most if nothing untoward happened. According to Captain Yu's plan, he would continue to insist on completing the resurrection tower before assessing the situation and deciding whether it had to be destroyed.

There were architects aplenty near the resurrection tower, and some students would occasionally pass by. Since the fortress was filled with people and defending it was not a problem, it was left unattended most of the time.

No one was surprised to see Xiao Lin. In fact, those NPCs rarely had any contact with the students. After all, it was just a simulated exam. Except for Captain Yu, most of the freshmen did not have much interest in communicating with anyone else.

Xiao Lin took the initiative to speak with Captain Yu because the two of them were quite familiar with each other. Although Captain Yu seemed anxious, he still patiently said, “The self-destructing device is a standard configuration of the resurrection tower. I didn’t deliberately conceal it before. According to the regulations, no one else should know about this except for a few people. After all, the Academy is still quite worried that such a thing would fall into enemy hands.”

“Security purposes? Oh, don’t worry about it. Just look at this!” Captain Yu was amicable with Xiao Lin and thus made a brief introduction.

A light blue spell formation, visible to the naked eye, was present at the base of the resurrection tower. The spell patterns on it were very complex, but they were all directly engraved using the scrolls. It was rumored that they were made by very high-level mages, and all Captain Yu knew was how to use it.

“This self-destructing device is divided into two scrolls, both used to power it up. Haha, you heard that right. This device is very safe. If you want to power it, you need to activate both scrolls at the same time.”

“Where are those two scrolls?”

“It’s with me, of course. Don’t worry!” Captain Yu probably felt that Xiao Lin was worried about their safety.

“Can you show them to me? I’m still a little worried.” Xiao Lin remained calm.

“Just this once. That’s the most I can show you.”

Captain Yu hesitated, then took out two scrolls from his possession. He raised them up and said, “Besides, after the resurrection tower is completed, these two scrolls will be guarded by different people. The selection of candidates is confidential though.”

“Mm, that’s good.” Xiao Lin pretended to be at ease, then suddenly asked, “By the way, what level of strength did you achieve, Captain Yu?”

“What?”

Captain Yu was a little surprised by that question but quickly answered, “This is embarrassing. To tell you the truth, my basics aren’t that good. I’m just fortunate to have a little bit of talent as an architect when I was on Earth. It was only when the resurrection tower appeared that the college began paying attention to that talent. That was how I was able to follow them to the New World... Well, for now, I’ve just managed to pass Black Iron-rank.”

“Oh, apologies then!”

“Apologies?”

Confusion had barely sunk into Captain Yu when he suddenly noticed Xiao Lin pulling out the Holy Soul Sword. Frightened, he asked angrily, “What are you trying to do?”

Thump!

Captain Yu had been knocked down to the ground. He fainted but was not injured. With Xiao Lin activating his Miracle and transforming all his attributes into strength, Captain Yu was very much vulnerable despite being on Black Iron-rank.

Everything happened so suddenly that the architects around him were caught by surprise. Meanwhile, the new students passing by stared at Xiao Lin with a heinous look.

A few seconds later, those students made a desperate run toward the headquarters.

Xiao Lin had no time to pay attention to those people. After knocking down the captain, he quickly grabbed the two scrolls, placed the Holy Soul Sword down, then held one scroll each in his left and right hand. He stood quietly in front of the resurrection tower with a mocking sneer in the corner of his mouth. He shouted loudly at a distance in a very cold tone, “How about that? Still scared to show yourselves right now?”

Chapter 265 - Female Elf

Chapter 265: Female Elf

The most ethereal of voices was heard after a few seconds of silence. “I’m curious. How did you notice it?”

A woman appeared some distance away with a look of surprise on her face. She had short hair, was of moderate build, and looked rather nonchalant as she approached Xiao Lin slowly.

However, Xiao Lin immediately felt a pressure coming down on his face like the tide. It was a feeling that could nearly suffocate a person instantaneously, but Xiao Lin was not unfamiliar with that feeling, having felt it a similar feeling lingering in the past couple of days. The smothering feeling in his heart was actually just a small-scale version of it.

Xiao Lin bit down hard on his lip, to the point where he injured his skin and filled his mouth with blood. He wanted to use the pain to dispel that suffocating feeling. It was an instinctive reaction that surfaced from the depths of his soul, and the severe pain had somewhat relieved him of the pressure that bore down on him. At the very least, he could speak despite needing a great amount of effort to do so.

“This has gotten me thinking ever since Lightning died. I couldn’t make sense of how anyone was able to kill him, but then I realized, we’ve been thinking about this all wrong. All of us thought that the elves must have done something straight from their fleet of warships. I don’t doubt that you have that kind of ability, but it must be extremely hard to execute with such precision and stealth.

“I couldn’t figure it out this entire time, but I had a sudden realization just a few moments ago. If your goal is the resurrection tower, and if you wanted to obtain the complete tower while preventing us from destroying it beforehand, what could be the best way to do so?”

Xiao Lin spoke in slowly and quietly, then curled his lips in a wry smile. “The best way is simple, really. You just have to sneak in!”

The woman cocked her brow. “Is that how you concluded that someone must have sneaked in here?”

“Uh, of course not. After all, I won’t have a way out if I just went ahead and did this. I can’t tell anyone else either, because I don’t know who you are and whether you have some way to keep watch on all of us.” Xiao Lin glanced at the magic scroll in his hands. His nails were already full of blood, and just like before, self-mutilation was his way of ensuring that he would not be subject to the female elf’s aura. Had he not done so, he was worried that he might not be able to activate the magic scrolls.

At that point, the other acting monitors and instructors also rushed over after hearing the news. Han Manman of Class Four had already rushed to the forefront. Being a mage, she had already taken out her wand, asking as she walked, “Xiao Lin! Have you gone absolutely nuts! Even if you decide to give up on yourself, don’t drag us down in the process. If that’s what you’re doing, I might as well just deal with you right now!”

Although Han Manman’s words were filled with anger, there appeared to be excitement on her face as she had been waiting eagerly for that opportunity to come. That was precisely the reason why Xiao Lin could not act on anything unless he was very sure of his guess.

If he did what he just did and his guess ended up wrong, Xiao Lin would have completely lost everyone’s trust. After all, Captain Yu was on their side despite being an NPC. Assaulting one’s allies was no small crime.

Han Manman’s gloating did not last too long. Since she was the first person to walk down the stairs and rushed to the forefront, the huge burst of pressure bore down on her the moment she stepped into the training ground. She reacted much worse than Xiao Lin, falling to the ground right then and there. Trembling from head to toe, her lips quivered as though she wanted to say something but could not do so.

Han Manman stared at Xiao Lin fiercely and resentfully. She still regarded Xiao Lin as the source of all that, and at that point, tried her best to raise the wand in her hand. In that state of hers, gathering the elements was probably impossible to do, let alone casting spells.

The woman in front of Xiao Lin watched Han Manman’s movements, and a look of displeasure flashed between her brows. She therefore raised her left hand ever so gently. A short silver bow that was less than half an arm’s length was held in her palm. Its bowstring was as thin as hair and it shone with an eye-piercing glow.

The bow was raised and the bowstring was drawn.

After the bowstring vibrated slightly, Han Manman had collapsed onto the ground with a stupefied and perplexed expression, despite Xiao Lin noticing that no arrows had flown past. Blood did not drip down to the ground either.

Xiao Lin's heart thumped suddenly and he finally understood how Lightning died. It was probably the work of that unusually delicate, small, and exquisite bow, which had been used to shoot directly through Lightning's heart.

The others who were preparing to come down were also surprised and froze in place. The speed of the woman's shot was almost as fast as lightning, and there was no wound to be seen on Han Manman's body. Those who were slightly closer were still puzzled as to what happened. Someone shouted at Xiao Lin in horror and anger, "Xiao Lin! What the hell are you doing!"

By then, Xiao Lin had no time to explain everything to them and did not even bother to turn his head slightly. His eyes remained fixed on that seemingly ordinary woman, and his bloody hands were still clutching tightly on the magic scrolls that could activate the self-destructing device.

Xiao Lin felt like he was walking on a tightrope. The weather might have been very cool at that moment, but dense beads of sweat formed on his forehead and streamed down his cheeks.

The woman's identity was still unknown, but it had completely exceeded Xiao Lin's expectations. Based on his initial guess, anyone who could sneak in without being detected must surely be superior to the students in terms of strength. Any attempt to locate them would prove impossible, so all he could do was choose a near life-threatening ruse to flush the enemy out.

Xiao Lin was confident because of his initial guess. The elves and the orcs co-operated solely for the resurrection tower, so for them, the combined weight of everyone in this fortress was never as important as the resurrection tower. Indeed, the enemy could care less about the lives lost in the fortress or who had control over it, but if Xiao Lin wanted to destroy the resurrection tower, then the enemy had no choice but to be flushed out.

While it was clear that Xiao Lin succeeded, the enemy's strength appeared to be more terrifying than expected. Such spiritual fear and pressure had been felt only at the academy's opening ceremony when the golden dragon appeared. That could only mean that the woman's strength was comparable to that of a golden dragon!

Everyone in the entire fortress combined was probably not even enough to stuff between the dragon's teeth!

Xiao Lin's heart felt very bitter and he was not at all happy that his guess was proved right, because it meant that their monthly exam journey would end that day.

"Interesting humans."

The woman's laughter was very pleasant, like a silver bell. A green halo then suddenly enveloped her and the light bloomed abruptly like a flower, covering the entire fortress in an instant.

The glow was fleeting, and when Xiao Lin opened his eyes again, before him was a pair of long ears, light green skin, and a face with almost no flaws. Like the rumors suggested, the elven race

was rich in beautiful females. One might be unaccustomed to their green skin, but in no way did that character hinder their aesthetically-pleasing looks.

Chapter 266 - Restrained

Chapter 266: Restrained

“As much as I admire your courage and wisdom, it’s quite unfortunate because you really shouldn’t have stopped me this time.” Although the female elf’s appearance had completely changed, her pleasant voice remained more or less the same and her Chinese was much more fluent than the orc shaman.

“Elves like us have always emphasized on the policy of neutrality. The reason I personally came here was to avoid unnecessary casualties as much as possible. Too much blood has been shed in this war. You might be the invaders of time and space, but us elves cannot bear to watch these excessive killings.”

The female elf had a sorrowful and compassionate look. She then began walking slowly toward Xiao Lin. As the light green halo passed by, everyone in the entire fortress was horrified to discover themselves lying limp on the ground, unable to move at all.

Xiao Lin had almost bitten off his lips, but the pressured feeling was completely different from previously. After the green light brushed past, the pressure and anxiety lingering in his heart for several days had completely disappeared. A calm and tranquil feeling replaced it, but it did not make anyone feel the least bit pleased. It was incredibly difficult to make any movements under that feeling.

“Huh! That’s nice of you to say. Why did you kill her, then! And Lightning, the orc shaman. Didn’t you kill him without hesitation?” Xiao Lin tried to think of ways to break free while distracting the female elf’s attention as much as possible.

The female elf tilted her head and glanced at Han Manman’s body before sighing. “Her spirit is in a very unstable state. It’s very unfavourable for us, you and I both. As for that orc, he wouldn’t’ve lived long anyway even if I didn’t kill him. Shamans aren’t allowed to commit suicide, and all I did was help him set himself free. That’s what he wanted too.”

“What do you mean?”

“How do you think I came here?” Victory was within the female elf’s grasp, but she suddenly halted her footsteps and looked calmly at Xiao Lin amidst all the chaos.

It was just as Xiao Lin planned and he thus answered unhesitatingly, “My guess is that you sneaked in when we attacked the orcs the other night. After all, that was the only chance. You wouldn’t have been able to avoid the attention if you sneaked in at any other time.”

“Correct, but not quite.”

The female elf squatted down and brought her flawless face close to Xiao Lin. Her light scent was intoxicating, and curiosity flashed in her eyes as she whispered, “I’ve actually been very curious about you.”

Xiao Lin froze, and then realized that her curiosity probably referred to all those colonists from earth.

Sure enough, the female elf continued, “I really wanted to get to know all of you deeply, which is why I disregarded the orcs’ objections and changed my plan at the last minute to sneak into your fortress all alone. I posed as one of your female soldiers, ate with you, lived with you, all because I really wanted to know how different you are from us.”

“And?”

The female elf stood up again and merely shook her head. Unsure whether it was to express regret or whether she did not understand the question, she eventually whispered, “I won’t do anything to your lives. This green light isn’t fatal. It’ll only incapacitate you temporarily. I’ll leave after taking the resurrection tower.”

“This is just an unfinished resurrection tower!”

“My original plan was to wait until it was fully complete, but unfortunately you found out. Not that it matters anyway. I’ll just bring him away too.” The female elf had prepared well in advance and pointed to Captain Yu who was not far away.

“Xiao...Xiao Lin, hurry up and use the self-destructing scroll!” Captain Yu had gradually come to his senses and shouted with great effort. After all, Xiao Lin did not use a lot of strength when knocking him down earlier, and his own strength levels were also Black Iron-rank.

“Don’t bother. You can’t even move a finger with that strength of yours.”

“It’s impossible to possess such suppressive force even at Gold-rank. You! Who are you!” Captain Yu glared.

“Heh, you mustn’t forget that Gold is not the highest rank there is. Although Planet Norma’s people seem to be inferior in terms of cultivation compared to invaders like yourself, it doesn’t mean that we’ll lose to you when our strength is at our peak.”

Captain Yu widened his eyes in astonishment. Above Gold-rank were the much more unattainable Epic- and Legend-rank, of which few individuals existed even among both earthlings and Normans.

Similarly, the power held by those two ranks of people were far too immense and terrifying. They were almost equivalent to nuclear weapons. The implication of their existence was solely strategic deterrence, but even in the war between Dawn Academy and the orcs, neither side has used individuals of such strength levels to fight on a large scale.

Even the knuckleheaded orcs were well aware that a fight between Epic- and Legend-rank individuals were practically genocide with no further room for maneuvering. Both sides therefore had a tacit understanding not to take the initiative and dispatch someone of that rank.

Xiao Lin's face turned pale and he finally understood why that battle plan ended in a disastrous defeat in history. It was because the elves disregarded the tacit rules and arbitrarily dispatched someone of that level, making the collapse of the fortress unavoidable.

In fact, the female elf harped on about reducing killings, and in fact, no one else was hurt other than Han Manman and the female student whom she took the place of.

However, one should not forget that the orcs' most elite army were still waiting there outside the fortress. They were probably waiting to see what would happen there before charging over all at once. It did not take a lot of imagination to know the fate of those who were completely immobilized and lost all combat effectiveness.

"Can you stop the orcs if they charge in?" Xiao Lin held on to his last glimmer of hope and asked.

The female elf was silent for a few seconds. "We have an agreement with the orcs. We won't interfere with each other in this cooperation. I can only promise that my decisions will be what I ought to do, but I can't violate the agreement in the name of the Tree of Life."

"Such hypocritical kindness!" Xiao Lin had no strength to even sneer.

"I'm sorry. Do allow me to give you a kind reminder: I know you've tried to stimulate your response system with the pain created by your self-harm earlier, but it's useless. This restraining spell comes directly from law itself. It restricts your speed, mental power, strength, and everything else."

Everyone gasped all of a sudden. In fact, Xiao Lin was not the only one struggling to break free. It was the same with Cheng Ming, Chen Dao, and the rest. They were all trying to break free from the restraints in their own ways, but everyone gave up struggling once they heard what the female elf said. If it really was law-based, then the difference between ranks was already far more than what anyone could resist.

Chapter 267 - Final Hope

Chapter 267: Final Hope

The actual historical battle saw Dawn Academy's plan frustrated due to the forceful intervention of that female elf. After all, it was Planet Norma, where even the most meticulous of command plans would look like a joke in the face of such absolute power.

The female elf was very confident. Faced with the group of people inside the fortress who were no more than Black Iron-rank at the strongest, she believed she could crush all of them. As a result, she did not even bother to take away the self-destruct activation scroll after immobilizing and chose instead to bring back Captain Yu first.

She drew the bowstring of her dainty bow once more. Several aquamarine-colored beams were fired out, landing like raindrops in a circle on the ground around the resurrection tower. The ground then shattered open, and everyone could see that her intention was to take away the entire tower along with its base.

“Captain Yu, how big is the range and explosive power of this self-destructing device once activated?” Xiao Lin suddenly asked in a quiet voice.

At that moment, Captain Yu was suffering in pain and feeling conflicted. He could not elect to commit suicide in such a state, let alone resist. Once captured by the elves, it might mean that he would never come back again. He probably thought that Xiao Lin wanted to use the self-destructing device’s explosive power to harm that woman, but sadly, he knew better than anyone else that there was no one in the fortress who could fight against that female elf.

“Its explosive power is only equivalent to a Gold-rank spell. Due to a fear of accidental injury, the explosion range has been carefully calculated and it’s not very large. The core explosive power covers about half the training ground at most, but the resulting force of impact isn’t weak either. It’s more than enough to destroy this fortress.”

Captain Yu had a very detailed understanding of those materials since he was the one responsible for the resurrection tower’s construction, but there was no doubt that such information was extremely confidential during peacetime. In particular, once the self-destructing scroll was activated, it also meant that the fortress would be completely destroyed. That would be equivalent to abandoning the mission, but at that moment, he was no longer in the mood to conceal it.

The corner of the female elf’s mouth curled up slightly into a smile, though it was hard to make out whether the smile was sarcasm or pity. Perhaps she was just sympathizing with the powerless humans that they were.

“The entire training ground?”

Xiao Lin looked around, and besides a few NPC architects, there were only a few acting monitors and instructors in the vicinity. The other students were guarding strictly at the city wall. In addition to the fact that the light beam came so suddenly and no one had managed to react yet, he was certain that no one else would be within the scope of the explosion.

The expression on Xiao Lin’s face suddenly became calm, almost too oddly in fact. He slowly began speaking in a very low tone, “You just said that this restraining spell is a law-level restraint. I’m curious: if you’re really that great, why don’t you just look for Ivanovich? He’s the pioneer that enabled us to resurrect.”

“It’s useless to provoke me and sow anger.” The female elf continued to do her thing. She carefully cleaned the soil around the resurrection tower so as not to destroy it when she took it away. Without even looking back to answer Xiao Lin’s question, she made light of it and said, “You’re right, what I’ve mastered isn’t the complete law, nor can it be compared with Ivan, but it still isn’t something that you can easily break free from.”

“So, this restriction spell has no effect on Ivan?”

“Yes, the only thing that can resist the law is the law. There’s nothing to be denied.” The female elf readily admitted that there was no shame for her to be inferior in terms of strength, for she was still able to crush everyone on the scene.

“The only thing that can resist the law is the law.”

Xiao Lin mumbled those words repeatedly and his gaze gradually sharpened. He had to stop the female elf. Whether she took away the resurrection tower and Captain Yu did not matter, because at the end of the day, it was all just a simulated exam. No matter what the result was, it was impossible to change something that had already happened in history.

If things continued as they were however, the orcs would inevitably rush in and kill them all, just like what happened in history. Almost no survivors will survive this battle, and each of them will lose 10 years of life. Gu Xiaoyue was the only one who had no other chance.

At this time, Xiao Lin had no time to consider the evaluation or results of the exam. The only possibility to save Gu Xiaoyue's life was to activate the self-destructing device in his hand and use the explosive scroll on the resurrection tower to completely destroy the fortress.

According to the contents of that simulated exam, the fall of the fortress amounted to failure of the final objective. The exam would thereby be terminated immediately. From his experience in the first monthly exam, all survivors would return to the academy once the exam ended.

If Captain Yu's description of the power and range of the explosion is correct, Gu Xiaoyue was not within the range of the center of explosion. She might be injured at most, but she would not die.

That in itself was also a big risk, but on the balance, it was better to do so than just wait to die there.

Xiao Lin did not hesitate to turn on his replicating skill when he thought of that. He obviously did not possess any law-level ability, but his SS-level talent made him almost equivalent to the existence of law itself. Many hints had been given to him in The Final Land, as well as from the memory which claimed itself to be left behind by Ivan.

All it amounted to was a guess on his part, but it was also his very last hope.

Once activated, Xiao Lin did not rush to choose a subject to replicate, since he was not expecting the ability to have any effect on the female elf. Such level of spells had far surpassed the evaluation of E rated spells.

Xiao Lin continued trying, but the result frustrated him tremendously. His brain was still unable to control his body and he could not move at all. Aside from that, none of the power in his body could be used, just as the female elf said. The inability to concentrate mental energy meant that he was unable to gather up the basic elements.

Ordinary magic scrolls could be used simply by tearing them open, but it would not be as easy to execute it on a scroll meant for a self-destructing device. Mental strength had to be channeled into the scroll, and the magic formation could only be activated once the elements were gathered.

"In that case, replication: start!"

There were many people that he could use Replicate on and the type of skills replicated was not at all important as long as it was a spell. Xiao Lin first fixed his gaze on Han Manman's corpse. He never tested whether the subject to be replicated had to be alive, but the skill information that suddenly popped into his mind made him understand the results.

[Skill: Hurricane Spell. Replication: success!]

Han Manman was a wind-element mage and it was no secret among the monitors. She was only able to master LV2 of the Black Iron-rank Hurricane Spell.

None of that mattered now that Xiao Lin's goal had been achieved. Just as he expected, the active skill of his SS-level talent was not restricted by the restraining spell at all.

Chapter 268 - The End of The Monthly Exam

Chapter 268: The End of The Monthly Exam

The female elf had a keen perception of the surrounding elements, and at almost the exact moment Xiao Lin manifested those elements, she suddenly turned her head and stared incredulously at Xiao Lin. Her face had a shocked and suspicious look precisely because she was too confident in herself. She never even bothered to take the activation scroll from Xiao Lin's hand because she felt that it was just a waste of time.

Her hesitation only lasted for less than two seconds. Within the silver light in her hand was the special short bow that she gripped tightly. The slender bowstring was drawn once again, and the silk-like light beam broke through the sky at lightning speed.

Whether Xiao Lin could dodge the attack was beside the point—even if he was alive and kicking, there was absolutely no way for him to avoid that invisible arrow. Its speed was already beyond the limits of what could be observed with the naked eye.

Xiao Lin desperately copied the spell in order to channel the condensed wind element into the scrolls he was holding. Before he could even complete the groundwork to execute the Hurricane Spell, all he felt was a slight chill in his chest.

Death came so suddenly that Xiao Lin actually seemed rather calm when it came. Perhaps he knew that this was just a simulated exam and he still had enough life span at his disposal. Therefore, he felt close to nothing when the arrow beam passed through his heart.

His consciousness began waning quickly. He had no idea what the arrow was made of, but it was as thin as hair. When it passed through his chest, the coolness of an ice cellar immediately spread throughout his whole body, and the entire process lasted only a few seconds.

Xiao Lin felt the scrolls in his hands gradually getting hot. It was a sign that they had been activated. Once predetermined magic scrolls such as those were activated, it was no longer possible to halt the process. Xiao Lin could even faintly hear the female elf's angry roar.

She always had a hypocritical smile on her, and it was a pity that Xiao Lin was not able to see her anger before he died.

That was also Xiao Lin's last thought before falling into a coma. He was already prepared to die. Even if he was not killed by the female elf, the orcs would surely finish him off. After successfully activating the resurrection tower's self-destructing device, the following explosion was equivalent to a Gold-rank one, and its power was not something Xiao Lin could resist.

The coma in the chaos only lasted for less than a few seconds. When Xiao Lin next opened his eyes, he was already standing in the classroom in the metal hall as more and more light beams descended from the ceiling. The other students began following suit and began appearing one after another in the classroom.

The exam had ended and it was within his expectations. The memories before his death informed him that the resurrection tower's self-destructing device must have been activated successfully. The fortress would be destroyed as a result and the mission's objective would have failed, meaning that the monthly exam would also be terminated.

Xiao Lin could not help but get nervous as his eyes landed directly on the seat next to him. His seat was next to Gu Xiaoyue, so if she came back, she would definitely appear there.

The return of dozens of people in the class lasted for several minutes, and Xiao Lin's heart was practically already in his mouth. It was not until the last milky white light descended that his heart calmed down once more.

Xiao Lin breathed a sigh of relief after Gu Xiaoyue walked completely out of the halo. A shallow smile gradually appeared on his face as he said, "Welcome back."

Gu Xiaoyue understood what he meant by that and blushed slightly. She faced away from him, and after thinking for a moment, faced him again with a frown and asked, "What did you do?"

The situation back then had also changed rapidly. Naturally, Gu Xiaoyue, who was still at the fortress wall, did not know the specific reasons for what happened. Most of the people in the class were confused too. After returning, they whispered to each other and enquired about what exactly happened.

Boom!

The classroom door was suddenly kicked open. The man who barged in was someone that Xiao Lin knew. He was the monitor of Class Ten, but the two had little contact with each other. Xiao Lin did not give it much thought, but the guy went straight to Xiao Lin after coming in and had a displeased look on his face.

Xiao Lin raised his guard instinctively, and when the two of them were less than a few meters apart, the man suddenly sped up and rushed forward to slam his fist right at Xiao Lin's abdomen. Xiao Lin was already prepared for it, but he could not just let the man have his way. He did not dare to act rashly when facing a talented class monitor and therefore activated his Miracle state almost immediately.

After transforming all his attributes into strength, Xiao Lin reluctantly took the brunt of that blow, but his body was still sent back a couple of steps. The man seemed to have quite some strength.

"What are you doing!" Xiao Lin did not fight back, but instead asked angrily.

“You killed us all and you’re pretending to play the fool, but I saw everything clearly. The final explosion was caused by the scrolls in your hand! F*ck you, you’re the spy for the orcs!” This man was somewhat amazed by Xiao Lin’s strength, but it was immediately replaced by anger.

Xiao Lin realized what was going on and remembered that the guy was quite close to the core of the explosion during the final moments. He might have been killed instantly if he had been unlucky, and there were probably a few of those monitors and instructors who were present there that ran out of luck.

“Stop! We’re inside a classroom! Xiao Lin must have had his reasons at the time!”

Qin Chuan hurriedly came up to dissuade them from fighting, but he would not take a fist to that man on a whim. If everything went without a hitch, he might even be promoted to sophomore year after that monthly exam, so it was unsurprising that he would not want to offend any monitor at the last moment.

More and more monitors and instructors rushed to Class Seven. Many people were still confused at the final moments. The ordinary students had absolutely no idea what actually happened, but even the monitors were left puzzled too. The last message they got was that Xiao Lin suddenly went mad and attacked his own allies, and when they arrived, the first thing they saw was a strange woman. They were unable to move immediately after that, and finally, they could only watch as Xiao Lin used some scroll and sent everyone back to the academy.

“What the hell happened?” it was the sensible Cheng Ming asking that too.

“F*ck! That woman was an elf, wasn’t she! She looked really beautiful!” Chen Dao was also very excited, but the focus of his concern was completely different.

