

Martial Arts 371

Chapter 371: Investigate Li Ping

"Chairman Hua? What does this matter have to do with him?" Zuo Hong frowned and asked.

The man swallowed his saliva instantly, looked around first, then said softly, "You three brothers may not know, but recently, a big event happened in Anshan City!"

"A big event?"

The three of them exchanged a glance when they heard this.

They could roughly guess what the man was talking about.

Of course, even so, they still pretended to be clueless.

"What big event?"

"Well..."

A cunning look flashed in the man's eyes, and he looked troubled, "Brothers, it's not that I don't want to tell you about this, but firstly, this matter is very confidential. I spent a lot of effort to find out about it. Even now, not many people in Anshan City know about it.

Secondly, if this information gets out and it's known that I said it, it could bring me enormous trouble. I could lose my life, so..."

The man looked at the three of them.

"Hehe."

Wu Fei let out a meaningful laugh. What confidentiality, what enormous trouble.

It's nothing more than thinking the chips aren't enough and raising the stakes.

I have to admit, this person is quite clever, knowing to stop when he's piqued their curiosity sufficiently. Unfortunately, he only has some minor wit.

In the next moment, Wu Fei pretended to reach into his chest and took out two packs of cigarettes, "Two packs, is that enough? If it's not, I have more."

"Enough, thank you, Brother! Thank you, Brother!" The man's face bloomed into a smile as he grabbed the two packs of cigarettes from Wu Fei's hand.

With the previous pack included, he now had three packs on him.

"Recently, my luck has been great, one good thing after another."

He thought to himself, putting the two packs of cigarettes into his pocket, and smiled obsequiously, "Before I say anything, I hope you brothers can keep it a secret, don't let this information get out, and even if it does, don't say I was the one who told you."

"Don't worry, we'll keep our mouths shut," Li Yan smiled.

"Alright, then I'll say it."

The man took a deep breath and said, "Just recently, a great battle happened in Anshan City. At that time, we all felt the commotion of the battle, but didn't think much of it.

Later, we found out that there was trouble at the City Lord's Mansion. Including the City Lord, several C-level Awakened were killed!"

He emphasized his tone at the end.

"Such a thing happened?"

Li Yan cooperated well, showing a shocked look.

"Yes! When I heard the news, I couldn't believe it. The City Lord, what a powerful figure he was. In all of Anshan City, there wasn't anyone more powerful than him. Yet, he was killed by someone, right here in the city."

The man was stunned.

It was clear that even after all this time, he still couldn't believe it when he thought back.

"Do you know who killed them?" Li Yan's heart skipped a beat, and he asked.

He knew asking this person probably wouldn't yield any useful information.

But what if?

If he could get a clue, that would be great.

"Brother, you're overestimating me. How could I know such a thing?"

The man smiled bitterly, "I only heard that the person who killed them was a big guy with a knife. Other than that, I don't know much."

The three exchanged a glance.

It matched the information they had.

However, hoping to get the identity of the killer from an ordinary person was unreliable.

"How is this matter related to the Chairman Hua you mentioned earlier?" Zuo Hong asked coldly.

"It's definitely related, and the connection is huge," the man said loudly. Realizing his excitement, he quickly lowered his voice, "Brother, you don't know, it wasn't just the City Lord and those C-level Awakened killed by the big guy with the knife. The former chairman of Anshan City Awakened Association also reportedly died at his hands."

"Really?"

Wu Fei asked cautiously, "Was his body with the others?"

"No."

The man thought for a moment and shook his head, "Reportedly missing. But after so many days, he hasn't appeared. Isn't it obvious he's dead? Who else could have killed him?"

"..."

The three were speechless.

They had to admit, what the man said made sense. They thought the same internally.

"With such a major incident in the city, Chairman Hua invited Li Ping to be the chairman of the Awakened Association. Thus, the following events happened. Don't you think this relationship is significant?"

"To put it bluntly, it's good that the former chairman died. If he hadn't, Chairman Li wouldn't have taken office. We couldn't have moved into the city either. Of course, these words must never be passed on, or I'll be finished."

"Oh? So Li Ping came to Anshan City after the incident?" Li Yan took interest and asked, "Is he originally from Anshan City, or from elsewhere?"

"Seems like he came from elsewhere?"

The man frowned, "I'm not sure, but probably from elsewhere. I heard Chairman Li came to the association to report a task when Chairman Hua saw him and asked him to stay and take over as chairman,"

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"Three brothers, you don't know, Chairman Li's strength is incredible. Alone, he can kill several Elite-level Fierce Beasts! It's said that he's stronger than the former City Lord! That's why Chairman Hua was willing to let him take the chairman position."

Upon hearing this, Zuo Hong, who was nearby, curled his lips. Killing several Elite-level Fierce Beasts alone, is that very strong?

In front of him, even a top-level Elite-level Fierce Beast was just decoration.

Wu Fei and Li Yan exchanged glances.

Their intuition told them that Li Ping's timing to become chairman seemed a bit too coincidental. Just as something happened in Anshan City, he arrived.

Of course, if you think about it deeply, it's nothing much. Perhaps it really was such a coincidence.

"Before we came, Brother Xiang reminded us to pay special attention to everything that happens after the incident in Anshan City. This Li Ping, whether he's the culprit or not, needs to be investigated carefully." Li Yan made up his mind and smiled at the man, "Besides this, has anything else significant happened in Anshan City recently?"

"Anything else significant?"

The man frowned, pondered for a moment, then slapped his thigh and said, "There is one more thing. Two days ago, someone dragged the corpse of a Fierce Beast here. It's said to be a Commander-level Fierce Beast!"

"What? A Commander-level Fierce Beast!"

Upon hearing this, the three were all shocked.