“It’s impossible for you to be in possession of such a powerful scroll. Were you intending to destroy the resurrection tower?” Class Four’s Sheng Guo managed to understand the gist somewhat.

“Xiao Lin! You’re to blame for our failure in this exam! You must take full responsibility!” The sharp voice came from Han Manman. She was the first to die, but she also heard what happened from the others while they were on the way to Xiao Lin.

...

Many monitors raised their own questions, but they did not necessarily blame him like how Han Manman and the man who directly attacked Xiao Lin did. Nevertheless, they still felt that Xiao Lin did not handle it properly.

Losing the fortress in the end meant that their mission had failed. Although they could still accept the rewards and redemption points for the first and second missions, those who were eager to vie for the year leader’s position undoubtedly found the result hard to accept.

Chapter 269 - After the Monthly Exam

Chapter 269: After the Monthly Exam

More and more people gathered in Class Seven's classroom. Of course, with the exception of the acting monitors, most of them were just there to watch the excitement or simply trying to figure out the cause of the matter. Someone added fuel to fire and perhaps even deliberately spread rumors among the crowd that the final monthly exam was forced to end in failure solely because of Xiao Lin's fault.

The fingers were all slowly being pointed at Xiao Lin. In fact, calling it a rumor was not entirely calling. It was indeed Xiao Lin who forced an early end to the exam, but the reasons could not be explained in merely a few words.

The classroom was getting more and more raucous. Someone then said, "Now that you mention it, it seems the exam evaluation results haven't been announced yet."

Everyone was silent for a while. It was really strange, because according to the trend of the previous monthly exams, they would all receive the comprehensive evaluation and rewards from the central computer once it ended. On that occasion however, it had been almost half an hour since they came back but there was still no sign of movement.

"Attention all freshmen, I am issuing an announcement on behalf of the student union. Due to unique reasons, the evaluation of this exam will be announced sometime later. Please return to your dormitories immediately and prepare for class as usual tomorrow."

There were loudspeakers in every classroom, and although they were rarely used, a pleasant female voice was suddenly put on air at that time. The discussion in the crowd suddenly became livelier, but all the students could do was follow the order since it was the decision of the student union.

Furthermore, everyone seemed to be in a rather tired mental state after the exam. That day was also a weekend, which generally meant that there were no classes. Soon enough, the people inside the classrooms finally began dispersing slowly.

The monitors still wanted to argue. Even if they had enough life span remaining, anyone would be upset to lose 10 years so needlessly like that. Xiao Lin did not want to waste his breath on them. Those who believed in him, like Chen Dao and Cheng Ming, would always believe that he had a reason for doing so, while no amount of explaining could convince the others who did not trust him.

When the crowd was getting lesser, Xiao Lin said goodbye to Gu Xiaoyue before immediately using the Phantom Steps to shuttle through the empty spaces between each person. He left the classroom in the blink of an eye, and those who were not paying attention could only see a blur in front of them. By then, Xiao Lin was already nowhere to be seen.

As of that moment, Xiao Lin was the only one among the freshmen who managed to master the Phantom Step. Even those with much higher agility attributes than Xiao Lin could only stare at his back from behind.

After returning to the dormitory, the first thing Xiao Lin did was to turn on the computer and view his profile. Information such as the score and redemption points of that monthly exam had yet to change, but the column displaying his remaining life showed only 50 years, as opposed to the 60 years he had when he first entered the academy.

“Five more chances?” Xiao Lin murmured. He shook his head and did not really care too much about it. He had enough redemption points, so he really could not care less about that life span.

The first thing he did was take a refreshing hot bath. Although there was sufficient supply of fresh water in the fortress, the orcs did not have the habit of preparing a bathhouse, and going without a bath for more than a month was unbearable even for a man.

After that, he proceeded to take a deep and heavy sleep. It was nearly eight in the evening when he woke up again, and there was hardly anyone present when he went to the top floor cafeteria. There were only cold leftovers, but it was good enough for Xiao Lin. At least he could avoid encountering any strange people who would directly come up and throw a fist at him.

After filling his tummy with food and drink, he opened the forum and saw that it was being refreshed almost constantly. Various new posts appeared almost every second. Xiao Lin clicked on a few to check them and unexpectedly discovered that the monthly exam’s evaluation had just been announced not long ago. Everyone began discussing the same topic.

Curiously, Xiao Lin was still unable to see any comments after clicking on his message again. In his puzzlement, he discovered that he had received an unread text message from the student union. The content was very brief, saying that he would have to show up at the student union’s conference room the following morning for the final evaluation of the monitors. The acting monitors were also exempted from participating in that morning’s class.

Xiao Lin contacted Chen Dao and Cheng Ming again, only to realize that the evaluations of all the acting monitors had been postponed and probably might not be released until the next morning.

Since he had a reasonably good relationship with those two guys, the three of them set up their own separate chat room and started the voice magic video chat. During that conversation, Xiao Lin also retold the specific events of what happened that day, drawing their immense shock. In fact, during that moment, the other monitors were not idiots and it was not like they never considered the possibility that someone might sneak in.

That possibility had actually crossed Chen Dao’s and Cheng Ming’s mind before, but it was only a fleeting thought and they quickly filtered it out. The reason was also very simple—it was impossible for anyone to sneak in due to the heavily guarded situation at the time. The students could easily see the intruder even if they flew in with wings, which was why they quickly filtered out that idea.

“We’re thinking along our habitual line of thoughts again!” Cheng Ming lamented. All of them subconsciously maintained Earth’s mindset and forgot that they were on Planet Norma. It was not at all impossible if the intruder were to become completely invisible.

“More accurately, our level of knowledge and information isn’t equal!” Xiao Lin was also reflecting on it, but in fact, that battle was a trap right from the beginning. First of all, an alliance between the orcs and the elves was not considered at all, and the academy certainly could not be blamed for concealing information before the exam. Since it was a fully simulated exam, it only goes to show that Dawn Academy was similarly in the dark back when the battle happened in real life.

Secondly, it was near fatal for a character that was above Gold-rank to go to war. If their strength was strong enough in the New World, they would completely ignore all rules of war and common

sense. Xiao Lin is the first to understand that truth, but he would still remain powerless even if he understood that well in advance.

“Go to the forum and make a post to explain it! I just saw that damn Han Manman trying to fan the flames. She wants to push all the responsibility for the failure of this monthly exam onto you!” Chen Dao was incredibly disgusted with Han Manman.

“I’ll talk to Han Manman.” Cheng Ming was also quite worried about this. He was the stereotypical good guy, but was helpless when it came to private disputes between monitors.

“To tell you the truth, I’m actually really curious about the result of this battle in history. Did the elves really succeed in getting the resurrection tower?” Chen Dao suddenly asked again.

“It’s hard to say. After all, our strength levels are still far too low, and those people in history would definitely be stronger,” Cheng Ming answered prudently.

“No matter how strong they were, they could not possibly be better than that female elf. Didn’t you hear what Xiao Lin said? She was beyond Gold-rank! Damn, I’m surprised the academy would actually give us such a fatal exam! It’s like our lives are worth nothing to them!” Chen Dao appeared to be incensed.

Cheng Ming tried consoling him, “It isn’t so bad this time. At least Xiao Lin managed to end the exam ahead of time. Except for some of the acting monitors and instructors, most of the other people survived.”

All three of them were stunned after Cheng Ming said that. Could activating the self-destructing mode on the resurrection tower to prevent it from being taken away by the elves be the only way to crack that exam?

Were that the case, then Xiao Lin—the only one who made that move—would probably end up with a very high score.

Chapter 270 - The Monthly Examination Review Begins (1)

Chapter 270: The Monthly Examination Review Begins (1)

Plenty of posts appeared on the forum at that moment and one could see that the freshmen’s evaluation was neither too high nor too low. That was because they held on for more than a month, and almost all the people who toughed it out all the way to the end received at least 1,000 redemption points. Those who died on the way due to poor luck were able to reap at least a couple of hundred as a reward, which was no small amount.

Xiao Lin suddenly realized that the reason for giving such a generous reward was exactly because of that. Rather than saying that the exam was very difficult, it might as well be said that the exam

was practically unsolvable. Even if destroying the resurrection tower is the only way to crack it, it was almost certain to cause a lot of casualties.

Han Manman's post accusing Xiao Lin as the chief culprit of the exam's failure did not get much support. More and more people who responded either took a neutral stance or questioned her.

Xiao Lin directly made a new post and reconstructed the test, starting from the joint pre-planning of the orcs and the elves to snatch the resurrection tower. Of course, he made it abundantly clear that it was just his own guess, but at the end he also emphasized that destroying the resurrection tower was the only choice at that time, otherwise everyone would lose 10 years of their life span if they simply waited for the orcs to charge in.

After posting it, Xiao Lin did not bother to keep tabs on it and went directly to bed.

After all, the disputes in the forum were just private discussions. The final assessment of that exam would still be made by the student union. Early the next morning, the acting monitors who were granted permission to not attend classes arrived at the office building of the student union.

The staff of the student union—a couple of pretty girls—guided everyone to the waiting room. After that, the student union would evaluate each acting monitor one by one, which would then determine their final position as monitors. As soon as anyone tried to inquire about any further information, those girls dutifully chose to remain silent.

However, there were those who had come to receive their assessment results earlier than the monitors. They were the instructors of each class, and according to the regulations, they would no longer have the title of instructor after the monthly exam. Once they have enough credits, they would automatically be promoted to sophomore year.

If their points were not enough, they would have to remain in the freshman year again, but only as ordinary students. Whether or not they could serve as group leaders depended on how well they got along with the monitors. Therefore, the instructor treated the monitors in a polite and cooperative manner during the final monthly exam. Of course, it also meant that they never actively intervened in quarrels between monitors.

The waiting room was very spacious. Xiao Lin chose a corner and made a cup of tea to drink slowly. He could feel the unabashedly hostile gaze of some people, but the main cadre of the student union was next door, and the others would not dare to curse at him right there even if they had the guts to do so.

The waiting process was rather cordial. Those who were on good terms with each other would occasionally exchange a few soft words, until the door opened and the instructors from each class came in. Their evaluations have all ended, and most of them chose to come over and say hello to those monitors.

Qin Chuan was also one of them and he strode directly toward Xiao Lin. Xiao Lin also took the initiative to get up and asked in a cold tone, "How is it? What's the result?"

The bright smile on Qin Chuan's face had actually explained everything. Sure enough, he laughed and said, "I have enough credits to enter sophomore year. I owe it to you this time!"

“Congratulations, Senior Qin!” Xiao Lin smiled and stretched out his left hand, and at the same time changed the title of address as senior instead of instructor.

Qin Chuan was somewhat taken aback. He exhaled as though he was relieved from a burden and proceeded to stretch out his hand toward Xiao Lin. He then said in all seriousness, “My talent might not be as good monitors like you, but if you ever find yourself in any difficulties next time, please don’t hesitate to come and look for me!”

“Heh, I’m not officially the monitor yet!” Xiao Lin said half-jokingly.

“You’re joking! I read your post last night. You were the biggest contributor in this exam! Anyone who isn’t blind can clearly see that!” Qin Chuan said very loudly, attracting the dissatisfied gazes of everyone else, not that he cared anyway since he was already going to leave his freshman year.

“Well, I sure hope so. Thank you for your kind words.”

Qin Chuan left immediately after letting Xiao Lin know about the number. In fact, the two of them did not interact much, and Qin Chuan even expressed a clear dislike of Xiao Lin at the beginning of the school year because the latter’s basic attributes were too low. He felt that Xiao Lin would hamper his quest to get promoted to sophomore year.

It was impossible for Xiao Lin to have a favorable impression of Qin Chuan, but one could not say that he loathed Qin Chuan either. At the very least, Qin Chuan would never target him repeatedly on purpose as Han Manman did. Furthermore, Qin Chuan did not give them any more headaches during the final monthly exam and even provided Xiao Lin with assistance. In fact, Qin Chaun handled the class well when Xiao Lin went out of the fortress and entered battle.

Although Xiao Lin was unsure whether or not he would meet Qin Chuan again in the future, it was nevertheless beneficial to make more friends rather than enemies.

After the instructors left, the monitors immediately had topics to gossip about, such as the final evaluation results of the instructors in each class. Everything went smoothly for the 10 of the 12 instructors. The sole exceptions were Classes Four and Ten. The 10 were promoted to sophomore year without a hitch, which was a much higher promotion ratio compared to the previous years.

The monitors’ evaluation came soon enough, but to everyone’s surprise, their turn to be called was not in order of the class. The female staff came in and Xiao Lin’s name was the first to be called. He was told to go to the next room in order to receive the final evaluation.

“Perhaps they’re starting from the most unqualified.” Han Manman laughed gleefully but did not get any response from anyone. As Qin Chuan said earlier, it did not matter what they thought of Xiao Lin. Aside from the last moment where they could not judge Xiao Lin’s behavior, there was no doubt that his performance on most occasions was absolutely outstanding.

The assessment was carried out in the conference room. Xiao Lin’s first time setting foot there was when he was negotiating with America’s Judge Academy.

A long table was present in the huge conference room, and in addition to the familiar baby-faced president, there were a total of seven men and women—both old and young—sitting stoically there.

Two women stood by the door, each holding a pen and preparing to take some notes. The entire atmosphere looked quite formal and serious.

Xiao Lin was also a little nervous. He sat on the chair that had been prepared for him in the center and waited for everyone's assessment.

The baby-faced president spoke first and greeted Xiao Lin in a very calm tone. "Hehe, I didn't expect us to meet again so soon, Xiao Lin."

Xiao Lin had a brief meeting with the student union president after returning from Judge Academy, but it was clear that the president would not have mentioned it for no reason. Xiao Lin was somewhat surprised by that remark before casting a grateful look at him.

The student council president's words were obviously addressed to the other seven reviewers. Sure enough, several of them had looks of disbelief after hearing that. It was known that students were not able to meet the student union president so easily under normal circumstances, yet they seemed to be familiar with each other?

The old man sitting on the far side could not help but ask, "Are you acquainted with this student, President?"

The student council president smiled and waved his hand, "Not exactly acquainted. The dean entrusted him to me. Oh, and by the way, he was the one who stirred things up in New Washington some time ago."

"The dean knows him!"

"What? Are you saying that the diplomatic team you sent to New Washington was for him!"

Everyone was getting flustered.

Chapter 271 - The Monthly Examination Review Begins (2)

Chapter 271: The Monthly Examination Review Begins (2)

The student council president maintained his innocent smile and gave the others a small reminder. Very soon, he cleared his throat and said sternly, "Let's start the evaluation then."

Other thoughts of surprise or shock were retracted. Their expressions remained serious still, but at least it was slightly more cordial than before, causing the conference room's atmosphere to relax considerably.

The student council president showed no intention of introducing the identities of the other people and went straight to the point, "According to the final evaluation results provided by the central computer, you've completed the first task and the second task. Your comprehensive evaluation is A,

your total redemption points are one thousand and five hundred, and the total amount of credit points you'll get is thirty. Any objections?"

"No." The calculation was within Xiao Lin's expectations.

"Mm." The student union president nodded to the others.

A middle-aged man in a strong voice then continued, "Student Xiao Lin, I want to know why you attacked the architect responsible for the resurrection tower at the last moment, and why you activated the resurrection tower's self-destructing device."

The man's tone of questioning startled Xiao Lin, but he nonetheless recounted the full story, including the doubts he made as well as his final helpless choice.

The spacious conference room consisted only of Xiao Lin talking calmly as well as the two girls recording his explanation. It was 10 minutes by the time Xiao Lin finished talking. The few people at the long table whispered to each other for a while, and then the woman in the corner asked in a deep voice. "Student Xiao Lin, I would like to ask whether you understand what's the significance of the resurrection tower to us?"

Xiao Lin froze and replied, "I understand, anyone within the scope of the resurrection tower could be resurrected indefinitely as long as one had enough lifespan remaining. It provides the greatest support for Earth's people to colonize Planet Norma."

"Then have you ever considered how serious the consequences would be for the entire combat plan if your judgment was wrong at that time?" The woman's character was intimidating but her tone was not very friendly.

Xiao Lin frowned, and before he could speak, the woman had already answered her own question. "In that case, your comrades-in-arms will die for nothing, while the fortress will be overrun by the orcs. It will even affect the outcome of this war! Please answer me. Did you make such a consideration at that time?"

"But there is no 'if'," Xiao Lin emphasized.

"I'm just making an assumption. You must understand, what you went through might just be a simulated exam where you have nothing to lose even if you make a mistake, but you'll be going to the New World in the future. For the monitors, in particular, you'll be getting at least the rank of lieutenant when you enter the army. By then, each and every of your words and deeds can have serious consequences for the entire battle and even Dawn Academy!"

Xiao Lin's brows furrowed even more severely. It was a truth that he was well aware of. From Dawn Academy's perspective, such things were important and had to be properly considered. After all, attacking one's own allies in actual combat, or even destroying the resurrection tower for that matter, amounted to a serious betrayal.

However, the present circumstance was a simulated exam after all. It was also an event that had been etched in history, yet she repeatedly assumed the possibility that it had never happened. She appeared intent on proving that Xiao Lin's judgment at the time was unintentional and it was obvious that she was deliberately finding fault in him.

Xiao Lin could not help but glance at her once more. It was an old woman with deep wrinkles on her face. Her slightly narrowed eyes just so happened to meet his gaze and left him feeling very uncomfortable.

Xiao Lin was beginning to feel a little upset. The evaluation given by the student union president earlier merely touched on the rewards for the exam, but whether or not he could serve as the official monitor had to be decided based on the coming evaluation.

Xiao Lin believed that he had performed fairly well throughout the entire month's exam, be it when taking command or on-the-spot combat. While he did not dare to proclaim that he was definitely number one, it ought to have been no problem for him to be appointed monitor. It appeared that some people were not too keen to see him as the official monitor, because despite the president's clearly favorable words about him, the old woman was still giving him a hard time on purpose and turned a blind eye to his performance.

"I want to know the specific results of this battle in history." Xiao Lin did not directly answer the old woman's question.

"This landfall operation is a classified secret in the academy."

On that occasion, it was the old man sitting next to the old woman who spoke. In fact, they all looked old, except for the student council president and another young woman.

"Even though it is top-secret, it has been so many years since it happened. In fact, it's not really that top-secret, otherwise these little brats wouldn't have had this for their exam this time."

"That was an arbitrary decision by the dean."

A few people disputed that. What surprised Xiao Lin was that although the president of the student council was sitting in the middle, he merely kept that faint smile on his face and did not say a word apart from the first two sentences. The other people did not seem to have any intention of asking the president any questions either.

The status of those other people was even higher than the student council president!

Seeing them at odds with each other, Xiao Lin was also a little speechless. He could not help but say, "We likely failed the battle at that time, because judging from the strength of that female elf, it was impossible for anyone to stop it. Therefore, the resurrection tower must have been taken away. As for the fate of the captain, that is something I don't know."

The president finally found an opportunity to interject, "The situation might be exactly as you said, but the reason why this matter was classified as top-secret at the time was because of the resurrection tower."

"Oh?"

"That period was when the law of resurrection was just created. Even if we did not fully understand it, no one knew what the consequences would be if we let the opponent get the resurrection tower. If revealed, it would only cause great panic among Dawn Academy when facing

the orcs, maybe even going so far as to cause dissatisfaction from the other colonial academies. That's the reason why this incident was listed as top secret.

"Over the years however, the elves who have received the resurrection tower have not done anything. They also signed a hundred-year peace agreement with America's Judge Academy. We've gradually understood that even if they obtained the resurrection tower, there was still nothing they could do if there was no resurrection law."

The other old man seemed to feel that it was pointless to conceal anything from Xiao Lin after the latter passed the exam. He openly added, "In addition, the chance appearance of those elves at that time was also classified as confidential, because Dawn Academy did not want to provoke the enemy for no reason. After that war, we secretly signed an agreement with the elves and received a lot of rare material compensation as a result."

"We got back the resurrection tower?" Xiao Lin was a little surprised, but he quickly shook his head and refuted it, "Impossible. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush. If it's material compensation, then that means we did not investigate any further. Did you just sell Captain Yu off like that?"

The final sentence had a touch of resentful doubt. Even if it was a simulated exam, Xiao Lin still had a good impression of the architect after more than a month of interaction. He was a good architect, if nothing else.

Chapter 272 - The Monthly Examination Review Begins (3)

Chapter 272: The Monthly Examination Review Begins (3)

"Ahem! Xiao Lin, this present meeting is to assess you. Be more serious." The president of the student council cleared his throat and gave a gentle reminder. Since the other people were older than the president, it went without saying that they were not to be provoked.

"We'll skip this question for now." The other old man did not seem keen on dwelling on that issue anymore. The old woman was obviously displeased, but if no one else made any objections, she would not be able to oppose it anymore.

"There is one more question. We have no way of knowing the specific situation of the monthly exam, but according to historical data, the female elf had mastered certain law-level restraining spells even though she only possessed Epic-rank strength. I don't think a freshman like you can break free from that spell, so can you tell me how you did it?"

"Uh, sorry, no comment."

All their faces soured and the old man spoke in a rather grim manner, "Even though the president seemed to suggest that you know the dean, it still doesn't mean that you have the right to trivialize

this assessment meeting. The monitor position, and even your future position in the New world, isn't the headmaster's say alone!"

Xiao Lin's face was full of embarrassment. "You misunderstood. It's not that I want to conceal it on purpose. I'm afraid you just don't have the authority to know about this, so I can't mention it."

"What?"

"We don't have the authority to know about it?"

The old man laughed angrily. He stood up and walked over. Xiao Lin immediately felt like a glow on his back as the old man's aura became dense and almost suffocated him.

"He's just a freshman!" the student council president warned, seemingly unhappy.

The old man huffed slightly. His aura diminished, but Xiao Lin was already sweating profusely by then. Although that aura was not as strong as the female elf, it was not too far off either. Xiao Lin estimated that the old man had a strength that was at Gold-rank, perhaps almost approaching that of Epic-rank.

There was no explanation for why people of that level were participating in the evaluation of mere freshmen.

Xiao Lin's expression was completely cold. As a freshman, anyone in the room could put immense pressure on him, but Xiao Lin was also confident in himself.

"As I've said, you don't have the authority to know. If you don't believe me, you can check the central computer." Xiao Lin thought for a while and added, "This is what the dean explained to me. There are some things no one else except him has the right to question!"

"Are you seriously waving his remarks around as if they're a token of authority!"

Xiao Lin noticed that his mention of the word 'dean' annoyed the old man instantly, which was quite surprising. It seemed that even though the influential dean was in charge of Dawn Academy, he was still not all-powerful.

"President, go and get the detailed simulation from the central computer!" Another old woman immediately suggested, and the student union president was reduced to being an errand boy.

The president did not seem to care, but he hesitated, "This doesn't seem to meet the regulations."

"By my authority, you are now allowed to do so!"

The president was helpless as he cast a reproachful look at Xiao Lin. He was likely blaming Xiao Lin a little for making things difficult. Based on his initial expectation, all Xiao Lin had to do was clarify everything. Irrespective of what the others say, Xiao Lin had still achieved grade A and would therefore be allowed to continue serving as the class monitor.

Xiao Lin responded with an even more innocent expression. It was impossible for him to reveal his SS-level talent, more so when he realized that those people might not necessarily be on good terms with the dean. The dean was the only one who gave him the highest sense of trust.

10 minutes later, the president slowly came in with a very strange expression on his face. He distributed the thin files in his hands to the others. After opening them one by one, everyone's expression suddenly stiffened.

There was only one line in bold and black on the blank document: 'This information is top-level files for which you are unable to inspect with authority!'

"We don't have the authority to look into this?"

"What did that old man do?"

"it's impossible for a person with his authority to perform an encryption of this level!"

"The central computer can't be restricted by the old man, which means that this encryption has to be approved by the central computer?"

"What sick joke is this!"

...

Their discussion became louder and louder. Xiao Lin vaguely heard some of their conversations and tried to understand them. For example, the 'old man' that they spoke of probably meant the dean. Such a disrespectful name left Xiao Lin feeling increasingly unhappy. He had a good first impression of the dean and he began loathing those people even more.

The student union president helplessly cleared his throat and was forced to remind everyone again that they were still assessing the class monitors. 11 more people were waiting for them after Xiao Lin's turn.

In fact, there was nothing more they could say after seeing the authority letter produced by the central computer. Instead, they looked at Xiao Lin with a strange look and attempted to figure out how he was different.

The next process was relatively simple. The student union president started to read another report, and Xiao Lin learned that there were also hidden evaluations for monitors in addition to the basic evaluation for the monthly exam.

"Student Xiao Lin, commanding ability: three and a half stars. Combat ability: five stars. Coordination ability: three stars. Battle preparation and judgment: four stars. The full mark is five stars, and this is the final assessment given to you by the central computer for your monthly exam. You've passed your monitor's evaluation. Congratulations," the president smiled and gave his well wishes.

"Thank you."

The president turned to the other people again. “If there are no further questions, the next person can be called in.”

It was normal for them not to have any objections, but Xiao Lin suddenly hesitated before asking, “Sorry, I’m still a little confused and I wonder if I should mention it.”

“Go ahead.”

“It’s about the resurrection tower,” Xiao Lin seemed to hesitate, because this question had been lingering in his mind since the monthly exam. He simply did not have time to think about it at the time, but it continued to linger in his mind even after the monthly exam was over. It was not a question he could answer himself, so he gritted his teeth and asked, “Did the elves really take away the resurrection tower and Captain Yu?”

The helpless president glanced at the displeased faces of several other people and sighed, “Well, to you the truth, the elves did take away the complete resurrection tower and Captain Yu, but so many years have passed and Captain Yu must have been sacrificed. It’s not that we never thought of rescuing him, it’s just...”

“That’s not it.” Xiao Lin interrupted him quickly, “I mean, won’t there be any problems?”

“Huh? What problems?” The student union president was also quite confused. He thought that Xiao Lin was bogged down with the fact that Dawn Academy did not save the captain.

“The resurrection tower, it’s practically the Midas touch for us, ahem, I mean, resurrection is our biggest advantage. Is it really okay?”

The president said kindly, “Like I said, you can set your mind at ease about this. Let me make an analogy. The resurrection tower is equivalent to a lock. The complexity of this lock is beyond anyone’s ability to unlock, and even though you managed to obtain that lock, it’s not a lock you’ll ever want to open!”

Chapter 273 - Lock and Key

Chapter 273: Lock and Key

The fact that they were able to expand so much as colonists in Planet Norma was not because they were particularly intelligent or gifted, but rather because they hit the largest possible jackpot.

Resurrection, even if it had a lot of limitations such as requiring resurrection towers and sacrificing 20 years of their lifespan, it still allowed those of them from Earth to hold a huge advantage over the natives.