"Are you sure you didn't see it wrong?"

"No mistake."

The man shook his head like a drum, "Although it was already late, I clearly saw that the beast was taller than the city wall. It was definitely a Commander-level Fierce Beast. And not only me, almost everyone in the city saw it!"

"Do you know the name of that beast?"

"Yes, the Furious Barbaric Bull King," the man said quickly.

"The Furious Barbaric Bull King, indeed a Commander-level Fierce Beast," Wu Fei nodded.

"Brother Yan!"

Zuo Hong's tone was a bit excited.

Searching high and low only to find it by chance.

The person who can kill a Commander-level Fierce Beast must be very powerful. With careful planning, it wouldn't be hard to kill two B-level Awakened.

So, this person is very likely the killer of Zou Xuan and the others.

Li Yan took a deep breath. The more critical the moment, the more he needed to stay calm.

"Do you know where the person who killed the Furious Barbaric Bull King is now?"

"This..."

The man showed a somewhat embarrassed smile.

Wu Fei instantly understood, quickly pulled out three packs of cigarettes from his pocket.

"Brother, you're so polite."

The man smiled like a blooming flower.

Despite his words, he quickly took the three packs from Wu Fei's hands.

"I know, that person is from the Martial Arts Association. I don't know where he went now, but if you go to the Martial Arts Association, you should be able to find his whereabouts."

"The Martial Arts Association?"

Li Yan and the other two exchanged glances.

How did this matter get involved with the Martial Arts Association?

Could the killer be a Martial Artist?

"Another suspect."

There has been a lot happening in Anshan City recently.

Li Yan grumbled inwardly and asked again, "Besides these two things, any other important events?"

"Any other important events?"

The man scratched his head.

"Apart from these two things, I don't remember any other significant events."

"Are you sure?"

Wu Fei smiled meaningfully and said, "Why don't you think about it more carefully? Maybe there's something important that you missed. Take your time, we're not in a hurry."

"Okay, let me think carefully, important events, important events."

He paced back and forth.

After two or three minutes, he stopped, smiled bitterly, and said, "Brothers, I really can't think of anything besides those two things. There should be nothing else."

"Are you sure?"

"?"

The man was startled, felt a bit strange, but not thinking too much, nodded and said, "Sure, if there was something, how could I hide it from you, right?"

"That's true."

Wu Fei said, then looked at Li Yan along with Zuo Hong.

"Of course."

The man smiled flatteringly, "You three brothers are the most generous people I've met over these years. Do you have any other questions? If I know, I'll definitely tell you. Of course, you understand."

He blinked quickly.

To him, the three in front of him were like a gold mine.

In less than ten minutes, he had gotten six packs of cigarettes from them.

Six packs, not bad, but not enough. If it could be rounded up to ten packs, wouldn't that be great? Or even better, a dozen packs?

"We don't have any other questions for you," Li Yan smiled.

"Really? That's..."

The man showed a disappointed look.

"Alright, I'll take my leave. If you have more questions, you can come find me. I live..."

The voice suddenly disappeared.

Oddly, his mouth and tongue were still moving.

At this moment, he also realized something was wrong and stopped talking, panting for fresh air like a fish out of water.

His increasingly twisted face showed that it was not working.

His body was collapsing inward, blood gushing from his nose and mouth, as if something was squeezing him from all sides.

"Help! Help!"

The man shouted these words, though there was no sound, one could read his lips.

Unfortunately, the three in front of him watched coldly, some even smiled, seeming to enjoy the scene.

The man struggled to breathe, clutched his throat, and after a few seconds, collapsed to the ground, his body contorted beyond recognition.

"You should have given him a quick death."

Li Yan glanced at Zuo Hong.

"Hmph."

Zuo Hong snorted, kicked the corpse on the ground and said, "If he hadn't been so greedy, I might have given him a quick death, but since he tried to be clever, he had to taste pain and despair."

His ability was to extract air, creating a vacuum where the target was.

Similar to Gravity Superpower, he carried alloy shells and could use a vacuum cannon, much more powerful than missile attacks.

He could also extract the oxygen around a target, suffocating them to death.

Of course, this move was ineffective against strong opponents or powerful beasts, as no one would stay in an oxygen-free environment.

"Brother Li, the Martial Artist who killed the Commander-level Fierce Beast is likely the killer," Wu Fei said.

"Hmm."

Li Yan nodded, "Low-realm Martial Artists are not to be feared, but those strong enough to kill a Commander-level Fierce Beast alone are formidable. High Spiritual Power is also possible."

"Brother Li, shall we go find him now?" Zuo Hong was impatient.

Unexpectedly finding the killer's trail so quickly, capturing him would make Brother Xiang happy.

"No rush."

Li Yan shook his head, "Remember, our main task is to understand the recent events in Anshan City, identify the killer. Even if we do, we should report to Brother Xiang first and follow his instructions. Otherwise, any mistakes could make capturing the person difficult."

"True."

Wu Fei and Zuo Hong nodded.

Better to be safe and strike once accurately.

"Brother Li, shall we now inquire about the Martial Artist from the Martial Arts Association?"

"Yes, and also that Awakened Association's Li Ping."

"Huh?"

Zuo Hong was puzzled, "Brother Li, why investigate him? He's only able to kill Elite-level Fierce Beasts. How could he be Zou Xuan's match?"

"Not necessarily." Li Yan coolly said, "What if he's hiding his strength? It's best to investigate all suspects. No harm in being thorough."

"Understood."

Chapter 373: Much Safer Than Outside

Juque City.

Even Chen Fan couldn't help but marvel at the grandeur of this giant city.

Just the four directions, east, south, west, and north, each had camps equivalent to eight mid-sized cities.