The residents of Planet Norma were quite religious, so the mental impact was quite significant when they were facing an enemy that could constantly resurrect themselves.

Fighting hard to kill a foe only to have them come back unharmed after a few minutes was the stuff of nightmares—the kind that you did not know how to wake up from. Almost any army would slowly start to collapse.

That logic was something even a freshman could clearly see, so Xiao Lin understood it as well, which was why he was so nervous waiting for the answer after he asked the question.

“They obtained the lock, but it will forever be shut!”

The president’s confident tone did not bring Xiao Lin any relief. Instead, he seemed even more somber and worried. Xiao Lin bit his lips, slowly muttering, “So, if they now have the key to unlock that lock, what would happen?”

The completely unexpected answer gave the president some pause, but the old man who had something against Xiao Lin could not help but slam the table, staring at Xiao Lin as he berated, “Nonsense! You’re a freshman who has not even reached the Black-Iron rank. What right do you have to speak of this! Do you really understand the resurrection law?”

Xiao Lin swallowed, not knowing how he could explain it to them.

He had thought about the high priest Asabanor who managed to return from The Final Land. The former high priest of the Thunder Kingdom was filled with hatred for the colonists. Xiao Lin did not know how much that guy understood the Law of Immortality, but it was obvious that the high priest did indeed gain an understanding of it after all those years in The Final Land.

The priest might have used the path Xiao Lin had opened to return to Norma, but Xiao Lin had not been bothered by it since the spirit was heavily damaged and even needed to hide from Judge Academy. However, thinking about this examination, Xiao Lin could not help but wonder about a terrifying possibility.

What if the high priest managed to collaborate with the elves and use his key to unlock that lock? Thinking about it, the possibility was quite likely.

What would happen if the resurrection that was the biggest advantage the colonists had was unravelled?

Even if no one answered, Xiao Lin had the answer himself. It would probably mean war; all the natives of Planet Norma would go to war with the colonists!

Xiao Lin could not voice his opinions due to the secrecy behind The Final Land. Faced with all their questions, Xiao Lin could only say, “You don’t have sufficient clearance to know.”

The old people were so angry, their nostrils were flaring, but the document on the table proved what he said. The president was caught in an awkward spot, but he stood on Xiao Lin’s side. He quickly smoothed things over, ending the evaluation.

The president sent Xiao Lin off personally, softly saying, “Don’t leave yet. I’ll help you contact the dean.”

He could not help but feel helpless after saying those words. He never expected that he would one day become the messenger for a new student as the president.

Xiao Lin had a neutral expression when he went back to the waiting room, inviting everyone to speculate. Just as Han Manman was happily speculating away, he immediately shattered their hopes, telling them he had passed the monitor evaluation.

Cheng Ming and a few others were curious about the evaluation process. There was not much to conceal; it was just mainly done by the central computer. The evaluation was just a final look into the various decisions they made during the examination.

“Why don’t you look happy?” Chen Dao had noticed Xiao Lin’s heavy mood earlier.

“Tell me, if we enter a large scale war against the natives, what would our chances be like?” Xiao Lin suddenly asked the question that had been on his mind for some time.

“Why did you ask? Didn’t the history classes teach us that there hasn’t been a large scale war for almost a hundred years?” Chen Dao was curious, but still answered, “It’s obvious we would destroy them!”

“Most of the battles right now are just small scale skirmishes. All the native races have lost all courage to face us.” The other monitors joined the discussion as well.

“That’s right, and even if a real war were to break out, we wouldn’t even be a part of it,” someone said regretfully.

A lot of them had hopeful looks. Under the protection of the resurrection towers, war was not all that scary, and was even a good opportunity to earn some rewards. However, everyone knew that the academy would never send new students out on the battlefield, even if war broke out.

The entire evaluation process lasted for more than an hour. Even though most of the acting class monitors were very confident, there was always a slight uncertainty around it, but all of them returned with happy looks on their faces. It was just like they expected, but the evaluation committee still asked them a lot of hard questions. For instance, Class Seven’s monitor was asked why he did not lead the troops when attacking the fortress, causing them to think he was afraid. The questioning almost made him go crazy.

Thankfully the end result was still fine, allowing him to stay on as the class monitor. The final entry was Han Manman of Class Four. No one knew how the strange order was determined, but the other eleven class monitors went through it easily, so Han Manman was quite relaxed.

However, her evaluation process was very long, even longer than Xiao Lin’s. After almost twenty minutes, Han Manman suddenly came out with a dark look on her face, ignoring the questions from the other female class monitors.

Chen Dao immediately guessed what her expression meant, and laughed in exaggeration. “Hahaha, someone kept saying that the only person who could not be fit to be an actual class monitor among us was Xiao Lin? Oh? Xiao Lin? Hahahaha!”

Han Manman did not pass the evaluation. She kept quiet about the process, but she still held onto the acting class monitor position, meaning she would continue to be tested.

Even though the acting class monitors had basically the same power as the actual monitors, Han Manman's reputation had been thoroughly ruined.

Chapter 274 - Letter of Appointment

Chapter 274: Letter of Appointment

Other than Class Four, every other class could appoint group leaders. After he got back, Xiao Lin immediately appointed Gu Xiaoyue and Zhou Feng as group leaders. It was different from the verbal appointment during the monthly examination; this appointment would be in their records.

After the evaluations ended, the student union president hurriedly ushered everyone else away before inviting Xiao Lin into his office. What caused Xiao Lin some surprise was the presence of a pretty short-haired girl in the office conversing with the president.

When she saw Xiao Lin walk inside, the woman gave him a thumbs-up, praising him, "Not bad! It's rare to see those old farts so defeated. You have more potential than I thought."

Xiao Lin looked at the president, who was smiling at him. He got up from the desk before moving to the sofa to the side, motioning for Xiao Lin to do the same, indirectly establishing a better relationship among all of them.

"I'm Yu Mei. You must be Xiao Lin. I've heard good things about you," the woman greeted him warmly.

The president smiled as he added, "Yu Mei is an army major. Her grandfather was Yu Sheng—he was a brilliant engineer from Dawn Academy a century ago."

Yu Mei unhappily blinked at him, feeling like the president had said too much.

Xiao Lin found it strange that even her grandfather had been introduced, but he suddenly gasped, standing right up from the sofa before gaping as he said, "An engineer from a century ago? Is your grandfather Captain Yu?!"

Yu Mei did not say anything, silently agreeing, but she did not seem to want to continue on that topic. The socially-savvy president quickly changed the topic. "Those old farts... Ahem, those seniors are all part of the army as well. This examination had some sensitive contents, but since such a long time has passed, the secret stopped meaning as much, but it's still part of the army's jurisdiction."

Dawn Academy was still just a school in the end—a place to cultivate new talent—but as colonists, the real battle was in the New World which was controlled by the army.

“Dawn Academy had to be different from the American Judge Academy. The dean’s power can’t just be limited to school affairs,” Xiao Lin said curiously.

“You know quite a bit, huh?” Yu Mei raised her eyebrows.

“That’s right. Our current dean is the strongest and most heroic dean Dawn Academy has ever seen. It is regretful that there are always some people within the academy who fail to understand the dean’s decisions. They don’t dare to publicly oppose the dean, but regularly mess with him in the shadows.” The president seemed to respect the dean greatly.

“An opposing faction?” Xiao Lin put a different spin on it.

“Yes, that can be said to be so.”

“I still don’t understand, those old people are the dean’s opponents, so why are they targeting me instead? Is it just because the dean treats me better than most?” Xiao Lin was still puzzled. On the surface, the dean did not help him that much, he did not believe those old farts would be so free to target him based on that.

Yu Mei exchanged looks with the president before taking out a document from a small bag she had with her. “You’ll understand after you look at this; it’s also the reason I came back here from the New World to find you.”

Curiously accepting the document, the golden letters on the white paper completely shocked Xiao Lin.

[Letter of Appointment: Appointing student Xiao Lin as a captain in the army; to be temporarily assigned to the sixth regiment.]

At the end was a stylish signature and a seal made with magic, proving that this appointment was made personally by the dean.

Yu Mei smiled bitterly. “Given the rules, the dean can appoint anyone as an officer, but it needs the approval of others. This time, the dean circumvented everyone else and issued the order, which led to a great amount of dissatisfaction. They could not grasp the dean’s real goal, which is why they came here to target you in order to test the dean’s response.”

Xiao Lin had yet to snap out from his stupor. Normally, a student could enter the military after they graduated from the academy, and monitors or year leaders could usually enter the army as officials.

However, that would require him to complete his fourth year. He was still just a new student who had just been in the academy for three months!

“Do you mean I’ll need to join the army and leave the academy?” Xiao Lin could not understand what the dean’s sudden move signalled. He did not feel like he could do anything in the New World at the moment, especially since he was still far behind everyone else in skill.

“No, the dean especially told me that, before you reach Black-iron rank, you’ll only be a captain in rank; you won’t have any actual military powers,” Yu Mei explained.

Yu Mei's tone led Xiao Lin to think of something. He asked, "The sixth regiment? What are you to that regiment?"

"She is the commander of the sixth regiment. I'll give you some background information as well. Dawn Academy's military wing currently has six regiments; the sixth regiment was only formed a few years ago," the president explained to Xiao Lin.

The young lady was already in charge of an entire regiment. Xiao Lin was quite surprised. Regiments were the common army classifications on Planet Norma, and being able to be the commander of an entire regiment was no easy feat.

"Even though there are many things I need to let you know and many questions you need answered, you still need to reach Black-iron rank before anything happens. Otherwise, even with the dean's letter of appointment, my regiment does not need someone like you at all."

After a pause, Yu Mei smiled and said, "I came today because I was curious who could make the dean do so much. The fact that you pissed those old farts off so much exceeded my expectations. Alright, let's stop here. I'll take my leave for now."

After her monologue, Yu Mei left immediately. Xiao Lin held onto the letter of appointment, looking at the president with a baffled expression. "Why do you think the dean gave this to me?"

The baby-faced president smiled. "Don't overthink it; focus on graduating for now. The commander is right. Without the proper strength behind it, that letter is just a useless piece of paper."

"Does this count as an advance promotion?" Xiao Lin laughed. He did not know if he really wanted to join the military, but someone had actually already paved the way for him. If he was not opposed to it, he really did not have a good reason to reject it.

Before he left, the president stopped him. "Oh, what you said earlier about the lock and key; make sure you don't bring it up to anyone else, understand?"

"Relax, I'm not so loose with my words. This is all just my own speculation after all."

After Xiao Lin left, the president smiled to himself as he looked at the blue skies and vibrant sun outside, sighing as he said, "I wonder how long this peace will last!"

Chapter 275 - Gambling

Chapter 275: Gambling

After the third monthly examination ended, everyone once again threw themselves into their studies. The final appointment of the class monitors did not cause too much shock, since everyone had been the acting class monitors beforehand. The only exception was Han Manman, who was still stuck as an acting class monitor.

Xiao Lin's appointment being official was a matter of course. Right now, no one treated him like the trash that had the lowest attribute scores in the entrance exams anymore. Even as he walked around, strangers would often greet Xiao Lin as 'Monitor Xiao.'

The few monitors that had seldom interacted with him now sought him out for conversation frequently as well, acting like old friends. Within Class Seven, any voices of opposition to him had been crushed. Even the ever antagonistic Wang Dalin had resigned himself to his own devices, avoiding Xiao Lin every time they met.

This led to Xiao Lin feeling the real weight behind having actual power. Now, everyone viewed him as an official monitor, with the appropriate power to back it.

However, to Xiao Lin his skill was still far from enough. His current goal was to reach the Black Iron-rank as soon as possible. Commander Yu Mei from the sixth regiment's sudden visit with the dean's letter of appointment caused Xiao Lin a great level of nervousness.

The dean knew he had an SS-rank talent, on par with Ivan and Lilith who the Judge Academy threw their complete support behind. Naturally, the dean would emphasize Xiao Lin's growth.

However, no matter what, giving Xiao Lin the rank of a captain should not be part of that growth. The only explanation was that the dean was under an immense amount of pressure which led him to make that decision.

What kind of pressure was that?

After the conclusion of the examination evaluation, Xiao Lin went back to the dormitories and thought for a long time. He felt it could only mean war—a war with Planet Norma. The dean possibly had this possibility in mind the moment he heard about the high priest's return to Planet Norma.

Xiao Lin's attributes were currently at 14 Strength, 16 Agility, 15 Intelligence, and 16 Physique. Compared to before the examination, it was a huge boost.

Black Iron-rank needed his total attribute score to be at 100 points. Xiao Lin's attribute scores totalled to 61, which meant he was not far away from that rank. The other monitors were also around that level.

Even if the academy only required the students to reach Black Iron-rank to get to the second year, as monitors, they could not afford to have that minimum requirement as their goal.

As for the selection for the year leader, the student union had yet to release any information regarding that. It seemed like it would not be released in the short time either, leading to some competitive thoughts from the class monitors.

The discussions regarding the monthly examination on the new student forums started to fade. Most of the students were quite satisfied with the results, the ones who lived to the end having earned at least over a thousand redemption points, which meant the topic was not brought up too much.

During that time period, more and more threads regarding reaching the Black Iron-rank started to surface. When the discussions started to get more and more intense, someone actually opened a gambling pool with the twelve class monitors, including Han Manman, who was still an acting class monitor in it. The gambling pool was on who would get to the Black Iron-rank first.

In just a short two- to three-day span, more and more people joined in on the thread. The new students only numbered in the hundreds, but the replies on the thread had exceeded two thousand. Xiao Lin spared the thread a few glances. Various replies dissected everything to the most detailed of points, leading him to believe those students had too much free time on their hands.

However, the matter did not end there. It might have been because of the lack of entertainment in the academy, but many students were way too engaged in the topic during their free time, which led to the gambling being increasingly higher stakes, even escalating to putting redemption points on the line.

The academy was quite generous in that aspect, not placing any restrictions on the students. There were even functions on the forums that assisted that, allowing the students to deposit the redemption points they were gambling within the academy before allocating it accordingly after, but no one had noticed that function before the gamble started.

The students everyone focused on numbered to 20. Other than the 12 class monitors, Class Seven's Gu Xiaoyue and various other students with high attributes were thrown into the mix. As for the stakes, after a large amount of discussion, the person who started the gamble determined it.

The lowest returns were Chen Dao, who had only a 1.5 rate of return. That meant that every 1 redemption point a student gambled on him, they would only get 1.5 in return. Chen Dao was considered the freshman with the highest total attributes, which meant he was the hot favourite to win, leading to lower returns. Quite a lot of students had put their money on him, occupying a third of the freshmen.

Cheng Ming followed closely behind, having a payoff of double, while Gu Xiaoyue's was triple. Even if her intelligence score was incomparable, her other attributes were way too average, or even weak. However, she was still one of the favourites, and those that followed behind had greater and greater odds, but fewer and fewer students who gambled on them.

There might have been twenty students in the running, but everyone was very clear that there were no shortcuts to increasing their attributes. It was only through hard work and continuous training that they could accomplish it. Any difference in their basic foundations was enough to be insurmountable odds, which led everyone to believe that the final victor could only be from the few with the lowest returns.

However, some monitors were not willing to disclose their current attribute scores, including Xiao Lin. Those monitors had odds that were only based on speculation by everyone, which was why Xiao Lin was among those with the highest payouts, even if he was not the highest.

Everyone had recognized that Xiao Lin had the capabilities to be a monitor, but they still felt that Xiao Lin lost out to Cheng Ming, Chen Dao, and the others. Other than a few of the loyal Class Seven supporters, no one really felt like he could be the first to reach the Black Iron-rank.

In one short week, a large gambling pool had formed among the freshmen. Xiao Lin did not have too much interest in it, since he was not lacking in redemption points. The gambling pool did not offer much to gain either, since it was opened up by a few students working together. It was not possible that they had that many redemption points to spare.

However, the night after a week, Song Junlang suddenly gave him a call, earnestly asking him what his total attribute score was.

Xiao Lin trusted Song Junlang quite a bit, and so did not want to hide much from him. However, as he was about to answer, he seemed to have recalled something and asked curiously, “Department Head Song, don’t tell me you’ve decided to enter our year’s gambling pool.”

Song Junlang nodded immediately, saying excitedly, “It’s not just your year who’s in the pool now. Don’t you know? After the academy magazine published the news two days ago, a lot of higher year students, even the research students, have started to participate.”

Chapter 276 - Plotting With Song Junlang

Chapter 276: Plotting With Song Junlang

Song Junlang gave Xiao Lin a brief overview of the situation. Dawn Academy Evening News might be an official news source, but even on Planet Norma, there were not usually that many things to report. A lot of the news was actually gossip, such as love rumors about high-ranked colonists.

Usually, the new students would focus on any news regarding the monthly examinations in the papers, but this monthly examination was highly sensitive, and under the orders of some higher ups, the paper did not report anything on it. That was why the gambling pool became the topic of focus instead.

“You might not know this, but the higher the years you go, the more redemption points you need!” Song Junlang sighed as he furrowed his eyebrows.

“I feel like you’re the one who needs redemption points.” Xiao Lin’s eyes twitched. After interacting with Song Junlang for so long, he knew what the guy’s temperament was like.

“Ahem, I’ll admit to that, but what I want to say is, with so many people participating, the rewards are getting better and better.”

Xiao Lin opened the forums to take a look, and just like Song Junlang said, he got quite a shock, especially after two days ignoring the forums since he was busy with training.

The bets had increased from the few hundred first years to several thousand people, and the odds had gone up according. Originally, even though Xiao Lin was not regarded as having any chance to win, the compensation was only around seven or eight times, but now it had risen all the way to 20.

It looked like someone had invested a lot, which became a hot topic on the forums. There was a lot of discussion around the identity of the mysterious investor. Some believed they were a graduate—a very distinguished one at that.

That kind of person would not lack New Dollars. With their skill, they would have earned quite a bit in their four years in the academy, but redemption points were useless for them after graduation. Being able to invest in the gambling pool meant that they would stand a chance to earn quite a bit, but it was no issue at all if they lost anyway.

The odds and the scale of the gambling pool caused Xiao Lin quite a bit of surprise. He peeled his gaze off the computer before looking toward Song Junlang. “So, you want to place your bets on me? Do you really believe in me that much?”

“No, based on normal speeds, there’s no way you will be the first to reach Black Iron-rank.”

Xiao Lin took offense to that, retorting, “You know how fast my attributes rise, why do you think I don’t have a chance?”

Song Junlang waved, scribbling on a notebook before showing it to Xiao Lin, earnestly saying, “Look, this is a general growth graph I made for you. It’s true that your attributes go up faster than others, even if I don’t know why. However, your foundations are regrettably weaker than everyone else, you’ll likely need to wait until after Black Iron to overcome that natural deficiency.”

Xiao Lin thought to himself in silence. Song Junlang’s words were reasonable. His SS-rank talent allowed him to speed up his training, and in three months he managed to climb out from the last place in total attribute scores to the average line. The speed was astounding, but he was still quite a bit away from the other monitors, especially Chen Dao and Cheng Ming. Based on his understanding, their total attribute scores were at least 10 to 20 points higher than his.

Academic Genius was really good for the long term. If he had enough time he would be able to surpass anyone, but it was definitely not at that moment.

Song Junlang paused before a sly smile appeared on his face, “Of course, it’s only impossible if I don’t lend you a hand.”

Xiao Lin processed that quickly, furrowing his eyebrows before saying, “Do you mean you have a way to help me exceed everyone else? I guess you mean your special food? That would probably be hard; those things might be able to increase my attributes, but it’s full of uncertainty and slow to boot. Every time I eat them, there are always side effects, so it’s definitely not a reasonable solution.”

With those words, Xiao Lin seemed to remember something before furiously asking, “I actually have something to ask you. That dragon blood you made me drink, what sort of side effects does it have? I suddenly lost my consciousness during the monthly examination and started attacking my own allies. What happened?!”

Song Junlang jumped back in shock before recovering. “Huh? Attacking your allies? That definitely has nothing to do with me.”

“I can’t think of any reason other than your dragon blood.”

“Ahem, let’s get to the main topic. Do you want to reach Black Iron-rank in half a month?” Song Junlang changed the topic abruptly, but it was enough to surprise Xiao Lin.

“Half a month?”

“That’s right!”

“You’re not joking?”

“I don’t really have the time to joke with you!”

Xiao Lin went deep into thought, rapidly counting in his head. He currently had a total attribute score of 61, and needed 39 more to reach 100. If he were to ignore night and day and frantically train, it would take him more than a month, even if he were to increase his attributes by one a day.

Chen Dao and the rest needed maybe two or three days to gain one attribute point, but they only had ten to twenty odd points to go, so their speed would still exceed Xiao Lin’s.

After some thought, Xiao Lin once again raised his head, asking, “What do you need?”

Even though he had a decent relationship with Song Junlang, he did not think that man would do anything for free. Song Junlang lowered his voice and said, “Very simple, we split everything in half after the matter!”

“What?”

Xiao Lin gaped, not knowing what to say before finally retorting, “So you basically aren’t planning on spending anything, but want me to use my redemption points for you instead!”

“I’m using my expertise here, and I really don’t have anything on me.” Song Junlang smiled bitterly. “You know as well that my research is not supported by the student union due to safety concerns. Even though I’m a department head, the school still won’t support me financially. I’ve been getting by using my savings from the past, but it will run out soon.”

Xiao Lin could not help but think about Department Head Song’s past as a genius graduate. Being relegated to a logistics department head that no one respected was quite tragic. He clenched his teeth, saying, “We’re splitting it three to seven!”

“Four to six! No lower!”

“Then I’m the six!” Xiao Lin said decisively.

“Fine, but you’ll pay the taxes!”

“What? There are taxes?!”

“Of course, the academies are basically countries in the New World. How would a country function without taxes?”

Chapter 277 - Expanding Gambling Pool

Chapter 277: Expanding Gambling Pool

The two of them argued for half a day, but Xiao Lin managed to understand the academy's taxation system thanks to that. Even though he trusted Song Junlang, he still needed to be careful after having been tricked so many times.

According to the rules of Dawn Academy, any income the students received after graduation needed to be taxed. Even though the taxes were not that high, especially since they regarded themselves as the elite of Planet Norma. Students were usually not taxed, but any form of gambling or business transaction would need to be taxed by the academy.

Xiao Lin could not help but remark that the academy really knew how to make money. It was no wonder the forums had betting capabilities—it was a way to keep things monitored. It was obvious their year was not the first one that used them.

Song Junlang was adamant he would not pay a single cent, saying, "I know you managed to get quite a bit from that incident with the Americans. You should have exchanged quite a bit of redemption points before the monthly examination, so you're definitely not lacking points."

That was true, but redemption points were just numbers to him, because he did not know how to turn those numbers into usable resources. If he spent it on higher level equipment, he would only be able to keep it in the dormitories and not have a use for them until later. Any equipment he bought for his current level would be cheap, but they would not be used for long.

"Department Head Song, you said you could get me to Black Iron-rank in half a month. How do you plan on doing that?" Xiao Lin asked curiously.

"Using food of course. How else would I do it?" Song Junlang looked like he was answering to an idiot.

Xiao Lin rolled his eyes, asking suspiciously, "To be able to raise my rank in such a short time, did you use the dean's golden dragon as your materials?"

"No no no, I can't tell you just yet, but just trust me. When have I ever lied to you? Let's get the bets in order first!"

Song Junlang looked like he was very confident. Xiao Lin was actually not too interested in the redemption points, especially since he still had quite a bit of New Dollars on hand, but he was very tempted by the idea of raising his rank in half a month.

The two of them discussed it for a while. Song Junlang had obviously given it a lot of thought before contacting Xiao Lin. He even mentioned wanting to pull some graduates into the gambling pool. The more people who joined the pool, the more they would get in the end.

As a former genius graduate, even with his current circumstances, Song Junlang still had quite a good network of connections within the academy. He only needed to broadcast it a little for even more people to know.

“Everyone needs money!” Song Junlang emphasized. “Even if we are the internal divisions, the difference in wealth is extreme. The stronger folks can easily get various resources. Raising your skill needs hard work and talent, but potions and various resources that enhance training is important as well. You’ll spend a lot after you graduate, so no one would ever let a chance to make money pass by just like that.”

“You say that, but aren’t we just scamming everyone else?”

“If you gamble you should be ready to lose!”

“...”

“Well just leave it to me, remember not to slack off these few days!”

“Don’t worry. I wouldn’t slack off, even if the gambling pool didn’t exist.”

Xiao Lin hesitated before showing the dean’s strange letter of appointment to Song Junlang, but it did not get too much of a response. Song Junlang told him not to worry too much. Even if war were to happen, they would not use the students in the academy.

However, Xiao Lin understood that the students in school were still reserved for worst case scenarios. If push really came to shove, like the last moments of the war against the orcs, the students would still be mobilized to the battlefield.

After finishing up the call with Song Junlang, Xiao Lin contacted Fei Yawen. She was the research student who provided him with the training potions before the monthly examination. He had not contacted her for a while, but since he needed to ramp up his training, those potions were absolutely necessary.

Fei Yawen naturally did not reject him, but Xiao Lin received some unpleasant news from her. After the success Xiao Lin saw with the potions, Fei Yawen and her supervisor managed to reach an agreement with the student union to prepare to conduct large scale trials.

Since the early results showed that the potions were most effective at around Black Iron and Bronze rank, the first-year students were naturally roped into the testing process. Of course, the participation would be voluntary, and the student union would contact a few of the monitors and other students with decent attributes to ask if they were willing to volunteer. Thanks to the gambling pool on the forums, the class monitors were unlikely to reject the offer.

Xiao Lin did not need money, but it did not mean the others were the same. There were quite a few students who wanted to make a small fortune from the gamble.

Even if Xiao Lin could not be certain the potions would work on the others, it still meant that he was now under more pressure. Song Junlang might have guaranteed that Xiao Lin would be able to reach his goal in half a month, but Xiao Lin was still not going to slack off with his training at all.

The few days that followed, Xiao Lin had practically missed every single class. Thanks to the permissions the dean had granted him, Xiao Lin was basically the only who got to experience the real feeling of being a higher education student with the freedom to choose his own classes.

The professors were no strangers to those sort of students, and had long since decided to not care about it. Some of them even respected him. Of course, they only respected his background, not his skills. Even the professors found it hard to even talk to the student union president, let alone the dean.

Song Junlang had disappeared for a few days as well. Only after asking Chen Yu did Xiao Lin know that Song Junlang had gone to the New World, probably to contact his old friends to throw them under the bus.

More interestingly, Chen Yu had tried to ask about Xiao Lin's progress with his courses with a look of concern. Xiao Lin gaped for a while, not knowing how to answer. That guy was actually silently trying to gauge his total attribute scores.

Chen Yu was the year leader of the second year, and no longer had the authority to look at information on the first years. Only the first-year year leader could do that, but that position was currently vacant.