Strangely, these camps had no walls for protection, much like the cities from his previous life.

"This seems a bit different from what Gu Ze described."

Chen Fan thought to himself.

These settlements had no walls. Were they not worried about Fierce Beasts attacking at night?

After all, in Anshan City, even he didn't dare to loiter outside at night, but here...

"Perhaps, there really are no Fierce Beasts active at night here?"

A flash of insight crossed Chen Fan's mind.

Walking all the way from Anshan City, initially, he would occasionally encounter one or two elite-level Fierce Beasts. Gradually he only saw high-level Fierce Beasts, and then, not even mid or low-level Fierce Beasts.

Nearer this place, he didn't see a single shadow of a Fierce Beast.

Considering these camps had no walls, if there were nighttime attacks by Fierce Beasts, these people wouldn't survive.

"It truly is a large city."

He sighed inwardly, continuing to observe. The roads crisscrossed with houses densely packed, people bustling and moving continuously.

The most eye-catching aspect was a road twenty to thirty meters wide in each direction, stretching for dozens of miles, finally converging in front of a colossal structure, which was Juque City.

The city had walls towering over 300 meters high, reaching into the clouds. Compared to this structure, the eight surrounding camps were insignificant.

The city walls extended for several hundred kilometers, connecting at the ends to form a square. The walls seemed to be made of some kind of metal, not particularly dazzling in the sunlight but exuding a dark sheen, like a slumbering steel behemoth.

The walls had countless window-like structures, about two meters in size, all tightly shut.

"Could those be the muzzles of cannons?"

Chen Fan muttered to himself.

He could imagine the scene if a Beast Tide erupted, with countless dark cannons protruding from the walls, aiming around and firing simultaneously.

On the walls, one could vaguely see some cannons, even traces of fighter jets.

And this might be just the tip of the iceberg of this city's defense forces.

Chen Fan took a deep breath, slowed his pace, and walked forward. Having finally arrived at a large city, he wanted to see what it was like.

As he walked, he felt a sense of déjà vu.

On the streets, there were streams of traffic, traffic lights, zebra crossings, pedestrians waiting by the roadside, killing time by looking at their phones.

At bus stops on both sides, many people dressed like office workers, carrying briefcases, either sitting or standing there.

There were also students, about sixteen or seventeen years old, wearing school uniforms and discussing in low voices.

"Only two months until the entrance exams, and I'm still not prepared. I really don't know if I can get into Martial Artist High School."

"Sun Hao, stop being modest. You're definitely set for the academic part. As long as your Martial Arts Realm reaches Body Tempering Second Layer, you'll get in, right? You've already reached it, so what's there to worry about?"

"Exactly, overdoing modesty is pride."

"Really?" Sun Hao smiled bitterly, "Though the admission requirement is Body Tempering Second Layer, it doesn't mean everyone who reaches it will get in. It's competitive, you know many in our grade have reached Body Tempering Third Layer, and a few have even hit the Muscle Refining Realm!"

"You're talking about Wang Shi, right? That guy's a genius, younger than us by a year but already at the Mid Stage of Muscle Refining. I heard Martial Artist High School has already pre-accepted him. No matter his academic scores, he'll definitely be admitted."

"Class 13 also has someone who reached the Muscle Refining Realm, though not as crazy as Wang Shi, it's at the Early Stage of Muscle Refining."

"Class 6 has one too."

"It's really frustrating comparing oneself to others. They've entered Muscle Refining, whereas we're still at Body Tempering First Layer, not even at the threshold for Martial Artist High School. Guess we'll have to go to regular high school, then either farm or work in a factory after graduating."

"Sigh, working in a factory wouldn't be too bad, at least there's no life risk, and you get a salary. After decades, maybe we can't afford a house in Jue City, but buying a small place here is possible. Life here, bitter as it is, is a luxury compared to other cities where mere survival is a struggle."

"Is it really that bad?"

"What did you think? Look at our city, there are almost no Fierce Beasts, buses run even at night. Even if there are any, they'd be swiftly dealt with by the city's Awakeners or Martial Artists. Over the years, how many Fierce Beasts have you seen outside of screens?"

"That's true."

"Exactly, and deeper in, there are three super-large cities guarded by the Thunder Emperor, forming a triangle zone even safer. Still, our area's pretty good, just surviving here is better.

"But becoming a Martial Artist would be even better." This sparked unanimous agreement.

"Yes, if we could get into Martial Artist High School, not only would tuition be waived, but we'd get stipends too. Our parents wouldn't have to work so hard to pay the rent."

"Right, and we could eat better, even buy elixirs. I heard Wang Shi reached the Muscle Refining Realm so quickly because he took Qi Blood Pills since childhood."

"If strong enough, we could hunt outside. An uncle of mine said one hunt could earn as much as a commoner's annual salary! If you catch a big one, it could exceed a lifetime's earnings of a common job."

"True, but it's dangerous out there, even Awakeners from the city might not return."

"Indeed."

The atmosphere fell silent.

Chen Fan showed a look of realization.

His guess was right; there were no Fierce Beasts here.

If outsiders could come to a large city, even not here, any place would be safer than the outside.

However, from Anshan City to here was over 2000 kilometers, even the closest large city, Jiangnan City, was over a thousand kilometers away. Ordinary Martial Artists couldn't manage that.

Moreover, the outlying forts and small cities acted as buffers, keeping stray Fierce Beasts at bay.

If everyone fell back, these large cities would become the frontline against Fierce Beasts.

Chen Fan sighed.

The apocalypse was especially harsh for ordinary people. It's better to live in peace than turmoil, so true.

Besides, he learned something from these students' discussions.

Martial education in big cities seemed very developed, with Martial Artist High Schools, and students eagerly aspiring to become Martial Artists.

After all, Awakeners are born with their abilities; you either have it or not. Martial Artists can be cultivated later, offering a chance for commoners to rise.

Yet, this path required talent and resources, making it difficult.

Chen Fan shook his head, walking on.

A road of dozens of miles may be daunting for most, but for him, it was a few steps.

The 300-meter-tall city wall was oppressive.

At the bottom, nearly twenty entrances resembled train station platforms.

Entry required purchasing tickets, except for Awakeners and Martial Artists.

When someone verified their Awakener or Martial Artist status, they earned admiring looks from the crowd.

When it was Chen Fan's turn, he showed his Awakened Association ID.

Unsurprisingly, he received everyone's respect again.

Chen Fan chuckled and put his ID away, entering the city.

The instant he entered, a familiar feeling washed over him.

Tall modern buildings rose up, with light rail and overpasses complete. Further was residential areas, villa complexes, parks, all resembling a first-tier city.

Chen Fan watched for a while before exhaling slowly.

If he wasn't clear-headed, he might have thought he hadn't traveled at all.

Truly a large city.

Compared to Anshan City, Chen Family Fortress was nothing.

Anshan City, compared to Juque City, was also insignificant.

For a moment, he was greatly tempted.

"I wonder what a super-large city would be like."

The thought crossed his mind.

There, in Yan Country, was the safest and most powerful place.

"But now isn't the time to think about that; I need to deal with my task first."

Chen Fan shook off his thoughts, walked a few steps, then realized he didn't know the way. He took out his phone and searched for the Awakened Association.

Surprisingly, there were several branches in the city due to its vast size.

"I'll go to the closest one."

It was about thirty kilometers away.

In no time, he stood before the Awakened Association base, where people shouted for elite team members, needing a control-type Awakener or a healer.

Seeing Chen Fan, someone approached, asking his level and interest in joining a team.

Chen Fan declined, walking forward alone.

Chapter 374: This One Please

Seeing Chen Fan walk in, a fair-skinned and beautiful woman immediately came over with an enthusiastic smile on her face.

"Honorable Awakener, hello, is there anything I can help you with?"

Chen Fan glanced at her and nodded, "I want to sell some Fierce Beast materials."

"Okay, please follow me."

The woman led Chen Fan into a spacious private room, "Sir, please wait a moment, someone will be with you shortly."

"Alright."

Chen Fan surveyed the surroundings, thinking that the confidentiality here was quite good.

The woman pushed the door open and left.

After a while, a middle-aged man who looked to be in his thirties or forties, opened the door and came in.

He glanced at Chen Fan, having no impression of him, so he asked, "Are you the one selling Fierce Beast materials? What level of Fierce Beast materials?"

"Commander-level Fierce Beast materials."

Chen Fan replied, sensing that the man in front of him had a strong aura, at least at the level of a B-level Awakener.

"Commander-level Fierce Beasts?"

A hint of surprise flashed in the man's eyes.

Most people selling Commander-level Fierce Beast materials are small teams of several people. Single individuals are rare, and usually quite powerful B-level Awakeners.

He carefully sized up Chen Fan and, compared to before, his tone became much gentler. "What kind of Commander-level Fierce Beasts?"

"One Frenzied Bull, three Strong Demon Apes, one of which is High-level Commander-level."

Chen Fan stated honestly.

"Four, four Commander-level Fierce Beasts?"

The man's eyes widened as he subconsciously asked, "Did you hunt these four Commander-level Fierce Beasts alone?"

Chen Fan shook his head, "No, it was our team that killed them. I'm just responsible for selling them."

"I see."

The man nodded.

There are many Awakeners in Juque City, and quite a few B-level Awakeners, but someone who could single-handedly kill four Commander-level Fierce Beasts is rare and he wouldn't have forgotten them.

Unless, the person standing in front of him was an Awakener from another city.

However, what Chen Fan said next made him stop thinking about it and nod instead. "Show me the materials. Once I verify them, the association will transfer the points to your account."

Chen Fan nodded and, with a thought, placed the materials of the four Commander-level Fierce Beasts on the ground.

Upon seeing the pair of horns, the man's eyes lit up and he nodded, "These are indeed the horns of a Frenzied Bull King."

His gaze swept over the other materials. As he looked, he nodded in satisfaction, "These are indeed materials from Strong Demon Apes. The one on the far right is larger than the other two; it's from a High-level Commander-level Fierce Beast. Moreover, whether it's the materials from the Frenzied Bull King or the three Strong Demon Apes, they're all well-preserved. How did you manage this?"

Chen Fan smiled without speaking.

"Pardon my rudeness, I'm sorry."

The man snapped out of it, smiling awkwardly, "The usual purchase price for a Frenzied Bull King is ten thousand points. But since this one is well preserved, the association can add two thousand more points, making it twelve thousand points."

His gaze then fell on the materials of the three Strong Demon Apes.

"The two regular Commander-level Strong Demon Apes are priced higher, each worth fifteen thousand points. Lastly, the High-level Commander Strong Demon Ape can fetch thirty-five thousand points. So, in total, that's seventy-seven thousand points. Is that acceptable?"

"Yes."

Chen Fan nodded.

It was actually higher than he expected.

"Great, if you have no objections, please give me your account details. I will have the points transferred shortly."

"Alright, I also have some Elite-level Fierce Beast materials."

Chen Fan said.

"You have some Elite-level Fierce Beast materials as well?"

The man was momentarily stunned, then smiled, "No problem, just like the Commander-level materials, we accept Elite-level Fierce Beast materials too. How many do you have, and what kind of Elite-level Fierce Beasts?"

"Frenzied Bulls, around thirty to forty of them."

"Frenzied Bulls, eh?"