Even though Xiao Lin was not favored by most in the race, Chen Yu was someone who interacted quite a bit with Xiao Lin, so he was clear on how deep Xiao Lin's background was. That was why Chen Yu felt that he needed to strongly consider Xiao Lin as a candidate.

Of course, Xiao Lin did not reveal anything, simply waving the question away with a laugh.

Chapter 278 - Odds

Chapter 278: Odds

The ones who started the gambling pool never expected that it would turn so out huge. It absolutely exceeded everyone's expectations.

After a few days, it was not just the students who were participating. Thanks to the Dawn Academy Evening News, even those in the New World started to participate. However, other than a few opportunists, most of the betters were fresh graduates, since they were the ones that needed the most money.

However, with the new participants they could not just limit themselves to redemption points anymore, especially since it was troublesome to exchange redemption points for New Dollars. Those graduates instead reopened the gambling pool using New Dollars.

Casinos were common in Planet Norma. Both the colonists and the natives were quite interested in that form of entertainment, as well as the idea of striking it rich overnight.

However, other than a few exceptions, most of the students in school did not care about the casinos. Only a few elites like Chen Yu actually had New Dollars with them, but in order to participate, they would need to get the upper year students to help them in the New World.

Based on Dawn Academy's rules, other than a few exceptions, freely heading into the New World was a privilege reserved for graduates.

Xiao Lin heard about the matter from Song Junlang. It was obvious that Song Junlang wanted to make all the money he could from both the academy and the New World.

"How did you do it? I'm referring to the pool in the New World." Xiao Lin already managed to get the odds from Song Junlang. He could only say that they were much crazier about this than the students. His own odds were 1:100, and it was in New Dollars. In comparison, the forums really looked like child's play.

"It's nothing; just set some waves into motion." Song Junlang was not surprised by the development, saying, "There are plenty of similar gambling pools. There aren't any sports tournaments on Planet Norma, but there are still plenty of things to bet on, such as inter-academy tournaments, which is a tournament between all the academies, or even the victors of war."

"War? Hasn't war stopped for many years?"

"It's just between the natives. Even without us, Planet Norma had never been all that peaceful. Their wars are even more ferocious than what we see on Earth."

"How much do you plan on putting inside?" Xiao Lin asked.

"How much do you have on hand?"

"9000 New Dollars and 2000 redemption points." The redemption points were basically all his earnings from the monthly examination as well as what he made from classes. He had practically spent all of his redemption points from earlier. Thinking about it, Xiao Lin added, "If you need it, I can always exchange some more redemption points."

"There's no need, New Dollars are more valuable than redemption points. After this gamble, those who made a lot of money from it would definitely hurry to exchange their points, which will lead to a big drop in the exchange rate. There's no way out of that. Redemption points can only be used here after all," Song Junlang said.

"Are we throwing all of it in?"

"Of course, we go big or go home!"

The corner of Xiao Lin's lips twitched, calculating it silently. His odds in the academy were one to twenty, so 2,000 points would get him 40,000. However, based on the New World's one to one hundred odds, his 9,000 New Dollars would turn into 900,000 New Dollars.

"What, are you afraid you'll lose?" Song Junlang thought Xiao Lin was hesitating.

Xiao Lin shook his head. Since Song Junlang was so confident, he would place his trust in him, but after some thought, he said, “The casino on the New World; if we need our real names to be able to bet, remember to use yours.”

“Why?”

“Ah, I’m afraid of what will happen if it becomes known I have that sort of money.”

Song Junlang rolled his eyes, saying, “That sum isn’t that much. Those capable of reaching Gold-rank and above would all have a lot more than that.”

No matter what, that sum was an eye-opening number for Xiao Lin currently. Even if he had not been too invested earlier on, he started to place more importance to winning the bet.

The other monitors were the same, but they were not fighting for money, but rather for their reputations. They did not have that much capital to begin with, but their reputations would definitely be bolstered if they won in the academy. That reputation would definitely be very useful when they eventually stepped into the New World.

Currently, the quickest way to increase their attributes was through combat training and learning related skills. That was the conclusion they arrived on after several months.

However, the speed that their attributes increased by was filled with uncertainty. Their innate talents, the intensity of their training, and even the state of their bodies and mental conditions could all affect it.

The monitors did have some problems with their training. Students with talents were naturally more skilled than most, so sparring with normal students yielded very little. To the monitors, their best sparring partners were each other, which caused problems to arise.

Not everyone was as honest as Cheng Ming. When training with their own competitors, tricks started to appear.

“You’re cheating! How could you not dodge that? Even if you wanted to slow down my growth, you don’t have to go so easy. This is a practical training session!”

“You’re way too quick, I couldn’t dodge it! Wait, don’t you know the Sweeping Strike skill? That attack hits a wide area. I’ve seen you use it during the monthly exam; why aren’t you using it now? You’re the one who’s faking it...”

...

Those kinds of conversations could be heard increasingly frequently on the training grounds. No one actually knew how effective it was, and it did not cause any grudges, but some verbal spats were unavoidable.

Some of them had wanted to spar with Xiao Lin as well, since his skills had been recognized now. Unfortunately, Xiao Lin chose to use the simulated combat system instead. It was a lot more convenient compared to fighting with actual opponents.

The simulated combat system was expensive and hard to maintain, so Dawn Academy had less than a hundred in the entire academy. It was widely used by the higher year students, so other than Xiao Lin, none of the other first years had convenient access.

There were naturally those who were unhappy with that, and there were even some who detested Xiao Lin's special privileges. Even though they respected Xiao Lin's skill, they did not think Xiao Lin would ever be able to compete with Chen Dao and Cheng Ming. Currently, only the two of them were regarded to have a chance to reach Black Iron-rank in the short term.

Chapter 279 - Library (1)

Chapter 279: Library (1)

It got progressively harder to increase their attributes the more they trained. It was especially true for the new students. They had recently reached a bottleneck period.

Normal training started to yield very low returns for the class monitors. For instance, even someone like Cheng Ming needed two to three days to get an increase in his attributes through Basic Swordsmanship training. That was even under the conditions he threw himself into his training, ignoring everything other than eating and sleeping.

For regular students who did not have any talents aiding them, their climb was even slower. That was why everyone had a lot of faith in Chen Dao and Cheng Ming. Anyone whose total attribute scores were more than ten points away from them basically had no chance.

Xiao Lin's training was at a higher level than theirs. With the simulated battles, the virtual characters were given very high attributes and he constantly dodged around with his Phantom Steps. He had begun to realize that the stronger the foe, the better the effects on training.

However, even with his current pace, Xiao Lin would at least need a month to reach the Black Iron-rank. It would mean he had used a total of four months. That speed was not that slow, but it was not fast either.

With how popular the gambling pool was getting, the forums started to discuss the fastest colonists to reach Black Iron. Xiao Lin had curiously read up on it as well.

Those records did not mean much, especially since everyone's attributes when they first arrived from Earth was different, which led to a lot of discussion.

However, no one questioned who held the record for the fastest breakthrough. Xiao Lin could not help but sigh when he saw the name.

Ivanovich.

The first SS-rank talent holder among the colonists. There were reliable records that showed that he only took seven days to reach Black Iron-rank after he entered the Russian academy.

Seven days. That meant his attributes were already close to Black Iron-rank when he first entered. Xiao Lin remembered Song Junlang telling him that Lilith from the Judge Academy only took two months as well. Compared to them, he was lagging behind by quite a bit.

After a bit of lamenting, Xiao Lin quickly typed out a reply in the thread, but his focus was completely different from everyone else, 'Thread starter, where did you get that information?'

He got a reply very quickly; it was just two words: The library.

Dawn Academy naturally had its own library. Xiao Lin had actually wanted to visit it since the first examination, but had to delay it due to Judge Academy. Even after that, he had been busy preparing for the third examination and was unable to.

It had been a week since the end of the third monthly examination. Thanks to the pressure from the gambling pool, every class monitor was frantically training, but Xiao Lin felt like he had to take the time to visit the library.

He needed to look for appropriate skills that he could learn. Not every skill was as structured as Phantom Steps. The academy's courses were limited, and not every skill had the same effect on their attributes.

Taking advantage of the weekend, Xiao Lin got the location from someone and headed over. The library was toward the center of the academy. It looked not much different from a library on Earth. The size was quite large and thanks to the weekend, it was quite crowded. Even professors and research students could be seen.

There were staff from the student union managing the library at the front hall. The entire process was quite smooth, but the queue was longer than expected, so Xiao Lin took the time to read the explanatory notices beside the counter.

The process to obtain a library card was quite simple; all they needed was the school universal card. The library cards were tied to the owner, and would need to be replaced if lost.

However, the interesting thing was that the library cards had ranks attached to them. The order from low to high was C, B, A and S. C-ranked cards only allowed usage of the reading room, and books were not allowed to be brought outside. That rank consisted of first-year and some second-year students.

B-ranked library cards could take books outside, but each book could only be taken out for a month at most, and only one book was allowed to be borrowed at a time.

A- and S-rank cards did not have limitations to the time and amount of books. Other than that, the notices also detailed the different sections within the library.

To put it simply, even if some books were in the library, the academy did not want everyone to have access to them. Rather, they did not want the lower-year students to be exposed to too much too early.

There were quite a few students in the queue. Other than first years, there were also quite a few students from the higher years. After fulfilling certain conditions, they would need to upgrade their cards as well.

Looking at the queue, Xiao Lin estimated that it would take at least half an hour to get to his turn. As he got ready to head to the back of the line, someone called out to him.

“Xiao Lin? Xiao Lin! Hey, over here!”

An excited girl called out to him from the counter as she waved to him. Looking at Xiao Lin’s confused face, the girl pursed her lips, saying, “I bet you’ve forgotten who I am!”

A gentle-looking guy walked over, hurriedly pulling the girl over as he stared at her awkwardly. Looking at Xiao Lin’s awkward smile, he said, “I’m so sorry, my girlfriend loves making a scene.”

Xiao Lin suddenly realized that it was Gu Fantian and his girlfriend Zhang Tingting. They were the two who were in charge of assigning the new students to their dormitories when he first entered the academy. He later asked them about Perception training, but had stopped interacting with them after that.

Even though the two of them probably treated him better because he was a class monitor, they were still quite decent people.

Gu Fantian more or less saw through Xiao Lin’s awkwardness and wisely came over. “Monitor Lin, why don’t you come inside and take a seat. We haven’t talked in so long. I heard you did well in the monthly examination and have officially been appointed as the class monitor. Congratulations!”

Xiao Lin could not help but admire the way that man turned that awkward situation around, even revealing to everyone else around them that he was a monitor in the process.

Monitors were quite rare in the academy. Adding up all four years, there were only a few dozen of them. Even the higher-year students had to look at him differently after hearing that.

Xiao Lin was not that familiar with them, but following Gu Fantian into the resting area confirmed one thing: he would be able to skip the half-hour-long queue.

Chapter 280 - Library (2)

Chapter 280: Library (2)

The pair of lovers were quite different personality wise. Zhang Tingting seemed very easygoing, while Gu Fantian seemed more shrewd. The resting area was behind the service counter. After entering, Gu Fantian got his girlfriend to continue helping the others while remaining behind to talk to Xiao Lin.

There was actually not much to talk about since they were not that familiar with each other, nor did they usually have much in common. Gu Fantian did not risk annoying him by looking to extend

the conversation with pointless topics. Instead, he went straight to the point, “Monitor Xiao, are you here to make a library card?”

“Yes, I came over since it’s the weekend. The two of you seem very busy. You were even in charge of guiding the new students.

“Ah, Tingting and I are just small characters in the student union. We usually take up these odd jobs to earn some credits and points. Let me help you get a B-rank library card. Don’t hesitate to look for us for anything in the future. We might not be big in the student union, but we’re quite capable of getting things done.”

Xiao Lin had expected to be able to skip the queue, but Gu Fantian was quite good at currying favor, giving him a B-rank card. He seemed to be afraid that Xiao Lin did not understand what it meant as he added, “Ordinarily, based on student union rules, you’d need to have been in the academy for a year and have reached the Black Iron-rank before you can get B-rank clearance.”

“Then is it really okay giving me that?” Xiao Lin was excited, compared to a C-rank, B-ranks could bring the books back to the dormitories. It was a huge advantage, but he did not want to cause any trouble for it.

“Rules are dead, humans are alive. That rule isn’t really that strict anyway. The library would always increase ranks at their own discretion. Even the student union can’t interfere with it, so what we do goes.” Gu Fantian was quite proud; that was part of his authority, even if it was not that important.

Xiao Lin laughed. “Then why don’t you just promote me to S-rank.”

Gu Fantian smiled bitterly. “You joke. The most we can give you is B-rank clearance. Anything higher is out of our power. Even fourth-year students usually have A-rank clearance at most.”

Pausing for a moment, he lowered his voice. “I heard that S-rank books are usually restricted. Any books inside could turn the world upside down. Even research students and professors need to gain the dean’s approval before reading those books.”

Xiao Lin was actually not that interested in those restricted books. They had nothing to do with him at the moment. Thanks to Gu Fantian, he got his library card in a few minutes as he walked into the library under the annoyed gazes of the crowd. He did not expect his first time enjoying the privileges of being a monitor would be there...

The inside of the library was much grander than the outside. Xiao Lin had thought that the tall building would have several floors, but it was actually just one. The tall and gigantic bookshelves were as tall as several floors. There were also wide distances between the bookshelves, with countless flying carpets gliding about. The carpets had students standing or sitting down on them.

Thanks to Gu Fantian’s prior explanations, Xiao Lin was prepared for the sight, but he still could not help but look on in awe.

The flying carpets could be obtained from the entrance. From what Gu Fantian said, they were specialized carpets designed by the school. If one wrote down the name of a book on the prepared paper slips, the flying carpets would bring the person over to the book. It was fine even if the name

of the books were not known; writing down the type or genre of the books would also have the flying carpet bring you to the area. It was extremely convenient, cutting down on the time needed to look for certain books.

Xiao Lin took a flying carpet for himself. Just like the other new students around him, Xiao Lin was very interested in the new toy. In truth, almost everyone was more interested in the flying carpets than the books during their first visits to the library.

The flying carpets were quite soft, leading to people being afraid that they would fall off. Since the carpets were used by new students as well, the mechanics of the flying carpet were also simplified. All Xiao Lin needed to do was put on a special mask to be able to mentally control the flying carpet's movements, but it only had very basic maneuverability.

For safety considerations, every flying carpet was equipped with slow fall magic, so they did not have to worry about falling off.

The flying carpets also came with a map of the library. Xiao Lin calmly figured out his destination before carefully getting on the carpet and putting his mask on. After chanting in his heart a few times for the carpet to fly, the flying carpet slowly ascended. When Xiao Lin thought to move forward, the carpet began to float forward, but the speed was not that quick, nor could he speed it up.

Every flying carpet and every bookshelf had anti-collision spells cast on them; when they got too close to each other, the carpet would automatically stop. The careful design invoked a sense of admiration in Xiao Lin.

It took about half an hour before he got used to piloting the flying carpet. He had no choice. Even if Xiao Lin knew time was of the essence, who could resist playing around with such a new and fascinating toy.

Area C was the closest to him. It also happened to be the largest area, occupying the space of two football fields. Continuing to move ahead would see one blocked by a metal door that would only open with a B-rank library card or above.

As Xiao Lin put his attention on the books, he noticed that even though Area C had a lot of books, they had quite a lot of books from Earth. It had history books on Earth, and even detailed histories of every colonist country. From the large area it occupied, basically half of the books were about Earth, with the other half belonging to Planet Norma.

It seemed pointless, but Xiao Lin could somewhat understand the reasoning. With the rule that Gold-rank practitioners and above could not return to Earth, a lot of them would one day never be able to return to Earth. It was even possible that the colonists would end up staying on Planet Norma forever someday. At that point, their descendants and even themselves would slowly forget about their origins. Those books about Earth were like a reminder to never forget their home.

However, Xiao Lin quickly brushed past those books, since they were not the reason he was there. After that, he moved his attention to the area focused on Planet Norma.

Chapter 281 - Introduction to Necromancy

Chapter 281: Introduction to Necromancy

The library area for Planet Norma was split into a few segments, including the history of the planet, the government, cultures, geographic and various races. There was a lot of content, not just detailing the current races, but even some ancient and extinct ones.

Understanding one's foes was the first step to defeating them.

Xiao Lin felt like the library was built with that in mind as well. The colonists had limited influence on Planet Norma, and they would never outnumber the natives. Being able to get so many territories and powers in just a short two hundred odd years required a very firm understanding of their enemies.

Some of the books were written by themselves, but those were fewer in number. Most of the books were translated from Planet Norma's own literature. Almost every academy had a team of linguistic specialists in charge of translations.

Xiao Lin flipped past a few books. Some of them were just handwritten logs, written like diaries; some of them even had magical symbols. The symbols looked to have some significance.

"I should come back to look at those some day."

Xiao Lin somewhat reluctantly put down the book. He was not here for that this time. He sat on the flying carpet and wrote 'Black Iron Rank Skills' on a paper slip before dropping it into a pocket in the front of the carpet. The paper slip emitted a dim glow before the carpet suddenly moved by itself.

It started to zip around the gigantic bookshelves, weaving left and right. If it was not for the automatic guidance system, Xiao Lin would probably have gotten lost, even with the map.

However, when the flying carpet finally stopped, Xiao Lin could not help but break out in cold sweat. In front of him were dozens of rows of books. All of them were Black Iron-rank skills. The writing of skill books, especially low-ranked ones, would directly affect a new student's growth, which was why those books were all written as a joint effort between all the academies. To put it simply, they were textbooks.

However, the textbooks here numbered a lot more than back on Earth. The academy adopted different teaching methods based on what they required during different time periods. On top of that, thanks to the uncountable number of different skills, it was impossible to rely only on classes.

Xiao Lin's position was obvious. He needed skills that would help him increase his attributes quickly. For instance, Phantom Steps was a skill that had simple requirements, but was extremely helpful to increasing his agility.

He then wrote the word 'strength' on the paper slip, adding 'F-rank' upon further thought. The flying carpet quickly brought him to a segment that focused on weapon skills, but he did not really like burdensome weapons like axes and hammers since they would affect his speed and skill usage.

Shaking his head and forgetting that train of thought, Xiao Lin started to look for a needle in a haystack. Strength- and Agility-based skills usually needed various basic skills as requirements, but Xiao Lin only had his Basic Swordsmanship at a respectable rank at that moment. Since he still needed to master Lightsword, he did not want to take up other sword skills at that moment.

He then shifted his focus onto spells. Song Junlang once said he had quite a decent affinity for flame-based spells, and his usage of Flame Bullet during the monthly examinations proved the point.

There were a lot of flame-based spells. There were spells like Exploding Flame Bullets, Rapid Flame Bullets, Flowing Fire Bullet, and various other fireball-like spells. There were other spells that focused on single-target damage or even area-of-effect damage. Everything had its own unique trait, making it hard to choose.

However, Xiao Lin thought for a bit before writing down 'necromancy' and putting it in the pocket. The carpet seemed to stop for more than ten seconds before speeding up, heading somewhere further away.

Necromancy was exactly what Xiao Lin was looking for. It was the reason he came to the library because even after browsing through every single class, he could not find any classes related to that branch of magic, which meant he could only rely on the library.

Xiao Lin's interest in necromancy was not recent. It had started ever since the high priest's undead army caused so much trouble for Lilith and himself, with them only able to escape that place after braving a lot of dangers.

During the monthly examination, his Holy Soul Sword's summoning skill was also quite useful. Even though the elves hated it, forcing him to not be able to use it openly later on, the soul's defensive abilities were still really great as protection.

The monthly examination still revealed a lot of problems. For instance, after activating Miracle to shift his attributes to Agility, coupled with Phantom Steps, his speed could reach shocking levels, but with the changing of his attributes, he became incredibly weak at the same time, forcing him to only be able to evade.

However, as a skill that did not have a very high rank, Phantom Steps was limited in its capabilities. A more skillful opponent would not care about his evasive maneuvers.

As for hoping for help from his teammates, even if Xiao Lin was not that arrogant, he could confidently say that no one from the first year could even force him to use everything in his arsenal. It was obvious from the monthly examination when he used his full speed to help out at various defensive points. He was just a sitting duck when his time limit was up. If he did not have any help, he would have been captured by the orcs. Releasing the sword spirit at that time would help him cover for that deficiency.

Thanks to his prior gaming experience, Xiao Lin was filled with an interest in necromancy. However, the flying carpet was moving in a strange direction, flying past countless bookshelves as it moved toward Area B.

He used his library card to open the access door, and after a brief pause the flying carpet flew inside. Xiao Lin was filled with curiosity. He did not expect necromancy spells to be that area.

It really was in the area, and even in a secluded corner. There was much less of a crowd there, with him only occasionally bumping into other students wearing higher-year uniforms.

There was only one row of books on necromancy spells. Compared to other books, the number was extremely small. Xiao Lin glanced over the books, ignoring any topics that were too high-level or useless to him, finally fixing his eyes on 'Introduction to Necromancy'.

"Necromancy is different from any other elemental magic. It uses mental strength to communicate with the dead. Learning necromancy will require sufficient mental strength and perception..."

The opening paragraph led to Xiao Lin widening his eyes. Just like how different sword skills needed certain requirements to learn them, elemental spells needed elemental affinity, but that indirectly increased the amount of time needed to learn them, not allowing for attributes to increase quickly. However, based on what he had read, he made the right choice picking necromancy.

Chapter 282 - Song Junlang's Experiment

Chapter 282: Song Junlang's Experiment

There were tables for reading beside every bookshelf. Xiao Lin took out the book and immediately had the carpet land. Even though the flying carpet was a great experience, the book in his hand was a lot more interesting

That introduction book detailed the origin and progress of necromancy. Necromancy was considered an evil art on Planet Norma. Other than a small number of races, most of the natives never wanted to meet necromancers, causing the branch of magic to be understudied.

Even though they were both branches of magic, necromancy and elemental magic basically had nothing in common. Necromancy did not require elemental affinity, nor did it need any resonance to magic. For necromancy, the most important thing was death energy.

Simply put, it was the energy left behind after dying. Every living being produced it when they died, and death happened in every corner constantly on Planet Norma. That was why necromancers believed that death energy was something ever-present and unavoidable; the myth that necromancy could only be used in ominous places like graves was unfounded.

The book was probably written by someone from Earth. There were various illustrations and personal opinions in the book, such as how the natives regarded necromancy as evil because of the reverence the natives had for the dead, just like how death is treated by certain cultures on Earth.

Just as Xiao Lin expected, summoning was the best part of necromancy. Compared to solidifying death energy to attack, necromancers preferred to use the undead to fight for them.

Compared to the nature summoning of the elves, necromancy's summons had a lot of advantages, such as being impervious to fatigue and pain, and being completely submissive to the summoner.

Necromancy's summonings were also split into a few types. Breathing life into rotting corpses was the lowest level of necromancy. Those corpses were usually not very strong and slow to boot, just like wooden dolls or machines. The corpses rarely affected combat unless there were terrifying numbers.

However, that was all for later on. Xiao Lin quickly flicked through it and arrived on how to learn the magic. It was quite easy to learn necromancy, only requiring a Basic Meditation of LV4 to start feeling death energy while meditating. Since death energy was controlled purely with mental strength, it led to a much faster increase than other magics.

Of course, necromancers had their own system of mediation: necromantic meditation. Even if normal meditation was fine, it was not as good as necromantic meditation for sensing death energy.

After writing 'necromantic meditation' on the paper slip, the carpet quickly located the book. The thick book was quite heavy, its pages a faint yellow, signifying how old the book was, but the condition of the book was still quite good, showing that not many people had read it.

That was expected. He had heard in New Washington that, other than a few special cases, most academies did not offer necromancy as a course, so students had to learn it themselves if they were interested.

Even if necromancy did not invoke any negative opinions among the colonists, they had noticed that necromancy would often invoke fear or hatred from the natives, causing needless bloodshed.

For instance, the elves' hatred for the undead was carved into their bones. That was why, even if there were no official rules on it in New Washington, it was absolutely prohibited to use necromancy in front of the elves there.

Dawn Academy did not have that worry. Even though the orcs did not like the undead either, the academy never had a good relationship with the orcs anyway. The war from years ago was not easily forgotten, meaning there was no need to avoid anything they hated.

Picking up 'Necromantic Meditation', Xiao Lin left the library. The borrowing process was extremely simple, only needing to note it down on the library card. Gu Fantian had reminded him that every book had a magical trace on it, and not returning them on time would lead to trouble.

As for the book that Xiao Lin had chosen, Gu Fantian and Zhang Tingting voiced quite a bit of shock. It was not because of necromancy itself, but they just felt like Xiao Lin was trying to learn too many things at once.

The truth was Xiao Lin was not that sure he would go any deeper into necromancy, but he still thanked the two of them for their concern.

Xiao Lin had actually started to realize that he had quite a hodgepodge of skills, but it was undeniable that it was the best way to increase his attributes in the beginning.

Thanks to Miracle's attribute-changing ability, increasing his attributes meant a lot more for Xiao Lin than anyone else. Every increase in attribute points caused his skill-activation to be better. The best proof was when he knocked Captain Yu unconscious during the monthly examination.

He did not bring his phone to the library since that toy did not have a silent function and he did not want to disturb anyone else. That was why Xiao Lin was surprised to see that he had received a few messages while he was gone, and they were all from Song Junlang.

Xiao Lin got up excitedly. Song Junlang contacting him at this time could only be related to increasing his attributes. He put away the book and immediately headed to Song Junlang's department.

After twenty minutes, Xiao Lin stood in front of Song Junlang's usual office, looking inside with an uncertain look, swallowing before he said hesitantly, "Uhm, is it really okay for me to come inside?"

The inside of the room looked very peculiar. There were dozens of transparent test tubes and flasks on the table, with various different-colored liquids inside. He did not know what the liquids were, but one red liquid definitely had the familiar scent of blood!

Song Junlang did not seem to have time for Xiao Lin at that moment. In his hand was a tiny silver knife, cutting into a frog that had wings. After a few seconds, he retrieved what looked like organs from that thing before throwing it into the flask behind him. He then poured a few strange smelling things inside, and after the smoke settled, there was only a dense liquid left inside.

Okay, Xiao Lin finally understood what those different-colored liquids were.

Chapter 283 - Super Tonic Pill

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Translator: EndlessFantasy Translation **Editor:** EndlessFantasy Translation

Song Junlang's experiment seemed to go on for quite some time. Xiao Lin did not bother him and simply watched in silence despite not understanding a single thing.

About ten minutes later, Song Junlang suddenly turned back and strode toward the door. As soon as Xiao Lin was about to open his mouth and say something, Song Junlang took the opportunity to pull him out of the room and shut the door heavily behind them.

Boom!