The man's face immediately showed a look of understanding.

When he saw the Frenzied Bull King, he had been a bit puzzled.

Frenzied Bulls are typically gregarious beasts. Where there's a Frenzied Bull King, there will surely be a herd of Frenzied Bulls.

"Alright, just show them to me like before."

He flashed a smile.

Quickly, around forty Frenzied Bull materials were laid out on the ground, nearly filling the entire room.

"These Frenzied Bull materials are also very well-preserved, almost like they were taken from a live Frenzied Bull. How did they accomplish that?"

The more he looked, the more astonished he became.

A minute or two later, he retrieved his gaze from the last Frenzied Bull material, nodded, and said, "There are forty-two Frenzied Bulls in total. See if that's correct."

"It's forty-two."

Chen Fan nodded.

"Great, these Frenzied Bull materials are well-preserved. Like the materials from the Frenzied Bull King, the association can offer a premium price.

Originally, the association's purchase price for a Frenzied Bull was around three thousand points. Given the condition of these materials, we can offer three thousand five hundred points each. For forty-two heads, that's one hundred forty-seven thousand points. Adding the previous seventy-seven thousand points makes a total of two hundred twenty-four thousand points. Is that acceptable for you?"

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"Two hundred and twenty-four thousand points."

Chen Fan thought to himself, this was nearly fifty percent more than the hundred and fifty thousand he had initially estimated.

Most of these points came from Elite-level Fierce Beasts.

Although each one provided fewer points, the sheer number compensated for that.

Another factor was the quality.

Don't underestimate this; a Frenzied Bull could fetch five hundred extra points, and forty-two of them would be twenty-one thousand points more.

That's almost the equivalent of two Commander-level Fierce Beasts.

"Alright."

Chen Fan nodded in agreement, took out his phone, and showed his account to the other party.

"So it's Brother Li."

The man glanced at Chen Fan's name and introduced himself, "My surname is Han, and my given name is Xu."

Chen Fan nodded.

He didn't care what the other person's name was.

Han Xu smiled and didn't mind.

Very soon, over two hundred thousand points were credited to his account.

"Brother Li, please verify it. If there are any issues, we can resolve them on the spot. Once you leave the Association, it will be hard to address them."

"No problem."

Chen Fan shook his head, put his phone away, and said, "Our transaction is done. If there's nothing else, I'll be taking my leave."

"Alright, let me escort you."

Han Xu smiled, "If your team has similar hauls in the future, we will take however many you have."

"Fine, but no need to see me out. I can leave on my own." Chen Fan declined his offer, pushed the door open, and walked out.

"Click!"

The door closed behind him with a crisp sound.

Han Xu stood in place, watching Chen Fan leave, and muttered to himself, "What a slightly aloof guy."

After speaking, he shook his head.

After leaving the Awakened Association, confirming that no one was following him, Chen Fan let out a small sigh of relief.

He had specifically chosen a large city far from Anshan City, and it seemed to have shown some effect.

Of course, if someone were determined enough to investigate his identity, they could still find out, but by that point, it wouldn't matter.

Firstly, most of the Cultivation Techniques from the Awakened Association were already in his possession. The remaining ones could be obtained from other places, such as ancient ruins.

Once his strength grew further, and he learned the Emperor's Qi Observation Skill, he would certainly explore them.

Secondly, if someone came knocking one day, he could simply deny everything.

After all, eighty to ninety percent of the land in Yan Country was controlled by Fierce Beasts. With so many Commander-level Fierce Beasts like the Barbaric Bull King and Strong Demon Ape around, it would be reasonable to obtain them from elsewhere.

After exiting the Awakened Association, Chen Fan decided to take a stroll around the city. After all, it was a rare visit and he didn't know when he might come again.

Walking down the bustling streets, he passed by countless people and many shopping malls, the atmosphere lively and vibrant.

"It's exactly like ten years ago."

Chen Fan couldn't help but sigh.

"Oh, what's that?"

His eyes were drawn to a majestic building a few hundred meters away, which had a sign reading, "Zijin Garden Sales Office."

"Sales Office..."

Chen Fan couldn't help but smile wryly.

Some things remain the same no matter when - ten years ago or ten years later. The prices seemed even higher now.

He shook his head and walked a few more steps before suddenly stopping.

Maybe buying a place wouldn't be a bad idea?

You always need a backup plan.

If the Beast Tide struck and Anshan City fell, having a property here could be an alternative.

This was a large city, after all, incomparable to small and medium-sized cities.

If the Beast Tide really did happen, buying a place here would be impossible then. It might even be impossible to get in.

Having a house here would be different.

"Consider it a contingency plan."

Chen Fan made up his mind and walked towards the sales office.

The lobby was spacious and filled with people, either looking at property models or talking to sales representatives.

Everyone was dressed impeccably, a stark contrast to those outside.

It made sense; one would have to be a very capable Awakener or Martial Artist to confidently walk in here.

Seeing Chen Fan enter, a woman with a beaming smile approached, bowed slightly, and softly asked, "Sir, is there anything I can help you with?"

"Tell me about the properties here," Chen Fan said.

"Of course!" The woman's eyes lit up. Her years of experience told her that this was someone who was not short on money. Perhaps she could close a deal soon.

"Sir, our properties are divided into three types. One is the high-end residential area, generally twenty stories high with elevators, wide views, and high-quality residents."

"Oh? How much is the price per square meter?"

"One hundred twenty thousand per square meter. As for the layouts, we have apartments ranging from sixty square meters for small units to one twenty for large ones, and more can be discussed according to your needs," the woman said with a smile.

"One hundred twenty thousand per square meter."

Chen Fan calculated.

Even a small unit would cost seven million two hundred thousand. A large unit would easily exceed ten million.