A dull explosion erupted from the room. The shock wave directly blasted the door to pieces, leaving Xiao Lin thoroughly shocked. Department Head Song let out a drawn-out sigh of relief before leaning forward and peering in. He then walked back into the room and motioned for Xiao Lin to come over, saying, "All good. You can come in now."

Xiao Lin looked at the messy room. All those bottles and cans had long shattered into fragments. It looked like a war had broken out in there. He tactfully chose to stand outside the door and ask, "Department Head Song, are you refining explosives? Or are you researching some explosive scrolls?"

"Nonsense. I specifically called you in because I've prepared a Super Tonic Pill for you!"

"Huh? Su-Super Tonic Pill?"

"Mm. That's right."

Song Junlang carefully extracted a pill from the glittering debris. It seemed rather hot because he blew on it a couple of times. He then used a paper towel to wipe some dust off the pill before handing it over to Xiao Lin.

Intrigued, Xiao Lin slowly walked into the room to take that beautiful-looking pill. It was about the size of a baby's fist and was smooth to the touch. Still suspicious, he asked, "You're not expecting me to eat this, are you?"

Department Head Song replied bluntly. "Duh. It just so happens to be hot right now, so hurry up and eat it. I'll pour you some water."

Xiao Lin poured cold water over Song Junlang's enthusiasm and said warily, "Let's get the record straight this time around. What is this, what's the use of eating it, and most importantly, what are the side effects? If you don't give me the full details, I sure as hell won't eat it!"

Department Head Song murmured helplessly, "You're really troublesome. I had to go through a lot just to get this stuff for you. Don't you know how tiring it was for me to travel back and forth between the academy and the New World? There aren't a lot of materials available at Dawn Academy, so I had to pay a special visit to the Foreign Affairs Department and chat with a couple of people from the other academies..."

Xiao Lin was unmoved and interrupted him, "Get to the point."

"Ahem, okay, this is my latest era-defining product. It's called the Super Tonic Pill. I won't tell you the specific process in detail since you won't understand it anyway, but in a nutshell, this Super Tonic Pill combines the essence of a variety of hybrid creatures, which will produce a qualitative improvement of one's physical attributes instead of mere quantitative changes like before," Song Junlang explained proudly.

"Can this so-called qualitative change allow a person to directly break through to Black Iron-rank?"

"You can put it that way. To some extent, it works the same as that super potion from the Royal British Academy, the one that temporarily prevents Planet Norma's effects on a person. But mine is more advanced though, because the effect is permanent!"

It sounded pretty awesome to Xiao Lin even though he did not understand it that well, but he had the habit of considering its negative effects first, since those statements came from Song Junlang's mouth. He weighed the pill and said suspiciously, "If what you said is true, then why should a

freshman waste their time to practice if they could just take this pill to directly reach Black Iron-rank?”

Song Junlang waved his hand, apparently to chastise Xiao Lin for his naïveté. “Things will never be as simple as that. The ingredients of this Super Tonic Pill are complex and it can’t be mass-produced. In particular, the proportion of each ingredient has to be tailored to the user, otherwise side effects would occur if the dose is too strong. I spent three months collecting data on your response to various hybrid animals, then specially formulated a Super Tonic Pill that would only have an effect on you.”

“And the side effects? Don’t expect me to eat this if you don’t spell it out clearly for me,” Xiao Lin was still suspicious over it.

“Um, well, of course there will be side effects. If something is that powerful, you can be sure that they’d have more side effects. It’s considered to be Planet Norma’s law of equilibrium,” Song Junlang muttered a few words, then slowly continued, “I said it before, this Super Tonic Pill is a collection of essences from a number of carefully selected hybrid creatures. Similarly, the side effects will be that of all the creatures combined.”

Xiao Lin froze for two or three seconds and immediately felt his hair stand on end. He stuffed the Super Tonic Pill back into Department Head Song’s hand and lambasted, “Damn it! And you have the nerve to tell me to eat this? While it’s still hot!? The side effects are all the creatures combined? My God, doesn’t that mean I have to experience all that suffering another time!”

“Uh, small correction there, it’ll probably be several times stronger than that.”

“Gee, thanks for that reminder!” Xiao Lin shot back angrily.

After Xiao Lin threw a fit, Song Junlang cleared his throat and said helplessly, “You could’ve waited for me to finish talking. Indeed, if this Super Tonic Pill is given to someone else, it’s not surprising that they’d die immediately after consuming such a high-power food, given the fact that their constitution is that of an Earthling.”

“Someone else?” Xiao Lin noticed the tone by which Song Junlang shifted the subject.

“You’re different, Xiao Lin!” Song Junlang’s eyes lit up with enthusiasm. “I noticed that from the results of our experiments the past few months. To tell you the truth, I wasn’t absolutely certain at first, but after the last dragon blood experiment ended, the final safety net for my plan is now in place, which means you don’t need to worry at all.”

“In other words, you really did use me as experimental material...”

The corners of Song Junlang’s mouth twitched and he laughed. “Where is that coming from? I think of you as a friend... In any case, I won’t talk much about the specific terminology here because it’s still difficult for you to understand right now.”

“Then explain it in plain language.” Xiao Lin blinked but refused to let Song Junlang go. When Xiao Lin considered how Song Junlang had a bad track record with the way things were done in the past, he vowed that he would not try anything else unless he fully understood the principles of those medications.

Song Junlang was stunned for a moment. He spread his palms and said in a very innocent tone, “Okay, okay. If I were to use the simplest of terms to explain it in a way you can understand, it can be described as fighting poison with poison.”

“Fighting poison with poison? Are you trying to say that I accumulated plenty of those side effects because I ate too much of your diet therapy animals? And that those side effects can somehow restrict the side effects in this Super Tonic Pill?” The explanation itself left Xiao Lin feeling quite speechless.

“That’s more or less the basis for it, but the side effects of this Super Tonic Pill cannot be offset by the effect of ordinary diet therapy. The only thing that can effectively fight poison with poison is dragon blood!”

Song Junlang was getting more and more excited with every explanation. In his words, that research took him a very long time. It might even be said that data collected since the very beginning of his diet therapy research laid the foundation that culminated with the Super Tonic Pill.

Chapter 284 - Taking the Pill

Chapter 284: Taking the Pill

Song Junlang droned non-stop and Xiao Lin could only barely understand it. Dragons stood at the pinnacle of Planet Norma’s biological chain and had extremely strong resistance. Meanwhile, the golden dragon was the zenith among the dragon clan itself. Even though the bottle of dragon blood given to Xiao Lin had been diluted countless times over, the effect was still there.

Xiao Lin had already experienced the side effects of the dragon blood. It involved a loss of self-awareness during the outburst and he would also enter a state of violence. The effect was incredibly different from the side effects of other diet therapies.

“Speaking of which, you promised me last time that the dragon blood had no side effects,” Xiao Lin could not help but complain.

Department Head Song’s face suddenly turned stiff. He let out a couple of hollow chuckles and immediately put on a serious face. “The point is, the dragon blood in your body ensures that you can fully digest this Super Tonic Pill. In fact, I’ve gotten very curious about your genes. People who can integrate dragon blood and adapt to it so quickly aren’t non-existent, but this is the first time I’ve seen someone achieve such a level before even reaching Black Iron-rank. If an opportunity permits, I’d really like to give you some undiluted dragon blood to drink, just to see what kind of reaction would be produced.”

Xiao Lin’s face soured even more and he said, “Sorry to burst your bubble, but don’t count on getting an opportunity like that.”

Song Junlang shrugged and declined to comment further. He proceeded to nudge Xiao Lin to consume that special Super Tonic Pill while it was still hot.

Although Xiao Lin was still skeptical due how Song Junlang constantly tricked him, the latter was still very trustworthy, at least when his character was concerned.

“Fine then. I’ll just swallow it like this?”

“I’ll pour you some water.” Song Junlang was immediately overjoyed after seeing Xiao Lin relent. He happily rushed to pour Xiao Lin a glass of colorful liquid.

Song Junlang took the initiative to explain on that occasion, “This specially formulated medicinal water is helpful for digestion.”

“Why do I feel like you’re trying to trick me again?”

“I would never! We’re friends!”

Xiao Lin murmured a few words and hesitated before finally putting the Super Tonic Pill in his mouth. The warm and moist pill became cold when it entered his mouth, and its firmness made it difficult to swallow. He took the glass and sipped the medicinal water. The liquid did not smell peculiar and tasted just like ordinary plain water.

The pill melted as soon as it came in contact with the liquid, and in an instant, Xiao Lin’s mouth was filled with a myriad of flavors such as sweet, bitter, spicy, and sour. Also present were strange, indescribable tastes that started to appear one after another. The viscous substance that remained after the pill had dissolved slid down his throat and into his stomach.

The taste was actually so uncomfortable that Xiao Lin nearly retched and vomited after swallowing. The discomfort in his stomach took a while to gradually subside.

Then the two of them sat down and stared at each other. Song Junlang held a pen and paper in his hand while asking eagerly, “How is it? How do you feel?”

Xiao Lin frowned. “I don’t feel anything at the moment. It couldn’t have been ineffective, right?”

“My experimental data can’t be wrong. Could you wait for a moment?”

There was still no response even after half an hour of waiting, so Xiao Lin looked at the time before getting up and saying, “I think I’ll head back for today. Whether it works or not, my training plan isn’t going to change.”

“Then what about the betting pool?”

Xiao Lin rolled his eyes. “You’d have to wait for it to take effect before you can place any bets.”

Xiao Lin had already left while Song Junlang continued pondering over it and muttering the word ‘impossible’. He returned to the dormitory to continue studying his necromancy book.

Time during the weekend was still quite precious for Xiao Lin. After reading the necromancy book for an hour, he brought the Holy Soul Sword to the training hall and planned to practice a bit of

swordsmanship. His attribute values were still relatively average for the moment, so he would face the same amount of difficulty regardless of which attribute he wanted to upgrade.

The training halls were still quite lively on the weekend, especially since everyone was abuzz over the recent gambling pool. Even those who felt hopeless had a sudden surge to put in extra effort.

Xiao Lin's arrival even attracted a lot of attention, as many more individuals had taken note of the monitor from Class Seven during the third monthly exam. Some of them would come up and cordially greet him, though it was inevitable that others would speak to him in a weird tone.

"Why are you interested to practice swordsmanship today, Monitor Xiao?"

"Don't you always use the simulated battle system?"

"Monitor Xiao, what's your current attribute value?"

...

Remarks like that were frequent, and there were always individuals there who felt psychologically challenged because they were not as strong as others. Xiao Lin's gaze darted directly past them and landed on the few people who were fighting fiercely nearby.

The people within the training hall were clearly divided into two sections: ordinary students were on the left side, while several monitors occupied the entire right side. While it seemed unfair, no one would have any objections because the monitors were a cut above the rest. Any ordinary person who got too close might end up getting hurt by accident.

"My turn, Cheng Ming!"

Xiao Lin stepped forward and yelled. Cheng Ming was already dripping in sweat after clashing swords with his opponent. He pulled away slightly, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and said to the other person, "I'll rest for a bit. Xiao Lin will replace me and practice with you."

"Ahem, what I meant was, let me practice with you, Cheng Ming. Battling an opponent of roughly the same level will have a greater effect on improvement," Xiao Lin corrected.

The person who practiced with Cheng Ming was Class Two's monitor. He wielded a saber, and his face turned dark when he heard that remark. Although he had witnessed Xiao Lin's strength during the monthly exam, he believed that there was not much difference in strength between the two of them.

"Uh, sorry about that. Let me practice with Xiao Lin for a while." The ever-earnest Cheng Ming had a sincere look that left Class Two's monitor slightly stunned. In the end, the latter could only mutter a few words before moving aside to rest and watch the battle.

Xiao Lin and Cheng Ming had used the simulated battle system once before the monthly exam, and it ended with a victory for Xiao Lin. However, the simulated battle had been conducted during the Basic Swordsmanship class, which gave plenty of people the chance to watch. For the moment, the person who seemed to have the greatest hope of winning in the gambling pool was Cheng Ming. He

therefore drew the attention of the entire training hall when he faced off against Xiao Lin, who had already proven himself in the monthly exam.

Even the monitors who were training next to them temporarily set everything aside and came to watch the battle. Ever since the betting pool began, the first instinct of all monitors was to keep their present attribute values a secret. They even deliberately hid their strengths during practice just so no one else could not discern their real strength. That way, it would be impossible for anyone to judge the exact level of attributes displayed.

Cheng Ming would never do such a thing, so many were curious about what kind of strength Xiao Lin would display during the battle with Cheng Ming.

“Who do you think will win?”

“I’ll begin by saying it’s fifty-fifty. Xiao Lin is quite strong. I’ve seen his strength during the monthly exam, but it looks like it’s just pure explosive force. Once that volatility ends, I don’t see how he could win over Cheng Ming.”

“Are you guys that bored? This is just a practice battle. There’s no need to decide who wins and who loses.”

“Well, if it’s that boring, why are you even watching?”

A heated discussion was immediately sparked after someone made the first remark. In fact, many forum users discussed the individual monitors’ strengths after the betting pool came into existence. So far, each of them had their own line of reasoning and it was difficult for any one person to convince the other.

Chapter 285 - Yet Another Rampage

Chapter 285: Yet Another Rampage

In order to ensure that the practice will have effect, Xiao Lin temporarily switched to a practice sword. It was not because he looked down on Cheng Ming, but because his Holy Soul Sword had been enhanced with Basic Swordsmanship. As a result, he would temporarily possess Basic Swordsmanship MAX. Meanwhile, Cheng Ming’s Basic Swordsmanship was only LV7, which went up to LV8 with the addition of his Swordheart talent.

Xiao Lin would have an overall advantage in that scenario, but that would defeat the purpose of their practice. The main objective was to train with each other, not to draw a distinction between who was stronger.

Both individuals acted with decorum regardless of the heckling from the surrounding crowd. Xiao Lin neither activated his Miracle state nor used the Phantom Step, while Cheng Ming did not use any of his own skills either.

It was a measure of pure swordsmanship. Without the enhancement of the Holy Soul Sword, Xiao Lin's Basic Swordsmanship was LV7, only one level lower than Cheng Ming. If no other skills were in play, Xiao Lin would temporarily be at a disadvantage.

The disadvantage was not very obvious though. When one's swordsmanship reached such a level, every basic movement would have already been deftly mastered, and one could react quickly to spot a move and counter it. However, the difference in their basic attributes became very obvious. On average, Xiao Lin would face difficulties in defending at least one out of ten of Cheng Ming's moves.

Of course, getting hit was no big deal since neither of them were using real swords, but the feeling of giving it their all sent adrenaline rushing through their veins. Cheng Ming was enjoying the spar very much, as he had rarely gone up against someone who had reached that level of Basic Swordsmanship. The monitor who previously practiced with him was one level lower, but it appeared that he was trying to mislead others by deliberately suppressing his displayed strength to LV6.

However, the onlookers became a little disappointed. Although a few people gasped in awe at their swordsmanship, most others found the exchange uninteresting. After watching for some time, many people gradually left and continued with their own practice.

After clashing swords for half an hour, Xiao Lin and Cheng Ming were starting to pant a little. It turned out to be much more interesting to fight against someone of Cheng Ming's caliber, and Xiao Lin thought to himself that his Basic Swordsmanship could improve faster precisely because he did not have any advantage in terms of pure swordsmanship.

Cheng Ming took a breath, and suddenly frowned, "Xiao Lin, are you concealing your true strength?"

Xiao Lin froze, then shook his head and denied, "Of course not!"

Cheng Ming was a very forthright person, and when it came to him, Xiao Lin did not want to use any tricks. He never even used the Phantom Step when he was losing the upper hand. If that skill had been used, he could counter Cheng Ming with his flexible pace even if he was weak in swordsmanship.

Cheng Ming was never one to hide what he felt and there was dissatisfaction on his face. "It's not like I haven't seen your strength during the monthly exam! It can't possibly be limited to this!"

Xiao Lin did not know whether to laugh or cry, "I'm sure you've already guessed that my strength back then was only an explosive burst. It can't be maintained for long."

Cheng Ming moved his wrists. Sweat was dripping all over his body and he licked his dry lips before saying eagerly, "I know. I'm actually a little tired too, but at least let me see that explosive strength of yours before we take a break!"

There was an enthusiasm in Cheng Ming's expression that stunned Xiao Lin a little. Everyone had thought of Cheng Ming as an honest and forthcoming person, but in reality, Xiao Lin had a good relationship with him and knew that he was someone who constantly pursued greater strength. Despite being a talented student, Cheng Ming continued to pour out even more sweat and effort.

“Okay.”

Xiao Lin agreed. They were only using training swords anyway, and there was no need to worry about accidentally hurting anyone. Still, Xiao Lin reminded half-jokingly, “You have to be careful though, even I get scared of my own explosive power!”

With the Miracle state activated, Xiao Lin immediately used his Phantom Step without holding back. Cheng Ming tightened his grip on the hilt of his sword, and waited anxiously. He knew that his speed was inferior, so he took the initiative to be on the defense and wait for Xiao Lin’s to make the first move.

One minute later, Xiao Lin was oddly still frozen in place with his head lowered down. He hardly moved at all and did not respond to Cheng Ming, who called out his name a couple of times. Then, Cheng Ming noticed that Xiao Lin’s hand was trembling slightly while the sword was held.

Sensing that something was amiss, Cheng Ming ran over and reached out to support Xiao Lin’s shoulders. Upon contact however, he instinctively pulled back and shouted, “Damn, he’s hot!”

He could clearly feel that Xiao Lin’s body was exuding unimaginable heat even through a layer of clothing. Cheng Ming’s touch made Xiao Lin move. He raised his head strenuously, and his bloodshot eyes seemed to be filled with turbulent emotion. His voice was hoarse and anxious, as if he was enduring some kind of pain, “Go! Get away!”

“Xiao Lin! Are you injured? How is that possible? Oh yes, use the automatic treatment system soon!” Cheng Ming was so startled that he was clearly getting flustered.

Xiao Lin pushed Cheng Ming away abruptly, then took a deep breath. His roar resounded through the training hall like a thunderbolt, “Get away! Everyone, scram right now!”

The roar seemed to completely exhaust the last of Xiao Lin’s strength. He then hung his head weakly again, but the sudden change had already attracted the attention of everyone else.

Someone immediately flew into a rage: it was none other than Wang Dalin, an acquaintance of Xiao Lin’s. He had kept a low profile ever since Xiao Lin became the monitor, because only an idiot would dare to go against Xiao Lin during that period. However, it did not mean that the grievances in Wang Dalin’s heart had subsided. He probably felt that Xiao Lin’s words were targeting him, so in his rage, he came over and remarked unhappily, “What are you trying to say, Xiao Lin? You might be the official monitor now, but you have no right to look down on us!”

He felt that Xiao Lin’s words would definitely incite public outrage, but as soon as he completed his sentence, Cheng Ming quickly took a couple of steps back and shouted, “Don’t go near him!”

Unfortunately, it was too little too late. The berserk Xiao Lin raised his training sword, and he was about five or six meters away from Wang Lin. Cheng Ming’s well-intentioned warning did nothing to alert Wang Dalin, who laughed instead and said, “I think you’ve gone crazy. What are you doing with that sword, you...”

Thump!

Wang Dalin was not even able to finish his sentence when he felt himself flying up into the air. Scorching airwaves came rolling over, burning the clothes on his body and reducing them to cloth strips. He then landed with a thud, and someone immediately went over to him.

“Flame sword aura!” someone shouted right away.

Chapter 286 - Strange Scales

Chapter 286: Strange Scales

Wang Dalin ought to have been grateful that Xiao Lin was holding a non-lethal training sword, or else he would have been sliced in half but that one slash. Even so, there was a significant area of burns caused by those hot flames and it was enough to make Wang Dalin wail.

The training hall suddenly became chaotic. Students who had no idea what happened rushed out of the hall one after another, though there were a few people who stayed behind to see what happened. The monitors had already gathered together.

Barely half a month had passed since the monthly exam and the events which happened during then were still fresh in their mind. The scene at the end of the fierce battle with the orc commander, when Xiao Lin suddenly ran off and attacked everyone without distinguishing between friend or foe, popped up in everyone’s consciousness.

Several people looked at each other and someone asked diffidently, “What should we do?”

Xiao Lin stood still after the sudden release of flame sword aura at Wang Dalin. He hung his head low and held his training sword in his hands, but no one dared to approach him at that point anymore.

“We have to help him! At least subdue him and calm him down,” Cheng Ming said matter-of-factly.

“How are we supposed to do that? We’re all aware of his strength levels. Who else would dare to say that they are able to handle this, other than Cheng Ming!”

“We probably won’t lose if we go in together.” Rather than expressly going in to help Xiao Lin, the person simply seemed unconvinced that the monitors would fail in an attempt to subdue him.

“Tell me, why do you guys even bother? If you get injured here, you’ll have to spend redemption points for treatment. Don’t forget that we’re in the academy now, not in some monthly exam!”

Some of them were briefly stunned before making that realization and saying in unison, “Yeah, let’s look for a teacher!”

Everyone had only spent three or so months in Dawn Academy, but it was always difficult for them to fully assimilate the teacher-student status. After all, although Dawn Academy was an academy, the fact that many adults there were nearly 30-years-old nearly made them forget that they could

actually seek help from the student union or the teachers, should there be any issue that they could not deal with.

Cheng Ming expressed agreement. Xiao Lin was in a very strange condition, and it was definitely not something that the freshmen could handle by themselves. The monitors immediately dialed the number of sophomore year leader, Chen Yu.

Chen Yu was in the midst of fretting over the gambling pool, as he intended to make a small profit out of it and was one of the few who were optimistic for Xiao Lin. After listening half-heartedly to the monitors, he stood up abruptly and rushed over with a couple of people to the training hall. At the same time, he silently prayed that nothing had happened to Xiao Lin. He had already placed his bet, and had even been entrusted with New Dollars by someone else.

“What the hell is going on?” Chen Yu asked sternly after arriving at the entrance of the training hall. He could still be stern in front of those monitors, but all them were sheepish and unable to clearly explain the reasons behind what happened. They said it was a rampage but could not explain why.

As the conversation on their magic cell phone earlier was not entirely clear, Chen Yu first glanced at the empty training hall. Xiao Lin was just standing quietly there and looked just fine. Breathing a sigh of relief, he was just about to step forward when several monitors hurriedly pulled him back. Cheng Ming was nominated by other monitors as their representative to explain everything in detail to Chen Yu.

Cheng Ming scratched his head. He was actually still confused, so he could only explain everything in the simplest of words. “Xiao Lin is in a strange state right now, and the point is, we can’t get close to him. He’ll violently attack anyone who gets close, whether it’s an enemy or a friend. I feel like he’s lost his self-awareness.”

“He’s on a rampage? Are you sure?” Chen Yu felt that it was outrageous, and had it not been for Cheng Ming who said that, he might well have believed that they were just pulling his leg.

“Not exactly either. We’ve seen this once in the monthly exam. At that time, Xiao Lin was unaware of himself when he went into a rampage, but he still took the initiative to attack. It’s different from now, because he’s just standing still.”

“I’ll go in and have a look.” Chen Yu decided, then added after a pause, “Doesn’t matter even if he attacks me. Do you think I’m not able to beat him?”

His words were so confident that it surprised some of the other monitors, but they soon came back to their senses. Chen Yu was the sophomore year leader, which meant that he was the strongest in the entire sophomore year. No matter how strong Xiao Lin was, it could not possibly be a match for Chen Yu.

“The monitors can stay behind. The others can leave first!” Chen Yu noticed that there were a lot of onlookers, so he waved them to leave. He still had considerable authority as a year leader, so the crowd began dispersing reluctantly under his imperative order, which was made easier with the cooperation of several monitors who ushered them out.

After making some preparation, Chen Yu stepped into the training hall empty-handed. As a senior, his strength has reached Silver-rank, and he excelled even when compared to the vast majority of third-year students.

“It’s hot!”

Chen Yu frowned. Steaming heat had somehow spread throughout the training hall and it felt as if they were being put on a steamer before being baked in the oven. The independent realm in which Dawn Academy was located had an almost constant weather with no huge temperature fluctuations. Therefore, the suspicious heat could only come from Xiao Lin.

“Xiao Lin?” Chen Yu tried houting at him.

Xiao Lin then raised his head slowly. His turbulent and apathetic expression reminded one of death, but the next second, he suddenly moved and darted over without warning, just like a cannonball.

“So fast!” Chen Yu secretly exclaimed in his heart and instinctively crossed his hands in front of his chest.

Bang!

The heavy impact made Chen Yu’s feel slightly numb. The force was incredibly strong, which made Chen Yu doubt whether Xiao Lin was really just a freshman. Nevertheless, Chen Yu lived up to his reputation as a Silver-rank senior, as he was able to perfectly block Xiao Lin’s strong punch without even moving an inch.

Although Chen Yu was well aware that there was no way around the huge gap in strength between a freshman and a Silver-rank sophomore, he could not help but say somewhat smugly, “You’re still a bit too green.”

The next second however, Chen Yu’s pupils shrank and his horrified eyes fell on Xiao Lin’s unretracted fist. On the surface of his fist was reddish skin that looked burnt, which at some point became covered in a layer of light-yellow scales!

There were not too many scales, and were situated quite sparsely apart. Each one was the size of a cup opening and glimmered with a faint luster. To Chen Yu’s horror however, the scales were growing slowly at a speed visible to the naked eye.

“This. What the hell is this? You, who the hell are you!” There was finally a panic in Chen Yu’s tone.

As far as strength was concerned, Chen Yu was not at all afraid, but the scene before him was completely beyond his expectations. Despite being a year leader, Chen Yu had only been in Dawn Academy for three years. Many things were still beyond his general knowledge and scope of understanding.

“Year Leader Chen, I advise you to come out quickly. This situation isn’t something you can handle!” A low and serious tone suddenly echoed from outside the door. When Chen Yu turned around, he found that the logistics department’s Song Junlang had already showed up quietly.

Chapter 287 - Digestion and Assimilation

Chapter 287: Digestion and Assimilation

Chen Yu was unknowingly sweating as he came out of the training hall. A person of his strength would have no difficulty in extricating himself from the situation, and Xiao Lin seemed to have no awareness of anyone outside the training hall. Once Chen Yu retreated, Xiao Lin continued to stand motionlessly in the center. Chen Yu's expression was clearly that of bewilderment, and the monitors who were in the dark over everything quickly posed questions to him.

When Chen Yu was still trying to put his words together, Department Head Song was already warning him softly, "This is no longer any of your concern. You may leave. Chen Yu, I've notified the dean about this incident. I hope you'll just forget whatever you saw. You understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

Chen Yu took a deep breath. He had gradually calmed down, though he could not help but glance at Song Junlang again. Despite feeling slightly disdainful toward that former genius, Chen Yu was hard-pressed to express admiration for that guy's backer.