"Is there any shared space?"

Chen Fan suddenly thought of this and casually asked.

"Shared space?"

The woman giggled, "Sir, you're quite humorous. How could we, at Zijin Garden, have something like shared space? Business requires integrity, doesn't it?"

"Indeed."

Chen Fan nodded.

A total of twelve million points was only 1,200 points. For someone with over 200,000 points, it was a drop in the bucket.

"Besides the high-end residential area, what other types of properties do you have? What's the price?"

The woman was too excited to contain herself.

Every property sold earned her a three-thousandth commission.

Selling a twelve-million-point property would earn her thirty-six thousand in commission! In Juque City, that made her high-income.

Most office or manual workers would be lucky to make over ten thousand a month.

Of course, Martial Artists or Awakeners could earn much more. As a security guard here, the minimum requirement was an Entry Force Martial Artist, who would earn at least twenty thousand a month!

For those in the Meridian Refining Realm, working in high-end residential areas or villa communities, earning tens of thousands was not uncommon.

"Yes, we do."

She quickly answered, "We also have low-end residential areas and villas."

"Tell me about the villas."

Chen Fan said directly.

Before crossing over, his dream was to buy a villa—single-family homes offered peace and quiet.

While low-end residential areas may have fewer residents, they were still numerous.

Upon hearing this, the surrounding people whispered and cast complex glances at him.

There were looks of shock, envy, and admiration.

"Of course, sir."

The woman became slightly flustered in her speech.

Even the least expensive house in the low-end residential area cost more than a high-end residential large unit, at least twenty to thirty million.

Villa prices started at one billion!

Tens of billions for some!

Higher prices were not unheard of, but most couldn't afford them.

Even at one billion, her commission would be thirty million! Enough for a down payment on her own place.

"Sir, please come with me."

She led Chen Fan to another property model, pointing to the first few rows of villas, "These are small villas, complete with gardens, pools, garages, etc., totaling three hundred square meters at thirty-five thousand per square meter, priced at one and a half billion."

"Behind them are mid-size villas, with even more amenities, covering five hundred square meters at..."

"No need to introduce further."

Chen Fan shook his head and pointed to one of the front-row small villas, "I'll take this one."

Chapter 376: He is the murderer!

Outside Anshan City, in a secluded small house, two or three people were gathered together. Beside them, there were also two or three twisted corpses, their faces contorted in extreme pain, clearly having suffered inhuman torture before death.

"These ants dared to resist?" Zuo Hong sneered, his eyes filled with disdain.

The few corpses on the ground were all his handiwork.

There were Martial Artists and Awakeners.

The original plan was to give them a painless death after interrogation. Who knew they would be so uncooperative, either not speaking or attempting to escape, forcing him to make them suffer.

Wu Fei shook his head off to the side, saying nothing, and then looked at Li Yan, "Brother Li, based on what these people described, I feel that the guy named Li Ping seems to be more suspicious?"

"That's right."

Li Yan nodded.

They had interrogated a few people consecutively, gathering many details.

"Brother Li, what should we do next? Should we call the City Lord, or catch those two people first?"

Zuo Hong asked, itching for action.

The few people in front of him made his hands itch; he was eager to find a tough opponent to fight.

"Report to Brother Xiang first."

Li Yan said as he took out his phone and dialed a number.

The room instantly fell silent.

The phone was answered after only one ring.

"How's it going? Did you arrive in Anshan City?" Xiang Long asked directly.

"Yes, we've been here for a while and even conducted an investigation."

"Oh? Any findings?"

Xiang Long quickly asked.

"Yes, quite significant progress."

"Quite significant progress?"

Xiang Long asked with joy and surprise in his voice, "Tell me exactly what progress you've made."

"Alright, Brother Xiang," Li Yan organized his thoughts and said, "Since the original City Lord of Anshan City died, Anshan City has indeed undergone significant changes, all because of one person."

"Who?"

"Li Ping."

"Li Ping?"

Xiang Long's face was filled with confusion.

He had never heard of this name, but it made sense. A president of the Awakener's Association in a small city was nothing noteworthy.

But since Li Yan mentioned this person, it must not be without reason.

"The new president of the Anshan City Awakened Association."

Li Yan said gravely, "This person is highly suspicious."

"Highly suspicious? How so?"

Xiang Long quickly asked.

"According to the people from the Awakener's Association here, he isn't a local. He only became the president because the vice president persuaded him during a passing visit. This happened right after the incident in Anshan City.

Brother Xiang, think about it. He neither came earlier nor came later, but arrived right at this critical moment. Isn't that intriguing?"

"Hmm, it is intriguing."

Xiang Long frowned and questioned, "Isn't it a bit arbitrary to consider him suspicious based on this alone?"

It wasn't that he was against hurting innocent people.

He just thought it was a waste of time.

Du Hao was his good brother. Whether out of brotherly affection or to show his subordinates, he had to take the killer's life personally.

"Brother Xiang, you're right. Just looking at this alone, it doesn't make him seem very suspicious. However, after I tell you what comes next, you'll understand."

"Is that so? Alright, continue." Xiang Long nodded.

"After learning about this person, we specifically investigated his background. This guy is a C-level Awakened with a speed enhancement superpower..."

"What? C-level Awakened? Superpower is speed enhancement?"

Xiang Long's voice was filled with confusion on the other end of the phone.

A mere C-level Awakened could be the murderer of two B-level Awakened? Even if it was a sneak attack, he probably couldn't break the protective talisman they carried with them, right?

Also, his superpower was speed enhancement, yet the killer was an expert with a blade.

"Yes, Brother Xiang," Li Yan seemed to have anticipated his thoughts and said seriously, "This guy's weapon is a dagger, which he can use as both a sword and a knife."

"Are you saying he's the killer?"

Xiang Long squinted his eyes.

The suspected killer had three characteristics: proficient with knives, capable of mind control, and capable of spiritual attacks.

If someone fits any of these, they would become a suspect.

"The possibility is very high because he also fits the second condition: he has a method to directly attack the opponent's spirit."

"What!"

Hearing this, Xiang Long exclaimed.

Meeting even one characteristic would automatically put someone on his suspect list.

If two are met, they become a primary suspect, possibly even the killer!

How could there be such a coincidence in the world?

"How do you know this?" Xiang Long suppressed his excitement and asked.

"A video."

Li Yan explained, "There's a video in the association of this person fighting another Awakened. It has quite a lot of views, but since both fighters were C-level Awakened, neither we nor Brother Xiang paid attention before."

"Is that so?"

Xiang Long nodded.

That made sense.

He didn't have time to care about battles between mere C-level Awakened. He wasn't even interested in videos of ordinary B-level Awakened battles.

But battles between A-level Awakened were different. He had watched every publicly available video at least a hundred times.

As for videos of S-Class Awakened battles, those were kept secret.

Even he hadn't seen a complete one, only a few clips, which he had to pay a considerable price to view.

"The opponent had an explosive superpower. Li Ping, with his speed and considerable physical defense, couldn't break the opponent's shield with his dagger. His dagger even broke from the impact.

It looked like a stalemate. The one with the explosive superpower seemed confident, thinking Li Ping couldn't harm him and he would win once his spiritual power recovered. We thought the same watching the video earlier."

"Then, Li Ping used a spiritual attack?"

"Brother Xiang is sharp."

Li Yan complimented him, "Indeed, just when everyone thought he was doomed, he raised his right hand, pointed his finger at his opponent, and a wisp of black energy shot from his finger. The opponent died instantly."

"Soul-Annihilating Finger?"

Xiang Long exclaimed, his eyes widening.

This was a vicious martial art, capable of annihilating the opponent's soul in one move, with power depending on the user's spiritual strength.

He hadn't cultivated it because he didn't lack spiritual attack methods. His innate superpower was already the strongest attack. Cultivating Soul-Annihilating Finger would be like picking the sesame seeds and throwing away the watermelons.

Additionally, the martial art required high comprehension, making it hard to master.

And yet this Li Ping had cultivated it?

"Yes, it's the Soul-Annihilating Finger."

Li Yan meticulously said, "We repeatedly watched the video, compared it to other videos of Soul-Annihilating Finger, and confirmed it. Brother Xiang, considering the weapon he uses, this Li Ping is very suspicious?"

"You're right." Xiang Long squinted.

Li Ping was skilled with weapons, likely learning weapon martial arts, probably saber techniques. He also knew the Soul-Annihilating Finger, a spiritual attack method, matching two characteristics. There was a high probability he was the person they were looking for.

As for the third point, mind control, he might fulfill that too!

Because martial arts also had techniques similar to the Spiritual Technique for controlling minds.

This person learned saber techniques and Soul-Annihilating Finger, both martial arts. Learning another martial art for mind control might not be difficult for someone who mastered Soul-Annihilating Finger.

"It's likely him."

Xiang Long said in a low voice.

"Brother Xiang, do you think so too?" Li Yan asked.

"Otherwise?"

Xiang Long said, "This person likely fits all my described characteristics. If not him, who else? Before, you mentioned his suspicious timing. Now, it's clear he planned to take over Anshan City, and the person who persuaded him is likely his accomplice."

"I hadn't thought of that. The timing just seemed too coincidental. Listening to you, Brother Xiang, it's clear that Hua Jun must be his accomplice too."

Li Yan nodded and then changed the subject, "However, Brother Xiang, there's another person in Anshan City who is quite suspicious. He's also likely the killer."

"What, another suspect?" Xiang Long was taken aback.

He had mentally locked in Li Ping as the suspect.

"Yes, this person is mysterious, with little information available, but he definitely has the strength to kill Zou Xuan and the others."

"Tell me more."

Xiang Long felt a sudden vigilance.

"This person is a Martial Artist, likely from the Jiangnan Sub-district Martial Arts Association. Just two nights ago, he dragged a Commander-level Fierce Beast's corpse into Anshan City, causing a huge uproar. Many thought a beast attack was imminent. Even the city's Awakened rushed out, only to find it was a Commander-level Fierce Beast's corpse..."

Chapter 377: Unlock Higher-Level Permissions!

"And then?"

"And then, right in front of everyone, that martial artist called over someone from the Anshan City Martial Arts Association, used a saber to slice open the meat of the Frenzied Bull King, and then disappeared. Does anyone know where he went afterward? Is he still in Anshan City?"

"Killed the Frenzied Bull King alone? He indeed possesses the power to kill Zou Xuan and the others."

Xiang Long squinted his eyes.

Such an ordinary Commander-level Fierce Beast, he could easily kill as well.

Even high-level Commander-level Fierce Beasts, he could manage.

If it's a top-level Commander-level Fierce Beast, it would be challenging, because they have intelligence and their attack methods become complex, not only relying on claws and fangs.

Even if he happened to kill one, he would likely be severely injured, perhaps even dead.

"Yes, Brother Xiang, speaking of which, this person is highly suspicious.

Firstly, he is a martial artist, obviously studying various martial arts. He wields a saber, likely proficient in saber techniques. Secondly, his power is immense, enough to kill a Commander-level Fierce Beast alone.

Moreover, his timing of appearance is very coincidental; he had never appeared in Anshan City before it was in trouble, and then appeared right after. If he says it was unintentional, I think no one would believe him."

"Hmm."

Xiang Long nodded, "The only uncertainty is whether he practices spiritual-type martial arts. If he does, the possibility is even higher."