Direct communication with the dean? It would mean that Song Junlang had directly bypassed the student union. Not every department head had that kind of authority. At the same time, Chen Yu also understood that Song Junlang had given him a disguised warning, saying that it was best not to reveal anything indiscriminately or else not even the student union was able to protect him.

"I understand."

Chen Yu was aware of the circumstances. His surprised gaze lingered on Xiao Lin for some time as he recalled the shock he felt at that moment. He found it to be very incredible too. His shock was not certainly not limited to those unknown scales. There was an even more peculiar power inside the training hall, an oppressive strength that practically stemmed directly from the depths of the soul. Chen Yu's Silver-rank strength was a couple of ranks higher than Xiao Lin, but there was still no way that he could stop it.

Chen Yu left, and so did the other monitors under his orders as the year leader. Cheng Ming once again expressed his worry toward Xiao Lin and received a confident assurance from Song Junlang.

After everyone was gone however, the light smile on Song Junlang's face suddenly disappeared. There was only anxiety in his eyes as he stared at the lone Xiao Lin inside the training hall. He lamented, "I wouldn't have let you take the Super Tonic Pill If I had known this would happen."

Department Head Song seemed to be talking to himself, but he received a reply as soon as he finished talking. The baby-faced president had already arrived at some point. His gaze remained gentle, but his tone was very harsh, "Pills? The kind of pill you mentioned repeatedly to me in the past few years! Good heavens, you're seriously still continuing with this kind of research? Well then, regardless of what happens to Xiao Lin after this incident, I will most certainly propose to the dean that you be completely banned from doing your diet experiments!"

Song Junlang seemed to want to explain something, but he eventually shook his head and said, “Forget it, I’m too lazy to repeat the strategic significance of this Super Tonic Pill to you, but this is definitely not the fault of my pill. I’m afraid that the root of the problem lies in Xiao Lin. ”

The president snorted in anger, “Are you saying that all of this is Xiao Lin’s fault? May I remind you that he’s a freshman valued by the dean. If you mess around, don’t even think you can go past the dean with this one! Doesn’t matter how influential your backer is!”

“Don’t you think the pressure in the training hall is a bit familiar?” Department Head Song did not want to quarrel with the president there and immediately shifted the conversation to the main topic.

The president was taken aback for a moment. He closed his eyes and pondered for a moment before opening them and saying, “Dragon power!”

Song Junlang spoke in a slightly congratulatory manner. “As expected of the president. Chen Yu would’ve still been confused, but you were immediately able to feel it.”

The president was not too happy about that and reminded, “Only the bloodline of the dragon clan has the power of the dragons!”

“Oh, don’t worry, Xiao Lin is a pure Earthling. You don’t need to worry about that at all. It’s just that I gave him some dragon blood recently. That’s right, the blood is from a golden dragon, but it has been diluted many times over. ”

The president’s gaze froze again. When he finally reacted, his tone was no longer stern; rather, it was more appropriate to describe it as thunderously furious. “SONG! JUN! LANG! HAVE YOU GONE ABSOLUTELY INSANE? Don’t you know the consequences of randomly consuming dragon blood, even for someone who has already reached Gold-rank? He’s a freshman for goodness’ sake! It seems the student union has been allowing you to indulge yourself too much!”

Song Junlang turned a deaf ear to the president and continuing mumbling, “Xiao Lin is different. I noticed that right from the very first experiment. Do you remember how long that hapless student had to lie down during my first diet experiment a few years ago?”

“A month! And from then onward, the student union issued a complete ban on all your experiments, even though that person backing you still allows you to continue with it.”

“Yes, a whole month! But did you know that Xiao Lin only took less than two days to completely be free of my iron comb chicken’s side effects after eating it for the first time? His absorption rate was equally as superb. All subsequent experiments had the same result. It was then that I understood: Xiao Lin was different from the others.”

Department Head Song sighed with emotion and chuckled, “Although I don’t really interact much with the Admissions Department’s head, I have to admit that he did a good job this time. I’m aware that it’s impossible for Xiao Lin’s initial attributes to meet the admission standards, so it would’ve taken a bit of guts to get him enrolled in here.”

“Whether or not he actually recruited Xiao Lin is still up for debate!”

“Huh? What do you mean by that?”

The president waved his hand impatiently and did not want to continue with that topic. In fact, there were still many strange things about the recent admissions that even the president had yet to figure out, but the dean had encrypted the files completely. The president pointed his finger at the silent Xiao Lin and said blankly, “Let’s talk about how we can deal with this. Since you made a point to keep things quiet when you called me here, I believe you have some way of dealing with this?”

Song Junlang nodded and said, “Xiao Lin’s state is not so much a rampage, it’s just some discomfort from the first assimilation. I thought that the dragon blood that he drank before had been completely digested, but I didn’t expect his genes to be so abnormal that he didn’t digest it at all. Instead, it’s completely integrated in him!”

Perhaps afraid that the president would not understand, Song Junlang explained the difference between digestion and assimilation in concise language. The so-called digestion was akin to eating, absorbing nutrients and eliminating side effects.

Although the same concept of absorption could be used to understand assimilation, it was no longer the digestive system’s absorptive effects. Rather, it was a direct fusion at the level of genes and blood!

Powerful though it sounded, there remained a serious problem during the process of assimilation. The side effects of dragon blood lay in the violent hidden nature of higher-level creatures. It could easily cause someone to lose themselves and fall into a rampaging state. Initially, the side effects caused by the digestive process would gradually be discharged like excrement, so there was no need to worry about what would happen.

With assimilation, the side effects would be absorbed and stored permanently. It was akin to burying in Xiao Lin’s body a time bomb that would explode at any time.

Department Head Song’s original intention was to fight poison with poison by using the side effects of dragon blood to restrain the side effects of the Super Tonic Pill. The effect he sought was that of ‘one minus one equal zero’, but it turned out to be ‘one plus one equal two’.

Chapter 288 - The President Takes Action

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For Xiao Lin, the side effects of the dragon blood in his body had entered a latent state after it broke out in the monthly exam. Not only did the Super Tonic Pills function like a catalyst that activated the dragon blood’s effect, it also doubled the effect of the pill itself!

“I understand what you mean, but what I want to ask now is how to deal with the side effects in Xiao Lin’s body! You should know that I am not very good at potions and stuff like that.”

“Actually, the solution is really simple. All we have to do is suppress the instinctive rage of the dragon blood and let Xiao Lin’s consciousness re-dominate his body.” The solution came in a

straightforward manner even though Song Junlang took great lengths to offer his explanation earlier.

The president frowned suspiciously. “Chen Yu could’ve done that if that’s all there is to it. Xiao Lin’s abilities might be greatly improved in all aspects when he’s in this state, but he still isn’t a match for the Silver-rank Chen Yu. Why did you specifically call me here?”

“The dragon power’s suppressive effect won’t be weakened due to his poor strength.”

“The dragon blood you gave him isn’t even pure. The impact of dragon power at this level is practically negligible for a Silver-rank person.”

Song Junlang could not help that the baby-faced president was not that easily fooled. He spread his hands and said meekly, “Well, I admit that I was a little selfish. Chen Yu could equally have been able to suppress Xiao Lin if he were to do it, but he would definitely hurt Xiao Lin in the process. Since this is entirely my fault, I don’t want Xiao Lin to have to suffer because of it!”

The president sighed and shook his head, “Are you still refusing to tell the truth? Don’t think I don’t know about the bets you and Xiao Lin placed in the New World. Truth is, you’re afraid that it’ll affect his attribute growth. Oh, wait, that’s not right. You’re afraid that your money-making plan will... Okay, you know what, forget it. I’ll help. Xiao Lin is considered a valued student by the dean, anyway.”

Song Junlang smiled gratefully. “Thank you for your trouble. Right now, you’re the only one in the entire academy who can suppress the dragon blood’s side effects without harming him. Speaking of which, it’s been a good many years since you’ve used your talent. Hehe, it’s quite a pity that an S-rank talent of your year had to remain here as the student union president.”

The president froze for a while before turning his head and remarking sentimentally, “We’re both in the same boat. Ah yes, could you help me guard the door? You’re probably aware that it’s a little troublesome to activate my talent. Don’t let anyone enter my domain and affect me.”

“Not to worry, I’ll stay as far away as I possibly can...”

Song Junlang had also ran some distance away before he even finished his words. The corners of the president’s eyes twitched and he sighed helplessly. When he stepped into the training hall, his brows were slightly raised and he muttered to himself, “Such strong dragon aura. Is this really just the effect of taking diluted dragon blood? Whatever would happen if it’s pure dragon blood? Tsk, tsk. It’s no wonder that Department Head Song and the dean value you so much. Now then, show me how different you really are!”

The president suddenly set aside his school uniform to reveal the purple-blue mage robe that he wore inside. The mage robe was adorned with hundreds of five-star arrays, overlapping each other, like the stars in the galaxy. He reached out to the void with his hand and extracted his weapon. It was a very weird weapon, for it was a string of pendants strung with pearls and agates of various colors.

As the student union president, he was the most powerful person in Dawn Academy other than the dean. Swamped constantly with various daily affairs, it was practically impossible for him to have

any opportunity to fight. Although everyone knew that the person appointed by the dean as the president must certainly be very powerful, no one knew just how powerful he really was.

Song Junlang ran for several miles before stopping. Once at the entrance to the entire training zone, he chased away anyone who was wandering around or about to enter.

The logistics department's head might not be very valuable within the student union, but his authority was not to be questioned by ordinary students, including seniors and graduates. When Song Junlang sternly banned everyone from entering, those who wondered why and complained about it had no choice but to leave for the time being.

Within a few minutes, a ginormous strength began gathering in the sky above the training hall, causing the sky to become unusually dim. The space where Dawn Academy was located was an independent realm, where no obvious changes in the four seasons existed and there was also an absence of natural disasters. Such an anomaly therefore attracted everyone's attention in an instant and they all came over after hearing the news.

By then, the people who gathered there were no longer just ordinary students. There were year leaders from third- and fourth-year students, several other department heads, and even several professors who appeared at the gate of the training zone.

Nevertheless, all of them were similarly stopped. Of course, Song Junlang would not use his status as the logistics department's head, since that alone could not stop the people in front of him. It was not a big issue though, because Song Junlang had more cunning tricks up his sleeve.

"Sorry, the training hall is temporarily closed. Please go back. Don't worry, there's just a little situation inside, but it will be alright soon, I promise.

"What? You still insist on going in to have a look? Hehe, over my dead body!

"Damn! Hey, you! Are you really about to make a move on me? You're right, I still have enough lifespan remaining, but don't blame me for not reminding all of you. I'm sure everyone knows that there's someone watching over me!"

The noisy crowd became silent at that moment and everyone's expressions were very ugly. The energy gathered in the training hall was absolutely extraordinary, but the person watching over Song Junlang was also their biggest concern. Influence and power were a tricky and complicated issue that could be traced right back to Dawn Academy's establishment. None of them could afford to offend someone that should not have been offended. All they could do was stand there and stare at Song Junlang while waiting for the result.

After about half an hour's stalemate, the sky suddenly cleared again. The condensed energy disappeared instantly without a trace, as if nothing had happened.

The president just so happened to stumble over just as everyone was scratching their heads. His eyebrows seemed to be covered in exhaustion, which made his baby face look as though they had aged considerably.

"President!"

“President? What happened?”

Everyone began to feel calmer after seeing the president. When the dean was absent, he would be the backbone of the academy, having proved himself to be reliable. He gathered his energy with great effort, waved his hand at everyone, then said with a smile, “It’s fine now. You can leave.”

His sentences were deemphasized, but they nevertheless possessed an indisputable commanding tone. Although everyone was feeling incredibly curious, no one dared to ask any further questions anymore.

When the president passed by Song Junlang, he whispered in a voice that only the two of them could hear. “Things are more complicated than you and I imagined. I don’t want to speak of the details, but in short, you owe me.”

Song Junlang opened his mouth with the intention of expressing his thanks, but he eventually gave the president a mere pat on the shoulder. The moment he turned around however, he suddenly remembered something and quickly added, “Thank you for what you did. But if you really want to talk about debts, shouldn’t the kid be the one to owe you?”

The president’s body trembled suddenly. He was too tired to entertain Department Head Song anymore and simply left the place quickly without looking back.

Chapter 289 - Black Iron Rank

Chapter 289: Black Iron Rank

When Xiao Lin opened his eyes, he discovered that he was already lying in Department Head Song’s room. He shook his aching head vigorously in an attempt to recall his fragmented memory. Song Junlang had already brought the water glass over and gave it to him while lamenting guiltily, “it’s my fault for causing you so much trouble this time. I’m really sorry.”

“Could you at least start by telling me what happened? I remember practising with Cheng Ming at the time, and then I felt a murderous intent surging into my heart. I think that’s the way to describe it, but anyway, I suddenly wanted to destroy everyone in my sight. I was really scared at the time, so I quickly told the others to leave. I don’t know what happened after that.”

Xiao Lin frowned and asked, “Is it the dragon blood’s side effects acting up again?”

“Yes, the original dragons in the Planet Norma were violent and had tons of murderous intent. Although they were later equipped with sufficient intelligence, the nature of their genes still remained unchanged. It’s unfortunate that you still cannot completely restrain these side effects.”

“But Department Head Song, didn’t you say that there won’t be any more trouble after experiencing the side effects of dragon blood during the monthly exam?”

“Oh, I lied to you.”

“...”

“Ahem, just kidding. ”

Song Junlang pondered for some time before putting on a more serious expression. He once again explained the theories he brought up with the student union president earlier, and also recounted how the president finally had to interfere. Finally, he comforted Xiao Lin, “You don’t have to worry too much about it.”

Xiao Lin could not even be bothered to roll his eyes when he asked, “You mean to say there’s a time bomb in my body now? How do you expect me not to worry?”

“On the bright side, even though there’s been a bit of a situation this time, it’s still very surprising for me. You said that you already felt something before the dragon blood’s side effects took over. Is that right?”

“Yes, is there something wrong with that?” Xiao Lin asked strangely.

“But I remember you saying that you didn’t feel anything when it happened during your monthly exam.”

Xiao Lin thought for a while, then nodded and asked, “Maybe I was seriously injured at that time?”

“No, it means that your body is completely integrating the dragon blood. This is amazing.”

Xiao Lin appeared confused. “Don’t marvel at it. Tell me if this side effect can be eliminated.”

“Of course! If it’s you, it can definitely be done.”

“How?”

“By drinking more dragon blood.”

“Why do I feel like you’re tricking me again...”

Song Junlang ignored Xiao Lin’s doubts for the time being, and continued to mutter, “In any case, dragon blood isn’t some shabby street product. It’s priceless. I’ll help you figure out how to collect it, but you also have to look out for yourself at all times in the future. Right then, enough about this, go ahead and take a look at your current attribute values!”

“Huh? Attribute values?”

“You didn’t forget the purpose of taking the Super Tonic Pills, did you? This has everything to do with my money-making—ah—I mean, our money-making plan.”

Despite many doubts, Xiao Lin opened his personal file on the computer that Department Head Song slid over. His pupils then contracted rapidly.

[Name: Xiao Lin]

[Student ID: 201235]

[Attributes: Strength 24, Agility 26, Intelligence 25, Physique 26]

“How’s the effect?” Song Junlang appeared even more anxious.

Xiao Lin replied, “My average attribute value has increased by ten points, and the total attribute value is already a hundred and one.”

“It actually increased the total attribute value by forty? The effect of this Super Tonic Pill is better than I thought!” Song Junlang did not forget to record the data in his notebook.

“Uh, this is considered Black Iron-rank, right?”

“Yes, the total attribute value is a direct manifestation of your overall physical fitness. There will be a qualitative effect once a certain standard is reached, but don’t rush to register with the student union though. We have to place our bets first.”

Things were much simpler after that. There were no deadlines for the bet, be it on the forum or in New World’s casinos. Anyone could bet before the first freshman reached Black Iron-rank and obtained the registration certificate from the student union.

Thanks to Song Junlang’s department head position, entering and leaving the New World was easy as pie, so he reminded Xiao Lin to place bets on the forum using the redemption points. He then brought Xiao Lin’s New Dollars to Dawn City.

Before leaving, Department Head Song did not forget to repeatedly urge Xiao Lin not to disclose even the smallest rumor. It was best not to go to practice with anyone in the training hall either.

“They can tell?”

“Of course. Anyone with the slightest bit of experience can tell whether you’ve reached Black Iron-rank just from one swing of your sword. You’ll understand this after you fully appreciate the significance of this level.”

In fact, Xiao Lin did not intend to continue with further practice. Song Junlang told him that he had been in a coma for more than half a day, but once he woke up, he found it surprising that his fatigue was more than usual. It was as if he had just gone through a tragic battle, and the fatigue he was experiencing encompassed all aspects, from his mind to his body.

Xiao Lin therefore decided to head back to the dormitory for the time being and take a look at the necromantic meditation technique he borrowed from the library. He had already reached Black Iron-rank anyway, and although he was feeling a little weird, he was satisfied with the overall result.

Xiao Lin paused as he walked out of the logistics department and cocked his brows in surprise. He then closed his eyes slightly and focused his energy, as if he was feeling nature. After some time, he opened his eyes and exclaimed, “This feeling is really magical. No wonder Department Head Song mentioned that Black Iron-rank is a qualitative change. Is this what he meant by that?”

In his eyes, the world had become completely different from before. The blue sky, the fresh air, and the plants at the beginning of spring. Aside from that however, he could already feel that indescribable yet distinct free-flowing layer of energy that clearly existed in his surroundings.

The meditation tutor said that everything in Planet Norma was filled with four basic elements. It was what formed Planet Norma's foundation. One must first enter into a deeper state of meditation to perceive those elements, but Xiao Lin could vaguely sense them even in his normal state.

If he continued to meditate, it would mean that he could perceive more and more of the majestic elements, which would undoubtedly be a great leap in improving mental strength.

Aside from that, simply closing his eyes allowed him to clearly feel his body's silk-like energy coursing through his internal organs. Such energy was not foreign to him. Regardless of whether a person chose to learn saber techniques, swordsmanship, or other weapons, it was an aspect of learning that they would soon have to go through. For melee fighters, it was the nimble mastery of such energy that enabled them to display their strength to the fullest.

That was no doubt a great feeling, so much so that Xiao Lin vaguely felt as though he had been reborn. He remembered that Song Junlang once mentioned the inferiority of an Earthling's foundation compared to a Norman; he was probably referring to the threshold of Black Iron-rank. Indeed, the difference between before and after the threshold was very big.

Chapter 290 - The Path Ahead

Chapter 290: The Path Ahead

Xiao Lin, who quietly returned to the dormitory, did not realize that he had caused another uproar in the school. After all, the training hall incident could not be covered up, especially when freshmen who returned from there quickly spread news on the forum. The amount of people paying attention to Xiao Lin increased even more.

Unfortunately, Song Junlang and the president—the only two people who knew the truth of the matter—chose to remain silent. Even sophomore year leader Chen Yu pretended not to know anything about it despite having some knowledge of what transpired.

With the deliberate cover-up from many individuals, the news dissipated quickly even though it threatened to kick up a storm. Except for the occasional private discussion, the incident began fading away from people's memories amidst their confusion and incomprehension.

Since Song Junlang had mentioned in passing that the president lent a helping hand, Xiao Lin felt that it was best to thank him. After returning to the dormitory, he received a communication request from the president, who had probably found out from Song Junlang that Xiao Lin had woken up.

The baby face in that virtual screen had as gentle a smile as ever, but the tiredness behind that smile was very hard to conceal and his voice sounded a little hoarse. "Is your body okay?"

Xiao Lin nodded. “There’s nothing serious anymore, but I’m just a little tired. It’s strange though. This tiredness I’m feeling is a bit hard to explain.”

“Hehe.” The president’s expression become slightly odd and he waved his hand before comforting Xiao Lin, “You don’t need to go to class these few days. Have more rest. Your mental strength is particularly low right now, my talent isn’t— Forget it, that’s not the point. The point is, you have that pass to attend classes freely, right? I’ll have a word with some of your teachers.”

Xiao Lin thanked him again. In fact, those were not the questions Xiao Lin wanted to ask. What he really wanted to know was how the president suppressed the violent dragon blood in his body. Firstly, it could provide him with some experience in the future, after what Song Junlang said about the unpredictable time bomb in his body. Secondly, the president’s abilities had piqued his curiosity.

However, the president merely smiled and gave a few vague answers. When Xiao Lin noticed that the president was not too keen on saying more, he cut down on the number of questions. Ironically, it was the president who had more questions and began chattering incessantly about everyday life.

For example, the president asked detailed questions about Xiao Lin’s situation on Earth, such as his parents’ work, age, and even where he attended his kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and university.

“My apologies, I’m just casually asking. It’s fine not to answer if you find it inconvenient to do so. Don’t force yourself,” the president also knew that it was imprudent to be asking inquiring something that encroached on Xiao Lin’s privacy. In fact, there was plenty of information that could actually be passed through the Earth Division, but he preferred to hear the answer directly from Xiao Lin’s mouth.

Xiao Lin did find it rather strange, as the president appeared to be acting slightly different from the norm. For Xiao Lin however, all that information was nothing secret. Xiao Lin grew up in a very ordinary family, and his parents were both honest commonfolk.

Xiao Lin reminisced while answering those questions and the president listened very carefully. From time to time, the president also willingly spoke of his own situation on Earth. Not only did it increase their cordiality with each other, it also eliminated all doubt from Xiao Lin’s heart.

Unbeknownst to Xiao Lin however, when the call was hung up, the president—who was alone in his office—quickly entered the recorded data into the central computer. After a quick search, the incomprehension on his face was even more evident than before.

“He really is from an ordinary family, and his parents don’t have any record of having been in this academy. How is this even possible? The strength of his soul is definitely not something an ordinary person would possess!”

...

The following period, Xiao Lin received well wishes from many other people, and he was surprised at his apparent popularity among the freshman students. However, he was happiest when Gu Xiaoyue showed concern for him, even though all she did was call him and hang up immediately after confirming that he was alive and well.

The discussion of the freshmen monitors' strengths continued on the forum. At that point, there was less than half a month before the bet was set to end. He believed that no other monitor could reach that level except himself, so he did not hesitate to bet all his remaining redemption points.

He also had no intention of keeping up with the forum's discussion. In contrast, he was more interested in his advancement to Black Iron-rank. Since he was temporarily unable to go to the training hall, he took advantage of the rest and meditated by sitting crossed-legged on his bed.

Xiao Lin had been able to quickly enter a meditative state, with the process taking only about five minutes. Such speed was commendable, as ordinary people often needed 10 to 20 minutes to succeed. On that occasion however, it was much faster. He entered the starry elemental world in just over a minute, and the elements within his perception were much clearer and larger in number than ever before.

30 minutes later, Xiao Lin reluctantly withdrew himself from the meditation and checked his personal information. He found out his Basic Meditation had upgraded directly from LV5 to LV6. In addition, his Basic Perception went up to LV4 from LV3, while Basic Fire Affinity and Basic Water Affinity had jumped directly from LV1 to LV3. The magnitude of that increase surprised him to no end. "Is this the Black Iron-rank's power? It's amazing!"

Xiao Lin initially thought that the so-called Black Iron-rank was merely an increase in attribute value, but it did not seem to be that simple. A 99-point total attribute value might only be one point short of 100-points, but the difference in strength was truly spectacular.

In the past few months, the teachers have often drilled in a particular concept to the freshmen: in Planet Norma, a difference in rank is practically insurmountable. While the difference between the Black Iron-rank and ordinary rank was only one rank and the same could be said with Bronze-rank and Black Iron-rank, the disparity between those gaps were enormous. One could attempt a challenge against any person on the same rank, but one must never bite off more than one could chew and attempt to go against someone of a higher rank. That was the kindest advice everyone gave to the freshmen.

Xiao Lin finally understood the truth behind that statement, but he suddenly remembered that Judge Academy's Lilith could resist Silver-rank with only Bronze-rank. Furthermore, she went up against many enemies all by herself and still came out victorious in the end.

With that thought, Xiao Lin gained a deeper understanding of Lilith's strength.

Unfortunately, Xiao Lin consulted Song Junlang and found out that the effect of those Super Tonic Pills was the same as other kinds of diet therapy. It had no effect once a person reached Black Iron-rank. In fact, the reason Song Junlang had been researching that for many years was very simple: he hoped that more and more freshmen could reach Black Iron-rank sooner, thereby allowing them to enter the New World earlier. It was actually quite important for a colony with a scarce number of people.

Black Iron-rank could be likened to a basic travel pass for all colonists. After reaching that level, they were considered to be on equal footing with everyone else on Planet Norma.

Xiao Lin was silently thinking of the path ahead of him. The dean had suddenly appointed him to a position and wanted him to reach Black Iron-rank as soon as possible. Those actions as a whole

made him feel as though the dean was eager for him to go to the New World as soon as possible, rather than waiting for him to go after graduation.

Chapter 291 - Necromantic Meditation (1)

Chapter 291: Necromantic Meditation (1)

It would take a couple more days for Song Junlang to come back from the New World after placing his bets there. During that period, Xiao Lin intended to focus on necromantic meditation first. His original intention of borrowing that book from the library was to break through to Black Iron-rank as soon as possible, but his plans were not affected despite reaching his goal ahead of schedule.

Xiao Lin's interest was particularly high, especially after skimming through the book during the past few days and discovering many novel explanations of meditation which had never been mentioned in class. It was perfect for Xiao Lin because he was still in the inquisitive phase.

Speaking of that, Xiao Lin had actually been feeling quite miserable in recent days. He was both physically and mentally tired after the training hall incident happened and he woke up from his coma. He did not give it much thought then, but after all that rest, he realized that things were not as simple as it seemed. While his physical strength did recover, his mental fatigue showed little signs of improvement. It was slightly unusual, because he was previously able to recover quickly so long as he had a period of rest.

The student council president took the initiative to speak with him once more, stressing yet again that Xiao Lin had to take a few more days off. Although the baby-faced president never explained the reasons, it seemed to be related to the talent that the president used on him that day. In any case, Xiao Lin could sense that the president was being kind.

During those few days, Xiao Lin could only stay in his room most of the time, except for when he took his three daily meals. Aside from browsing the forum, studying necromantic meditation was the only way for him to pass the time.

Of course, Xiao Lin had also asked the president earlier on whether meditation would exacerbate his fatigue. To his surprise, the answer was in the negative, and the president even encouraged him to do more meditation to restore his spirit.

His first attempt at necromantic meditation was not very smooth, even though the process of entering meditation was similar to ordinary meditation. All he had to do was close his eyes, concentrate, and get rid of distracting thoughts. It was an easy process for Xiao Lin as he had already reached Black Iron-rank.

However, the similarities between ordinary meditation and necromantic meditation ended at that point. The first thing he had to do was completely sever all communication with the basic elements in the outside world. Judging from how the book elucidated it with only a few sentences, it appeared to be very easy.

In practice however, one would discover that it was the first hurdle of necromantic meditation. For people who were just getting used to ordinary meditation, sensing the basic elements was as

natural as breathing oxygen every day, so imagine being told one day that they should be breathing carbon dioxide instead of oxygen. Of course, that was based on the premise that they could still survive in a certain environment by breathing carbon dioxide, but it was still hard to get used to it.

The same was true of meditation. Whenever Xiao Lin entered meditation, he frequently allowed himself to enter naturally into the vast galaxy filled with countless stars. That was the virtual world of meditation in his mind, with the stars representing the abundance of basic elements in the air. Ever since he entered Black Iron-rank, the stars here have increased in both number and brightness, which meant that Xiao Lin's ability to communicate with the natural elements had been strengthened.

For the moment however, it seemed that entering Black Iron-rank was actually disadvantageous for learning necromantic meditation. Since it had become easier to perceive and therefore rely on the basic elements, it became even more difficult to sever that connection.

Xiao Lin was unaware that necromancy's failure to become a mainstream course of most colonial academies did not stem from Earthlings' prejudices against necromancers. From an objective point of view, it was very difficult for mages who had already studied ordinary elemental spells to learn necromantic meditation. The difficulty of learning necromancy increased proportionally with the rank of an elemental mage.

Xiao Lin began to gradually feel distressed too. It was as if a right-handed person was forced to use his left hand all of a sudden—such habits were too difficult to change. Entering the meditative state takes only a few minutes, which meant that Xiao Lin had only a few minutes to temporarily sever his communication with the elements.

It was only when he entered an empty meditation world that he could begin to sense the death energy. From that perspective, it would appear much easier for beginners, but necromancy has many limitations after all. It was also not mainstream, and by comparison, most colleges were more keen on training elemental mages.

After trying his best and wasting at least a few hours, Xiao Lin finally gave up with that kind of rigid method. The book stated that even a beginner would take about half a month to a month to master that technique. That duration would double for mages who were already able to communicate with the elements.

Xiao Lin could not possibly waste so much time on that, so he decided to try it in another way. Since he could not directly enter an empty meditation world, he would simply enter the one with the elements before slowly eliminating the communication with those elements to achieve the same result.

He closed his eyes and meditated. A few minutes later, he once again entered the vast galaxy full of dazzling stars. He randomly searched for the nearby stars. One of them was burning with red flames, which represented a certain fire element in the real world. Xiao Lin's mental strength was gradually improving, and along with the Black Iron-rank's influence, he could even begin to slowly distinguish the flames bouncing off those stars.

However, that was not the point of his meditation. After perceiving everything carefully, Xiao Lin began gradually cutting off communication and contact with the stars in his consciousness. It was somewhat difficult in the beginning because he had to make sure that he severed his connection

with that one star only, and not the entire meditation world, or he would otherwise exit the meditation world directly. In that case, he would have to face the problem again and fall into an endless loop.

After dozens of attempts, Xiao Lin gradually learned how to cut off his communication with a certain star alone. Once the connection was interrupted, the star will instantly disappear without a trace from his perceived galaxy. The first successful attempt seemed quite interesting.

However, his point of interest did not last too long. After repeating it endlessly, Xiao Lin realized the biggest drawback of such an attempt: he had only severed connection with one star out a sky full of stars, and the degree of cumbersomeness was simply unimaginable.

That it was cum **Chapter 292 - Necromantic Meditation (2)**

Chapter 292: Necromantic Meditation (2)

Xiao Lin spent two days in distress. Had he not stayed in the room while resting and waiting for Song Junlang to deal with things, Xiao Lin might have given up on the necromantic meditation technique.

He also understood why the course was not offered in the entire four years of study. Instead, it was only placed in the library for interested students to borrow, and even then, there were few who actually borrowed it to study.

Since Xiao Lin's mindset was to pass the time, he felt that he should continue trying harder. The first thing he did was search for anything relevant on the forum. Since he had a pass to attend whatever class he wanted, he could read the curriculum schedules of other grades as he pleased. It was a pity that his search came up empty.

He then went off to the library again, but rather than look for books, he hunted down notes. Like the example of the improved Flame Bomb, he knew very well that many a learner's own notes for spells were much more important.

Unfortunately, there were relatively few books on necromancy in the library, while similar notebooks were entirely absent. The relevant books were almost all translations. Perhaps the relevant learning materials could be found in other colleges, but for the time being, he had hit a dead end.

What annoyed him even more was the fact that his Academic Genius talent had no effect if he could not even get past the threshold to get started. As for Replication, he did not know anyone in Dawn Academy who could use necromancy.

He even asked Lu Renjia, the third-year who made the Holy Soul Sword for him, to no avail. The Holy Soul Sword did have the essence of necromancy-type weapons to some extent, but it was still

an ordinary weapon. Lu Renjia had simply gotten lucky when he obtained the item containing the swordsman's soul. In fact, he knew very little about the undead.

After racking his brain and trying various methods, Xiao Lin had no choice but to go back to square one. However, an unorthodox idea suddenly popped up in his mind.

He directly entered his meditation world as he did previously, but rather than slowly cut off each element one by one, he attempted to make all the stars disappear in a short time without leaving the meditation world. The end result would simply be an empty universe.

His means of achieving that were also very simple, which was to meditate in his Miracle state. Xiao Lin was actually a bit hesitant because the Miracle state lasted for a limited time while the meditation time was relatively long, though he eventually decided to at least give it a try.

In his Miracle state, he converted all attributes into intelligence so his mental strength could increase markedly. His control over the elements would be enhanced as well, although he had some misgivings over whether that enhanced control would allow him to sever his connection with the stars in one fell swoop.

Xiao Lin's perception had once again turned clear inside that galactic world. He could even vaguely distinguish the temperature of the tumbling flames on the surface of the stars, though it was still not very clear to him.

In addition to improving his perception, mediating in the Miracle state brought about a clear enhancement of control. He could easily control the movement trajectory of more than a dozen stars. Being unaccustomed to everything made things a little laborious, but he was barely able to completely disconnect himself from the meditation world.

"Progress!"

Xiao Lin was quite satisfied with that result. After exiting the meditation world, he felt hungry and went straight to the cafeteria on the top floor. Although there was still some time to go before class ended at noon, he was surprised to meet a few acquaintances there.

Cheng Ming was quite happy to see Xiao Lin. He waved and came over at once, and although the other monitors did not seem too keen on doing so, they came out of their own will after giving it a little thought. The group then directly sat together on a table.

Everyone was officially appointed monitor after the third monthly exam, though the group became much closer instead of breaking apart. Problems in command were glaring during the monthly exam, and after the subsequent assessment, many people had actually gotten a low rating for their commanding ability. As a result, everyone felt that it was good to get together and strike up good relationships with each other. At the very least, chaos stemming from command issues could be prevented should there be another joint operation in the future.

As everyone gradually warmed up to each other, their conversation topics gradually expanded and were no longer limited to daily courses. For example, they talked about how the Sichuan dishes served that day did not taste authentic at all. Xiao Lin actually knew why that was the case: although Song Junlang's diet therapy experiments were banned, it was the job of the logistics

department to provide food for the cafeteria. Based on that guy's character, the dish could have tasted strange simply because some special meat had been added into it.

Xiao Lin did not have to explain that reason to everyone else though. After all, he had experienced everything thoroughly, or rather, he had endured so many poisons that his body had built up an immunity and he had gotten used to it.

"I heard that someone placed a huge bet on Xiao Lin two days ago," Sheng Guo, Class Eight's monitor, said. He probably brought that up on purpose since Xiao Lin happened to be there.

"I saw that too. Someone betted thousands of redemption points."

They watched as Xiao Lin ate with relish and seemed as though they wanted to say something. A few of them had witnessed the freakish incident in the training hall some days ago, though they were later told that Xiao Lin had suffered from sudden physical discomfort and could only rest in the dormitory for the next couple of days.

Nevertheless, they were not idiots, and it was inevitable that they would still remain puzzled even after mulling over the odd occurrence. The betting pool on the forum was also increasing day by day, and it had accumulated a considerable number up until then. Even so, few would bet on the monitors who ranked last, and those who really wanted to bet big would often choose the more promising mid-range candidates.

A couple thousand points was not that big a sum, but it was hard not to be curious if those bets were placed on Xiao Lin. Sheng Guo seemed to be as simple and straightforward as Cheng Ming, but the third exam showed everyone that he was actually a very shrewd man.

Sheng Guo was the first to question. Although he did not expect any reply and Xiao Lin looked absolutely surprised, Sheng Guo finished his food and said half-jokingly, "Maybe Xiao Lin is the real big boss and he's just hiding his strength. I'm going to have to think long and hard about how I'm going to bet once I head back."

Sheng Guo's strength was considered mid-tier among the monitors, as he was neither in the upper half of the lower half of the rankings. He was shrewd enough not to plan on betting anything in the beginning, but instead, inquired from other people in order to try and find the most profitable candidate to place his bets on.

Xiao Lin smiled and said, "Sure, I just so happen to have some redemption points, so I think I'll go back and just bet on myself. Self-consolation, I guess. "

The rest all smiled. Redemption points were precious to them, and Xiao Lin actually left everyone feeling skeptical because of how readily he made that statement.

Xiao Lin was a little worried after returning to the dormitory. He was unpopular, but if the odds dropped due to an increased number of people betting on him, the money he and Song Junlang could make would also decrease.

"I hope Department Head Song comes back soon!" Xiao Lin sighed. Taking into account the casinos in the New World, Xiao Lin was forced to temporarily conceal his strength and delay the student union's verification until Song Junlang came back.

Chapter 293 - Black Hole

Chapter 293: Black Hole

Xiao Lin set aside Song Junlang's issue for the time being. After lunch, he reinvested his energy into another attempt at necromantic meditation. The idea was to enter ordinary meditation using his Miracle state and then eliminating the stars in that galaxy.

Although Xiao Lin's efficiency had improved a bit, the process was still very cumbersome. For Xiao Lin however, it could only be considered an unorthodox solution.

Once he entered his meditation world once again, the starry sky was as vast as before, with stars of all colors glimmering all around his spirit. Since the Miracle state could not be maintained for too long, there was not a lot of time for him to waste. He quickly began to target each area and carried out his plan to disconnect himself from those stars.

It was hard to grasp the flow of time in the real world when Xiao Lin was inside the meditation world. He had no idea how much time had passed. It could have been a dozen seconds, or perhaps even a few minutes. All of a sudden, he suddenly noticed a strange place in his meditation world—a completely blank area of sky had suddenly appeared.

It was very strange. Could it be the Milky Way? Probably not, as the place was created through connecting with the elements—it was a mere figment of Xiao Lin's imagination. Due to the distribution of those elements, it was impossible for such an empty vacuum to appear. Furthermore, he had never discovered that unusual place during his usual meditation.

Rather than describing the place as one that Xiao Lin dominated, it was much more accurate to say that Xiao Lin's subconscious was dominating it. He therefore started exploring the vacuum without much thought.

Indeed, it was completely empty there. No trace of basic elements could be sensed there, and the nearest stars went no farther than the edge of the zone, as if there was an uncrossable restricted area up ahead. Xiao Lin's Miracle state heightened his perception to an unprecedented level and he concentrated his spirit toward the centermost area of that vacuum, a place so dark that no light could pass through.

Pain!

In an instant, Xiao Lin's subconscious conveyed painful feelings throughout his body. Even the meditating Xiao Lin could not help but groan. The vacuum was a place that even Xiao Lin was unable to go through. As soon as his spirit made contact, the entire darkness became chaotic, with the pitch-black matter churning itself over and over. In it, Xiao Lin's spirit was like a boat in an ocean, ready to capsize at any moment.

What was going on!

The realm was his own spiritual realm. It was analogous to a dream whereby he was the ultimate master and he could do whatever his heart desired. That was a basic piece of information conveyed to the students by the tutor during their meditation course.

However, the scene in front of him was clearly different, and the surging darkness even produced instability in his spiritual realm. The starry elements which had gathered around as a result of his meditation seemed frightened and began fleeing farther away.

The instability of that spiritual realm meant that it was difficult to maintain a meditative state, but when Xiao Lin was on the verge of exiting the state, his subconscious noticed even more weird phenomena.

The turbulent darkness began shrinking rapidly, before finally condensing into a huge, pitch-black, cotton-shaped hole. It was the same as a black hole in the universe!

However, that black hole was not completely empty, and a dragon-like roar could faintly be heard. The black hole bore the essential characteristics of a black hole, which was its suction force!

The completely inescapable suction force began spreading at an unimaginable speed. Those elemental stars that were already about to escape from the meditation range had no room to resist under the fierce suction. Each of them was restrained and prevented from moving any further. They were subsequently pulled toward the center of the black hole at a speed that became progressively faster.

The meditation world, which had been on the verge of collapse, returned to calm and stability, but Xiao Lin seemed to have become a bystander even though he was the master of his own realm. He could use his spirit to feel the elements being pulled into and swallowed by the black hole, before finally disappearing without a trace.

After all the stars had disappeared from his perception, the black hole began turning fuzzy before vanishing slowly. It did not really disappear though, because Xiao Lin's Miracle state had reached its limit and was lifted, thereby restoring all his converted attributes. As was usual the case, his mental strength and perception would also decline.

The entire meditation world fell into a pitch-black darkness. Darkness in the spiritual realm did not really mean darkness though; it meant that there was no trace of the elements near Xiao Lin. It was an elemental vacuum!

Xiao Lin felt inexplicably excited even though he did not know why things turned out like that. That was the exact effect he has been trying to achieve for several days already. The meditation world that isolated all elements from the connection could then be treated as the beginning of necromantic meditation.

On Planet Norma, it was believed that natural force and death energy existed in addition to the basic elements. Those basic forces constitute the normal cycle of that world. Each force maintained balance and the scale would temporarily lose its balance once the basic elemental force was lost. That would make it easier to perceive the death energy.

According to that principle, it should be easier to perceive the death energy if the natural force was also stripped off, but since the natural force was also the life force, both sides complemented and

restricted each other. Like darkness and light, it was practically impossible to disengage oneself from both at the same time.

According to the method recorded in the book, Xiao Lin had started to perceive the death energy in that empty and dark meditation world. The entire process took longer than imagined.

Based on the narrative in the book, as long as a meditation world that excludes the elements can be constructed, perceiving the death energy was a matter of course and posed little difficulty.

During the whole three-hour meditation process, Xiao Lin tried his best to explore in the dark but only sensed a very faint white energy. Like the description stated, that energy was like stagnant water in a deep pool. With no fluctuations, it was silent, cold, and typical of death energy. However, it was a bit too weak.

Xiao Lin opened his eyes once again, feeling slightly tired but much more confused. He picked up the necromancy book and read it carefully, but was unable to find any further clues. He had followed the book's method judiciously when meditating, so he could not possibly have made a mistake.

He proceeded with another attempt in spite of his doubts. Just like before, he was still only able to enter the elemental meditation world, but he soon got the hang of it even though it was unfamiliar in the beginning. Once Xiao Lin activated his Miracle state, the black hole reappeared just as he expected. Again, like before, the black hole tumbled and churned before sucking up all the stars in the entire galaxy.

"It's still not working!"

Xiao Lin sighed and finally exited his meditative state after a long time. Other than that thread-like death energy, he could not sense any other energy at all.

Chapter 294 - Death Energy

Chapter 294: Death Energy

Could he have done something wrong?

That was impossible! Unless the book was wrong, but if that was the case, it would not be in the library. Xiao Lin believed the academy, with its long history, would not make a mistake like that.

Could something have gone wrong with the meditative world?

That was impossible as well, or that singular thread of death energy would not have appeared.

Once every other possibility was eliminated, the remaining one, no matter how improbable, was the truth.

"Could it be impossible to sense death energy in the academy?"

Xiao Lin furrowed his eyebrows as he thought of that possibility. The book was translated from texts from Planet Norma, there was no way they took the academies into account.

Xiao Lin remembered someone telling the new students when they first enrolled that the academy was an isolated space created by the original colonists. Even if it greatly replicated Planet Norma, even following the time zones and seasons, it was still not the real Planet Norma.

Almost every freshman knew that the four seasons in the academy were set in stone. Rumor was that the changing of the seasons in Planet Norma involved astrology that was too complicated for the original colonists to replicate.

Then came the problem. There might be elemental energies here, but that did not mean that natural energy and death energy existed as well. The book said that death energy was found everywhere, and was even more concentrated than elemental energies, but that was referring to Planet Norma. On that planet, every corner saw someone dying at every moment, no matter what race or even what level of intelligence, the cycle of life meant death was naturally abundant.

Was there death in Dawn Academy?

Of course it did happen. If their lifespan was insufficient and they died in the monthly examination, the students were unsalvageable. That cruel rule caused a lot of complaints, but it was irrefutable.

However, the simulated environments for the monthly examinations were their own isolated spaces as well. Their base attributes were different from that of Dawn Academy, even if they were still simulated worlds.

It was like the scientists back on Earth. They could imitate various weathers in their labs, but it was impossible to change the actual weather on Earth outside of the lab that easily.

Xiao Lin felt that his hypothesis was very reasonable, but it caused him a great amount of frustration. That meant that his hardwork the past few days had been useless, but what he failed to understand was that weak and dim grey-colored thread of energy. Since natural and death energy did not exist in Dawn Academy, then what did he see in his meditative world?

Thinking about it, Xiao Lin suddenly smiled as he looked at the Holy Soul Sword on the table. He had forgotten that the spirit of some dead swordsman was in the weapon.

“Holy Soul Summoning!”

Xiao Lin waved his sword, the name of the skill causing him to curse a little. It was clearly an undead being. Why did Lu Renjia insist on naming it a holy soul?

The holy soul needed a large amount of death as tribute, clearly meaning it required a large amount of fresh death energy. In Dawn Academy where there was no death energy, it was obvious the soul could not be summoned.

Placing the sword down, Xiao Lin once again started his necromantic meditation. The undead soul in the sword proved that his hard work was not for nothing. At the very least the LVo Necromantic

Meditation in his personal information was not just for show; the progress was just frustratingly slow.

As Xiao Lin was closely examining the only sliver of death energy in the meditative world, that blackhole did not seem to suck it in, or even reject it. When the blackhole appeared, the grey-colored energy would start to struggle, seemingly trying to escape.

It seemed to be terrified, just like how the elements would distance themselves from the blackhole, but it got Xiao Lin very curious, since dead spirits usually did not have any form of sentience. That sort of low-level lifeform that was only solidified through death energy were usually empty husks controlled by their masters. They would only gain sentience if they evolved into strong enough undead spirits, but that was obviously not the case for the swordsman.

Xiao Lin's interest peaked. He did not use his own mental strength to control it, trying to mess with the grey energy like one would tease a cat or a dog. The energy did not react at the start, acting like a corpse floating in the vast universe, but slowly, the energy started to react, even if it was just the most basic of reactions.

Xiao Lin felt a great sense of accomplishment. It was hard to describe the feeling; it was akin to raising a pet and successfully teaching them new tricks.

However, with Song Junlang's return, Xiao Lin quickly dropped what he was doing. To him, the more pressing matter was obviously how to make sure he could win the money from the casino, especially since he had put everything he owned in there.

"I've settled everything in the New World. How is the situation here?" The two of them were not strangers anymore, and went straight to the point when they met.

Song Junlang threw a silver-colored card over as he said that. Xiao Lin grabbed it. It was proof of their bet with the casino. On the card, 9,000 New Dollars was clearly written. The surface was very sleek, probably made from expensive magical materials to prevent tampering.

"I've already placed a bet on the forums, but some other folks seemed to have placed their bets on me lately, causing the odds to decrease. It's only at 1 to 18 now. How about the New World?"

"Oh, not bad. Your odds actually increased. How little does everyone think of you?"

Xiao Lin's mouth twitched, but he felt like something was off. He might have a bit of a reputation in the academy, but it was limited to the first-years; it was not possible for people to know of him in the New World. Looking at Song Junlang's cryptic but happy smile, he exclaimed in realization, "No wonder you've been missing for so long. You've been slandering me in the casino."

"Ahem, you should understand: those old gamblers have their own friends in the academy, so it's easy for them to get news. If I didn't say anything, your odds might have decreased by quite a bit."

Xiao Lin sighed. "Fine, give it to me then. What are my odds in the New World?"

"1 to 150!"

Xiao Lin's eyes widened, the odds had increased by half from the initial 100. Even if he did not know what sort of rumors were spread about him, the result was not too bad.

Someone might not have been that big a deal since he could simply be patient and spend more time on it. However, Xiao Lin soon discovered that he had no control over the number of stars in his galactic meditation world. He might be able to temporarily cut off the connection of certain stars, but after a long enough time has passed, he would soon reconnect with those stars the next time he meditated. He obviously could not just meditate day and night without eating or drinking all day.

Chapter 295 - Rank Evaluation (1)

Chapter 295: Rank Evaluation (1)

It was time for his rewards.

Song Junlang urged Xiao Lin to not delay things, and to hurry to the student union to prove his rank before immediately heading to the New World to get his money.

Xiao Lin was quite happy as well, but he felt that something was off. He asked, "Hold on, shouldn't you be the one heading to the New World?"

Song Junlang waved his hand, retrieving a slip of paper, "The bet was placed under your name, and the money was originally yours as well. You should naturally be the one to retrieve it. Just deposit half the funds into this account after that."

"Four to six split; it's 40%!" Xiao Lin corrected.

"Oh, with your number, you'll probably be taxed 10%. We agreed you'd pay for the taxes, so it ends up basically being an equal split." Song Junlang said with a sly smile.

"Why do I feel like I was tricked again?"

"This is a huge sum of money. With that money, there's a lot you can do in the New World!"

That was true. With the 1 to 150 payout, his 9,000 New Dollar bet would turn into 1.35 million. After the 10% tax and splitting it with Song Junlang, Xiao Lin would have 540,000 New Dollars.

With the forums in the academy, based on the 1 to 18 payout, Xiao Lin's 2,000 redemption points would yield him 36,000 redemption points, but it paled in comparison to what he earned from the New World. He was quite thankful to Song Junlang. Xiao Lin would not have even thought about placing a bet in the New World otherwise.

"Can I really go to the New World?" Xiao Lin said.

"Didn't the dean give you that letter of appointment? You're a captain you know. Don't look down on your status. The military does things differently. It's never been particularly hard for you to head to the New World, since you only needed to get the student union president to agree, but now

you don't even need that. You just need to bring your letter of appointment to the interspatial gate. No one would stop you!"

After pausing, Song Junlang straightened his back and said, "Something important happened lately, and I need to head back to Earth. I might not be back here for quite a while, so you should be careful. No one will hold a funeral for you if you cause any trouble."

Xiao Lin rolled his eyes, but he could not help but admit that Song Junlang was somewhat of a shield on his back. For instance, Department Head Song helped him when he went berserk a few days ago, even though the reason for that seemed to originate here as well...

After leaving the logistics department, Xiao Lin headed straight to the student union. According to Dawn Academy's rules, students ranking up first needed to be approved and verified by the specialized department in the student union before a certificate could be issued, proving that the student had reached that level. Thanks to the nature of the colonists, no one had ever faked those certificates, and they were naturally difficult to fake in the first place.

Xiao Lin was someone with quite the reputation in the student union. As he stepped into the classical style building, quite a few passersby turned to look at him. Everyone was filled with looks of surprise or curiosity, but not many greeted him, since he did not really know many people.

Feeling like he had given the student union president quite a bit of trouble, Xiao Lin hesitated before deciding against looking for the president. He asked around for the location of the Rank Evaluation Office. The whole place pretty much took up an entire floor. It was a department primarily catered to fourth-year students, after all.

Xiao Lin was stopped at the door by someone before being handed a form to fill up. It required his name, year, attributes, and other basic information, mostly to speed up the process.

After filling up the form he handed it over to a woman in charge of the information. She took a quick glance over the form before her expression immediately changed, exclaiming in surprise, "You're a freshman! You... Are you sure you want to undergo the Black Iron-rank evaluation?"

Her voice was quite loud, and even a few of the staff behind her heard it before scrambling out, pointing at Xiao Lin.

"That guy is from the first year?"

"Black Iron-rank!"

"Is the betting pool coming to an end today?"

"My god! I've already placed a bet. Hey, do you know what that is?"

Xiao Lin was a bit annoyed, and he noticed that the woman in front of him had a darkening expression, so he asked, "Senior, what should I do now?"

The woman coughed a few times, frantically shaking her head before saying through clenched teeth, "Are you sure you've reached Black Iron-rank? We have very strict testing requirements

here, and won't give any compromises. Even though the first evaluation is free, every subsequent one will be charged a fee to prevent troublemakers."

That woman was basically trying to chase Xiao Lin away, not believing he had reached the Black Iron-rank.

Xiao Lin gaped for a moment before losing his smile and saying, "Senior, I don't know who you bet for, but relax, I'm not lacking in money or points."

In the end, she could not hold Xiao Lin indefinitely. After making sure the form had no mistakes, she meekly pointed to a door and said, "The Black Iron-rank evaluation is in the second room. You can just head straight inside. There's no one else there at the moment."

"Thank you, Senior."

"My redemption points!"

"Senior, gambling can ruin you! You should be careful next time!"

"..."

Xiao Lin's arrival had caused quite a bustle in the usually quiet area. The truth was, after the betting pool had started a lot of people had shifted their attention here. After all, the victor would ultimately be determined by the student union's evaluation. The news spread like wildfire on the forums in just a few minutes.

A lot of them tried to take the opportunity to place their bets at the last minute, but the casinos and the ones in charge of the forums had gotten the news as well, closing the gambling pools immediately while they awaited Xiao Lin's results.

The ones in charge of the evaluation were a few young students, probably third- or fourth-year student union members. Xiao Lin could not help but chuckle when he saw the look of pain on their faces after looking at his form.

It was natural, since there were very few people who actually bet on Xiao Lin. What Xiao Lin did not know was that, after the closing of the gambling pools, a lot of chatter started on the forums. Everyone was hoping that his evaluation was a mistake, since it was their last hope.

Even though this evaluation had attracted the gazes of many, the few evaluators considered making the evaluation process harder. However, the process for selection was not that complicated, and it was only divided into three parts: a physical examination, a combat evaluation, and the final result.

Chapter 296 - Rank Evaluation (2)

Chapter 296: Rank Evaluation (2)

This was the second physical evaluation Xiao Lin was going through since he entered the academy. It was more or less the same as the last time. There was a door that looked like a security check in the room, and a red beam of light descended from it. Since the Black Iron-rank meant higher attributes, the evaluation took around forty seconds this time.

After waiting for a few minutes, the student union members looked at Xiao Lin's numbers. The moment he looked at it, a man who was wearing a watch exclaimed, "What even attributes!"

Another one shook his head, saying, "Strength 24, Agility 26, Intelligence 25, Physique 26. You did reach the requirement for Black Iron-rank, but these attributes are really very even."

Xiao Lin furrowed his eyebrows. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Ah, how do I put this..." The one who initially spoke paused before continuing, "Junior, didn't anyone tell you before that having even attributes isn't a good thing? Even though the numbers look like you're a jack of all trades, the truth is you're just very average."

The man waved his hand, finding it difficult to articulate. "You might not be familiar with our evaluation process, so let me just explain it. Even though it is said that having 100 total attribute points would mean you're at the Black Iron-rank and be able to live in the New World without any side effects, the academies have started to prioritize combat ability in the recent decades. That's why, attribute scores aside, you need to pass a combat evaluation as well."

The one next to him continued, "The test taker will have to defeat a virtual opponent in order to get the certificate. Please don't misunderstand, we're not trying to mess with you; those are just the rules."

Xiao Lin's lips twitched. They said that, but why did their faces look so gleeful? Did they really think he would fail the next step?

If he failed, then the gambling pool would continue until someone else was able to pass, and a lot of people would be able to avoid losing their money.

However, Xiao Lin was not afraid at all. Tidying up his shirt, he smiled and said, "Will you be my opponents?"

"No, of course not. We'll be using a simulation tool. We'll configure a Black Iron-rank opponent as your opponent. Obviously, you can choose to face a magical or physical opponent."

Xiao Lin shook his head, somewhat understanding what they tried to tell him earlier. Having even attributes might mean he had no weaknesses, but he had no strengths as well. The student union probably never configured an opponent for someone like him, so no matter if he was facing a physical or magical opponent, he would be on the short end of the stick in attributes.

Having one attribute be extremely high was completely different from having a few attributes being equal. The former would be able to use stronger spells or sword skills, while the latter would not have any attributes at the Black Iron-rank.

At least, that was how the evaluators were looking at Xiao Lin. Even if Xiao Lin's skills had been acknowledged, that was just among the first-years. Anyone else looking at his attributes would

think that he only attained 100 attribute points to reach the Black Iron-rank, and distributing his attributes evenly like that would affect his combat ability.

Xiao Lin was not worried at all. He showed a strange smile and said, “I’ll try them all.”

“Yes, huh? What do you mean?”

“Don’t you have both physical and magical opponents? I’ll just test myself against both. It’ll be more convincing that way.”

The few of them exchanged looks, and one of them could not help but say, “You can, but based on the rules, if you fail an evaluation, you won’t get your certificate. Even if you choose two, failing one would fail you completely. Are you sure?”

“I’m cool with anything,” Xiao Lin said nonchalantly.

“Fine, follow us then.”

The simulated combat room was in a large room next door. Xiao Lin was already quite familiar with the system, but his eyes brightened when he saw that it was a new type of system. He could not help but ask, “Isn’t this a little different from the other systems?”

The one leading the way paused before saying in surprise, “You’ve come across these systems before?”

“I use it basically every day.” Looking at their shocked expressions, Xiao Lin decided to change the energy stones himself. The student union members moved to stop him, but looking at how practiced Xiao Lin looked, it was obvious that Xiao Lin was not lying.

The men in charge of the evaluation were all confused. The virtual combat system was expensive to use. Even they would be happy to just use it once a month. He said with a hint of admiration, “Ah, the student union uses the newest model. The functions are more complete... Whatever, seeing as you’re familiar with it, I won’t explain too much.”

The attributes for the evaluation had already been pre-prepared. The total attributes were always set at 100. The physical opponent had 40 Strength, 15 Agility, 15 Intelligence, and 30 Physique.

Worrying that Xiao Lin would not understand, they explained a little. “These numbers are based on a Black Iron-ranked orc. You should already know from your history classes that the orcs are basically our greatest enemy. The academy believes that if you can’t defeat one at this rank, it would mean nothing, even if you entered the Black Iron-rank.”

Xiao Lin nodded before heading into the room. Once the system booted up, he understood what was different about the new model. He was no longer surrounded by cold metallic walls, but instead an uneven mountain ground with sharp spikes.

The newest model could even simulate different environments, giving an extra level of realism. It probably used illusion projection magic. Xiao Lin knew that spell was invented by the colonists, and they used it on their phones, but the virtual combat system used it on a much higher level.

The opponent quickly appeared. With the new model, the opponent was even more life-like. It even had various protective gears on it. The gears might not have been real, but during the battle, damage would be reduced based on the gear.

A strength of 40 was quite a high number for most freshmen, but since the agility was set to be quite low, it could be circumvented with speed, meaning it was not an issue for Xiao Lin.

The battle was starting, so he activated Miracle.

Under Miracle, he could convert 50% of his other attributes to any one attribute. His current total was 101 points, and his Strength attribute was at 26. Thanks to Miracle, his strength momentarily increased to 63, basically giving him an immense advantage.

No tricks, no strategies, not even bothering to think too long.

Even if his agility dropping affected his speed, thanks to Phantom Steps, he managed to maintain his speed advantage. With Xiao Lin's charge, he stabbed his sword forward, immediately dropping the virtual orc's health to zero.

The evaluators had not even prepared themselves when the battle came to an end.

Chapter 297 - Evaluation Result

Chapter 297: Evaluation Result

The observers looked at each other, rubbing their eyes. Some of them stared in disbelief. They had been doing this job for a few years, and Black Iron-rank evaluations were not hard, but even if it was simple, Xiao Lin was still way too quick. It was basically a complete slaughter.

"Why isn't he coming out?"

"Wait, didn't he say he wanted to try the magical opponent?"

"What! I thought he was joking!"

Everyone was starting to get frustrated. They had all placed bets, and none of them had bet on Xiao Lin. Even if they had hoped that Xiao Lin would fail, they did not dare harbor any thoughts about affecting the results after seeing his performance.

Even though losing to either of the opponents would not qualify someone for the certificate, but with his earlier performance, Xiao Lin was without a doubt qualified to be at the Black Iron-rank. If they did not issue the certificate, their jobs would be at risk. The student union was quite strict about being fair to students.

After waiting for a while, Xiao Lin curiously waved his hand to the window, trying to get the next battle started. The truth was, Xiao Lin was not trying to show off. Of course, proving himself was

part of it, but Xiao Lin just mainly wanted to know how strong he was after entering the Black Iron-rank.

The ones outside were deep in discussion, and someone finally said, “Let’s just see what happens. What if he wins?”

“You’re joking. He only has three months under his belt; how could he have the time for so many different courses. The magical opponent has pretty high requirements for mental strength and perception.”

They might have said that, but they still reactivated the battle system. The magical opponent’s attributes were 15 Strength, 25 Agility, 35 Intelligence, and 25 Physique. Those were the usual attributes that an elf woman would have when they reached Black Iron-rank. Elves did not just specialize in archery. Female elves usually had high intelligence, so they wielded rare elvish magic.

The two tests used elves and orcs as the virtual opponents—on some degree, reflecting the plans of the upper echelons of Dawn Academy. Of course, that was not what Xiao Lin was thinking about at that moment.

Xiao Lin had been waiting impatiently. The moment the room lit up again, he immediately switched to the wand prepared for the evaluation, knowing that the opponent would be magic-based.

Other than being able to help with the gathering of elements, the wand did not have any other uses. The rank evaluation was meant to test a student’s actual capabilities, which was why the students could not bring any of their own equipment inside.

Miracle still had a few minutes of activation. Xiao Lin quickly put all his attributes into Intelligence, giving him an intelligence of over 60. That number already exceeded what even Gu Xiaoyue had. The Miracle attribute started off not being too strong, but as his total attributes increased, the effect got increasingly more powerful.

“Flame Bullet!”

Xiao Lin once again attacked without hesitation. Flame Bullet was the Black Iron-rank version of Flame Ball. The damage was somewhat reduced, but the casting speed greatly increased thanks to it. Even without his Peakfire Staff, causing Flame Bullet’s burn damage to decrease, the spell itself still used his own mental strength. A Flame Bullet cast under the effect of Miracle was nothing to laugh at.

The thumb-sized Flame Bullet shot out from the wand, exploding when it hit the virtual opponent. In a mage battle, the speed of casting was the most important thing, and the opponent for the evaluation was not that fast.

The opponent could not properly cast its Flame Ball under the constant barrage. It seemed like that evaluation was just a check of the student’s basic attributes, so a big enough difference would naturally lead to an easy time. With that, the battle ended in less than 20 seconds.

When Xiao Lin exited from the room, the evaluators could only look at him with respect. Their earlier discontent had long since evaporated. They could only hate themselves for not being able to see his talent earlier.

The Black Iron-rank certificate was just a thin, regular piece of paper—not much different from most of the certificates on Earth. On the certificate was the stamp of the Rank Evaluation Office. Other than the words Black Iron-rank on the certificate, there were also a few other words: Physical Test: 18 seconds; Magical Test: 23 seconds. It then stated the total attributes at the time of evaluation as 101.

That was the time it took for Xiao Lin to defeat his opponents in the simulation. It was obvious that this was not just a certificate of qualification; it also somewhat reflected the student's ability.

“Getting a job in the New World would probably not just rely on the qualifications; the time recorded would be a selection criteria as well.” The evaluator saw Xiao Lin's incredulous expression and could not help but remind him.

Xiao Lin nodded in understanding. Just like the English examinations on Earth, a pass was still a pass, but the score one earned would put them on different levels.

“You can always apply to retake the evaluation if you're not happy with your record. Of course, the next evaluation will need to be paid for, and the higher your total attributes, the less value a fast time would mean. It's just Black Iron-rank anyway.” After pausing, the person in charge said, “Of course, you don't need to worry about it at all.”

“Is there anyone faster than me?” Xiao Lin asked.

“Of course there is, but the evaluations differ from time to time, so it's not really a direct comparison. Your results are basically already at the top level; it won't really improve that much more.”

Xiao Lin shrugged, not really caring about getting a job or whatnot. He had the letter of appointment, after all. The dean had already prepared his future path.

The evaluation results quickly spread on the forums. The certificates that came from the student union were not easy to forge, so wailing could be heard at every corner of the academy. Thankfully, the academy's bets were not too much. Even those that lost money did not really lose much, but it was a different story in the New World. Xiao Lin would not be surprised if there were those who wanted to end their life because of the results.

He had asked Department Head Song about it before, so Xiao Lin more or less knew the rules of gambling in the forums. Thanks to the protection from the school system, the bets were automatically enforced, not needing him to do anything special, which was why Xiao Lin quickly received the notification that he earned 36,000 redemption points when he got back to the dormitory.

At the same time as the message, he received an invitation from an unknown ID.

Chapter 298 - Casino Boss

Chapter 298: Casino Boss

Xiao Lin easily saw the person's name on the forums: An Fumin.

Seeing as the other party was online, Xiao Lin immediately called him. A pudgy man appeared on the screen; there was a large smile on his face. His tone was rough but well-mannered. "Are you Mr. Xiao Lin?"

"Yes, and you are?"

"Nice to meet you. I'm An Fumin, the boss of Dawn City Century Casino."

Song Junlang had told him before that Century Casino was the largest casino in Dawn Academy's colonized territories, and was also where he placed their bet. He nodded and said nothing, waiting for the other party to continue.

An Fumin looked like he had rushed back, wiping sweat off his forehead as he laughed and said, "You placed a bet in our casino a few days before, and I've already verified the results with the student union. You're the final winner, right?"

Xiao Lin did not deny it, but it did not seem like the man was calling to give him his money. He furrowed his eyebrows, asking, "Why? Are you not planning to pay?"

"No no no," the man said as he waved frantically, his smile still plastered on his face. "Century Casino is an establishment with a long history, and our reputation is everything. Even though we lost a bit from this, it's not a big amount. It's yours, so we'll make sure it gets to you."

"Then what are you looking for me for?"

"Ah, let me make some simple introductions. Our casino covers quite a lot; we even have branches in the other academies. Something like you who enters the Black Iron-rank first among the new students is just child's play, so the winnings are obviously limited. However, the Inter-academy Tournament will be starting soon. Are you willing to cooperate with us?"

Xiao Lin was starting to sweat. He had heard about it from Song Junlang before, but he did not know the specifics.

An Fumin saw the awkward look on his face and immediately continued, "The Inter-academy Tournament is a tournament jointly organized by all the academies. Ever since we started colonizing Planet Norma, there have been countless countries establishing their own academies and entering our forces."

"Looking at the bigger picture, all the academies are basically ants standing on the same string, pursuing the same benefits, but in truth, with the expansion of the colonized territories, there were alliances forged, but battles naturally had to be fought as well. Of course, it would never

progress to full-out war. Everyone knows that's the line, so the academies needed a way to determine their relative standings.

"That was where the Inter-academy Tournaments were born. In the beginning, every academy randomly chose students to participate, but following the increase in everyone's skills, especially considering how powerful the best colonists were, they decided on only sending final year students to compete. In recent years, the Americans and the British also pushed to add the first-year students.

"First-year students represented the future of the academies, while the final year students represented the academy's current strength. They would then determine their relative power based on that.

"The Inter-academy Tournament was held in the middle of every year. That time period was exactly when the fourth-years usually graduated and the freshmen would have almost a full year under their belt, so they would already have enough time to master various basic skills. This next tournament will probably be held in half a year. The list of participants will definitely be chosen from the best students, so the student union would usually already have a name list ready to allow the participants more time to prepare."

Song Junlang had said before that the New World's casinos were open for a lot of different bets, even including the victors of war. The Inter-academy Tournament would naturally be included.

After listening to An Fumin's explanation, Xiao Lin said playfully, "I don't even know if I'll be chosen as a representative."

An Fumin laughed once again. "You're joking. Your results for the Black Iron-rank evaluation might not be the first in history, but Dawn Academy definitely has never seen results like that in this time period. With that result, the president would probably have gone mad if he didn't pick you."

Xiao Lin actually had something he could not say. He was not sure if the dean would stop him from participating to keep his secret, especially since he was almost held hostage in New Washington.

Of course, he could not say that, so Xiao Lin asked, "Even if I do participate, are you planning on asking me to fix my matches?"

An Fumin's laughter died down a little, saying seriously, "How could I do that? I'm still someone from Dawn Academy. I have at least some pride in that. You might not know this, but it's been ten years since we even entered the top four. Ever since the genius Song Junlang fell ten years ago, our students have been really dropping in quality."

Dawn Academy was one of the first academies established, and they had always been among the top in foundations and powers in history. However, ever since the war with the orcs, along with the rise of the Judge Academy, Dawn Academy has been rather average lately, especially when it came to the quality of their students with talents, causing the academy to be in an awkward spot.

Xiao Lin sighed when he heard that, but An Fumin quickly had a sly expression on his face. "Since the Academy has been doing badly these years, the odds during the tournament has been steadily increasing, and I'm also planning on shaking things up a bit this year, raising the odds a bit higher..."

Xiao Lin finally understood what he meant. He really was a sly merchant; the man wanted to cause everyone to keep looking down on Dawn Academy to increase the odds. Then, if the time came and Dawn Academy actually managed to win, An Fumin would make a killing as the broker.

“What do you need me to do? Even if I really become a representative, I don’t have any guarantee of winning.” He was not being humble; it was hard to guarantee that the other academies would not have some student with an insane talent. Xiao Lin really did not have much confidence.

“Ah, don’t underestimate me. I’ll do everything I can to help the academy when the time comes. I might not be able to guarantee first place, but we can at least place in the top four. As for the details, I can’t reveal anything for now. I’m mainly just trying to get to know you today.”

Xiao Lin thought for a bit, and felt like there was nothing wrong with his proposal, but he was not willing to easily agree to anything, so he said, “Let me think about it for a bit. You’ve already said that the tournament will only take place in half a year anyway.”

Chapter 299 - Purchasing Lifewater

Chapter 299: Purchasing Lifewater

The harmless-looking fat man knew he would not be able to get any promises from Xiao Lin with just his words, and did not try to force anything, but he did not forget to invite Xiao Lin to Dawn City before he hung up.

“Betting payouts can usually be transferred straight into your bank account, but we don’t know your account number, and according to our records, the one who placed the bet was not you. Based on our regulations, the first transaction needs to be done by yourself personally. I’ll still be in the academy for a few days, but if you don’t mind, we can leave together later on.”

“As I understand it, even if a first-year student gets to Black Iron-rank, heading to the New World is not a trivial matter. The academy has strict rules on it.”

“Ah, you’re underestimating me.” An Fumin’s face might have been smiling, but there was a hint of pride underneath his smile. “Freshmen do have strict requirements before being able to head to the New World, but as long as you want to, I can make it happen. I know quite a few people in the student union.”

Xiao Lin was surprised, but he realized it was nothing surprising. He was basically one of the first people who knew of his results, and as the boss of the biggest casino in their territories, he definitely had deep connections. Getting some news or helping with trivial matters would not be hard for him.

However, Xiao Lin did not need the help. His rejection caused the man to be quite shocked. Just like Xiao Lin had said himself, no matter how outstanding a person was, a freshman would have a hard time getting to the New World, but An Fumin wisely avoided pressing the topic.

Xiao Lin could easily move around thanks to his letter of appointment, and he even had the freedom to choose his own classes. Thanks to those two privileges, he could leave at any time.

Xiao Lin once again logged onto the forums, and he noticed that the news of him breaking into the Black Iron-rank had already spread everywhere. News that had been verified by the student union would naturally not be false. There were those who congratulated him and even those who tried to mock him, but he ignored most of the comments. In truth, after the last monthly examination, he had been receiving a ton of friend requests daily—doubtlessly from those who wanted to suck up to him. After a few instances, Xiao Lin had learned to ignore all of them.

He immediately headed into the marketplace, searching for ‘elementary Lifewater’. Even if there was still some time until the next official release of Lifewater, it was impossible that there was not any available for sale at that moment.

There were some resellers around. Some of them even tried to scalp Lifewater to sky-high prices. If they were lucky and someone needed some urgently, they could make a quick buck.

The New World was different from the academy. The Law of Immortality was in full effect there. Every death would cost twenty years off their lifespan. Xiao Lin still had 50 years after dying in the third monthly examination, and he was 23 years of age at that moment. Elementary Lifewater was effective until about 100 years of age, so Xiao Lin still had 27 years that were lacking.

One bottle of Lifewater could add 10 years of lifespan. Even if he went to the New World, Xiao Lin’s current lifespan was not a big issue, but he had other thoughts in mind.

Elementary lifewater only cost 1,000 points from the school, but some students had already hiked the price up by double. 2,000 points was enough to even make second-or third-years hesitate, but Xiao Lin did not mind. After his wins earlier he did not care about the price.

Two bottles of Lifewater cost 4,000 redemption points. Xiao Lin was too lazy to even negotiate, paying first before he even notified the seller. That attitude caused the seller to even suspect him of fraud, leading to the seller verifying it repeatedly before believing he had stumbled upon a rich person. The seller passionately recommended him higher-tier Lifewaters, but Xiao Lin was not interested at that moment.

The seller was a third-year student. Xiao Lin had been prepared to collect the goods himself, but once the other party knew he was the one who won the gambling pool, the other party immediately warmed up to him, even giving him a 20 percent discount before hurrying to the freshman dormitories to deliver the goods. Of course, as a show of gratitude, Xiao Lin could not help but accept the other party’s friend request.

The Lifewater was stored in a transparent bottle that was only as big as his thumb. There was extremely little of it. Xiao Lin brought it up to his nose to smell it after opening the bottle, and a faint fragrance was emitted. He swallowed it in a gulp. The Lifewater tasted very plain, and he could feel a warmth beginning to spread from his stomach to his entire body. That strange feeling passed very quickly, but Xiao Lin still waited hesitantly, a habit probably caused by Song Junlang. Of course, since it was an official potion, it was much better than anything Song Junlang made, so there were no side effects.

Xiao Lin quickly swallowed the second bottle. In his personal information, his remaining lifespan had increased to 70 years.

Just as advertised, elementary Lifewater was quite effective in increasing his lifespan. Even with a total lifespan of 93 years, Xiao Lin was not that happy. He was feeling quite complicated. He had known the effects beforehand after all, since he was not the first person to use Lifewater, and the effects had long since been vouched for in the forums.

Why did the Lifewater not work for Gu Xiaoyue then? Xiao Lin used his authority as a class monitor to look at Gu Xiaoyue's personal information; the words '2 Years' were very grating.

He had been thinking about it constantly during his free time these days, even leading to him testing it out by consuming Lifewater himself today. Song Junlang had said that the elementary Lifewater was made by high-level alchemists in the academy, so he did not doubt the quality of the medicine; that was too improbable.

Then, the issue could only lie on Gu Xiaoyue's own body. Xiao Lin did not know what that woman was hiding, but with Gu Xiaoyue's personality, the fact that she did not even report it to the student union to this day meant she did not want the academy to know, so Xiao Lin could only hold his silence.

Putting his heavy thoughts aside for the moment, Xiao Lin once again contacted An Fumin, indicating that he could follow the man to Dawn City to retrieve his payout before agreeing on a time.

Before he left, Xiao Lin did not forget to notify his group leaders, Zhou Feng and Gu Xiaoyue. Xiao Lin had basically used his powers immediately after being named the official class monitor to officially give those two that position, even announcing it on the Class Seven chat room. His message was clear: following him would grant many benefits.

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The two of them would be the ones in charge of the class while he was gone. Zhou Feng was someone who was not afraid to stand out, while Gu Xiaoyue was someone who preferred to maintain a low profile. The two of them working together put Xiao Lin at ease.

The bald-headed Zhou Feng took the change to thank Xiao Lin. He had basically placed all of the few hundred redemption points he had on Xiao Lin. Of course, he had already told Xiao Lin that beforehand. He did not do it just to make money, but was actually doing it more as a show of support. Zhou Feng was surprised and ecstatic when it actually made him several thousand redemption points.

Even if Xiao Lin knew Zhou Feng was deliberately using it to suck up, he could not help but respect the man. There were only a few people in Class Seven who dared to do it. He knew everyone might have accepted him as the class monitor on the surface, but a good amount probably have yet to truly accept it in their hearts. Xiao Lin felt like he needed to properly reward those who really supported him, so he started with Zhou Feng.

“I’ve already discussed it with Cheng Ming from Class One; if anything gets decided on in the monitor meetings, he will let you know. Take care of the class while I’m gone.” Xiao Lin’s words carried two meanings. Firstly, he was appointing Zhou Feng as the substitute class monitor. Secondly, he was telling Zhou Feng that—even with that power, he still needed to go through Cheng Ming—so Zhou Feng should not think of hiding anything from Xiao Lin.

Zhou Feng did not disappoint him, ignoring the warning as he immediately expressed his elation, before asking, “How about Gu Xiaoyue?”

“Ah, don’t worry about that. That woman doesn’t like trouble, so she would not want to be in charge of too much. However, you can ask her for help if you have any problems.”

Zhou Feng nodded with a look of understanding, a smirk on his face. Xiao Lin felt like the man must have misunderstood something, but he did not bother explaining it.

Communicating with Gu Xiaoyue was a much easier affair. Xiao Lin felt like he developed a better understanding of the girl after the third monthly examination, but the closer they got, the more curious he was. Unfortunately Gu Xiaoyue had never bothered playing the social game in the academy, so she did not express anything at Xiao Lin’s arrangements.

“Oh, I understand.” Was her only reply.

With that, Xiao Lin regretfully headed to the inter-spatial gate deep in the academy, which was where he agreed to meet with An Fumin. Xiao Lin immediately recognized the casino boss when he got there, the man’s body was way too eye-catching.

An Fumin immediately shook Xiao Lin’s hand. The two of them walked into the platform after greeting each other. The one standing guard seemed to be an acquaintance of An Fumin. The two of them chatted for a bit and the guard did not bother checking him in detail before waving him away.

Xiao Lin was a different matter, since freshmen usually needed special permission from the student union to head to the New World. An Fumin kept his smile on his face as he looked on. He could have easily helped with the matter, but Xiao Lin had rejected it, leading to some curiosity from him.

With two pairs of eyes on him, Xiao Lin took out the letter of appointment that Yu Mei from the sixth regiment brought him. The letter of appointment was quite ordinary, having not been made of any special material, but the other two immediately widened their eyes when it was opened.

The two of them were shocked by two different things. The staff was shocked that a freshman had been appointed as a captain. That was enough to inspire the envy of most of the graduating batch from this year. An Fumin on the other hand was not too interested in a freshman captain. Since there were all sorts of people who frequented his casino, a captain was nothing special. What caused him to be so surprised was the signature on the letter of appointment.

Even if the words were sloppily written, enough for most to just ignore it, An Fumin clearly recognized the dean’s own signature.

There were quite a few captains in Dawn Academy, and there were even those younger than Xiao Lin, but those appointed by the dean himself were very rare.

An Fumin was shocked to the core, but his expression remained unchanged. He only imperceptibly nodded.

The letter of appointment had a lot on it, but it was not for the eyes of the two in front of Xiao Lin, but just as Song Junlang had said, the letter of appointment was enough that they did not dare stop him from passing. Xiao Lin and An Fumin passed the checkpoint without issue.

The platform had two interspatial gates on them. One headed to Earth while the other went to Dawn City, which meant that Xiao Lin did not need to make a trip to Earth this time. In front of the passage was the second security checkpoint; it was much stricter than the one in front of the platform.

First, they checked if the two of them brought any modern items that could damage the reality of Planet Norma. It was not the first time Xiao Lin went to Planet Norma, so he had naturally been careful about that issue. After passing the security check, Xiao Lin was surprised to see that An Fumin also knew the staff there. They were chatting away during the entire process.

After getting onto the carriage, An Fumin had wanted to give some simple explanations, but he noticed it was not Xiao Lin's first time. As the carriage started to move, the Timesand began to light up the carriage.

An Fumin looked at the calm Xiao Lin, smiling as he said meaningfully, "I heard you went to New Washington as a representative of the academy not long after you entered, causing quite a bit of a stir. It seems the rumors were true."

"I'm not nearly that capable. I merely followed Department Head Song out that time. He was the main character and I just followed because I knew a bit of the language." Xiao Lin easily pushed the matter to Song Junlang, since he was not around anyway. However, he was secretly surprised. That man had quite the impressive information network. The fact that something happened in New Washington was obviously no easy secret to keep, but with Dawn Academy and Judge Academy covering things up, there were not many who could tie what happened to freshmen.

It seemed like An Fumin did not just meet Xiao Lin because he won a bet; the man probably already had quite a bit of information on Xiao Lin.

An Fumin smiled, noticing that Xiao Lin did not want to delve deeper into the topic. He quickly switched the topic to Dawn City.

Xiao Lin might have been to New Washington, but that was still American territory. In the end, nothing beat home. No matter how advanced it was over there, Xiao Lin did not feel comfortable, especially after what happened between the two of them.

Even if he knew An Fumin was trying to get closer to him for some reason, Xiao Lin did not mind learning more about Dawn City from the man.