"Yes."

Li Yan sighed, "So after hearing these details, we are quite conflicted. Li Ping matches two out of three traits, but his power is only at C-level Awakener. Even if he broke through, it should be recent. Could he kill two B-level Awakeners who broke through long ago? It's unbelievable.

The martial artist from the Martial Arts Association meets the power criterion, but it's unknown whether he meets the spiritual one."

"There's no need to be conflicted."

Xiang Long coldly sneered, "Since both have suspicion, capture them all. The one who killed my good brother is definitely among them, one of them."

"Yes,." Li Yan nodded, thought for a moment, and quietly reminded, "Brother Xiang, Li Ping is easy to handle, but the martial artist might be more formidable."

"Formidable?"

Xiang Long sneered.

If that guy is formidable, does that mean he's not?

Killing an ordinary Commander-level Fierce Beast is no big deal to him; he could do it too if he wanted.

However, to be safe, he decided to capture everyone.

"Rest assured, besides me, others will come too. Even if that guy had three heads and six arms, he wouldn't escape."

"Brother Xiang, are you coming right now?"

Li Yan was shocked.

"Of course."

Xiang Long coldly sneered, "The longer the murderer lives, the bigger insult to me. Just wait there, and don't alert him, got it?"

He suddenly thought of this.

If they alert the suspect, even flipping the Anshan City Awakened Association and the Martial Arts Association upside down wouldn't help find him.

Although it would confirm the murderer's identity.

But it would be futile.

"How could we?"

Hearing Xiang Long's inquiries, Li Yan immediately responded, "We handled everything cleanly from start to finish, without others seeing. There's no way we alerted him."

"Good."

Xiang Long nodded in satisfaction, "Then don't act rashly. When I arrive, we'll split into two groups; you take people to the Awakened Association to find Li Ping, and I'll lead others to the Martial Arts Association to find the martial artist."

"Brother Xiang indeed is thoughtful." Li Yan smiled, "This way, no messages will leak, ensuring the true murderer doesn't escape."

"Hmph, escape? Where could he run?" Xiang Long snorted, the corner of his mouth curling up confidently.

"Alright, that's settled. We'll discuss specifics when I arrive."

"Understood, rest assured, Brother Xiang, without your orders, we won't act on our own."

"Hmm."

As soon as he hung up the phone, Zuo Hong couldn't help but ask:

"Brother Li, the City Lord is coming over now?"

Wu Fei didn't speak, but his eyes conveyed the same question.

"Yes."

Li Yan smiled slightly, put away his phone, and said, "Not only Brother Xiang, but other B-level Awakeners will come too."

"Coming together!"

Zuo Hong widened his eyes.

Is the City Lord mobilizing the whole army? Then, wouldn't Anshan City be filled with over ten B-level Awakeners? The Anshan City Awakened Association probably has never seen such a scene before.

"It seems the City Lord is truly enraged this time." Wu Fei sighed.

"A dragon's reverse scale, touch it, and you shall incur wrath."

Li Yan said lightly, "Brother Xiang owed his survival several times to Du Hao. Without Du Hao, there wouldn't be today's Jiulong City.

If the murderer only killed Zou Xuan and the others, there would still be room for negotiation. But to control Du Hao's clone and kill him changes the situation to a fight to the death."

"Yes."

Wu Fei agreed deeply.

The murderer faces the fury of the entire Jiulong City!

"Can't wait." Zuo Hong smirked, eyes filled with anticipation.

In his opinion, even without the City Lord personally intervening, the three of them present could capture the opponent alive.

But with the City Lord's order, he dared not resist.

Mere speculation made it clear what would happen once the City Lord arrives.

How would the murderer react facing inevitable death? Beg for mercy? Deny to the end? Or continue futile struggles?

...

Juque City.

Zijin Garden Villa District.

The woman introducing the house handed Chen Fan the room card, while sending flirtatious glances, "Mr. Li, all procedures are completed. From now on, you are the owner of this villa. If you need any assistance, feel free to contact me."

Though the man before her looked average, his presence was extraordinary.

The most important thing was that he used points from the Awakened Association! His power must be immeasurable.

If she could align with him, her status would rise rapidly.

"Thank you."

Chen Fan nodded.

"It's no trouble at all." The woman shook her head, shyly asking, "Mr. Li, do you need any help now?"

"No, you may go about your business."

Chen Fan's tone remained calm as always.

"Alright, then."

The woman, slightly disappointed, bowed and left.

Chen Fan frowned slightly.

He was not foolish; he understood her implied suggestion.

He refused simply because he wasn't interested, and any involvement would complicate matters unnecessarily.

After examining the villa for a moment, he stepped inside.

One part was to familiarize himself, and the other was to spend points.

Later, he would return to Anshan City for alchemy or find an abandoned city to hunt fierce beasts, collecting materials and gaining experience points.

"Should I continue hunting fierce beasts later?"

Chen Fan pondered.

After all, alchemy could be done at night.

Hunting fierce beasts is theoretically better at night due to their abundance, but the danger is evident.

As the saying goes, a gentleman does not stand beneath a dangerous wall. Hunt fierce beasts by day, refine elixirs at night, and neither is wasted.

Moreover, his skill bar unlocked two new martial arts.

The Dragon Elephant Wisdom Skill and the Vajra Indestructible Divine Skill.

Two supreme martial arts, he could imagine the required experience points would be astronomical.

As Chen Fan entered the villa, fresh elegance greeted him. The interior decor differed entirely from Anshan City's lavish villas, showing understated sophistication.

After a thorough inspection, he nodded in satisfaction.

He thought about moving his family here but reconsidered due to the unpredictability of any potential beast tide.

If he wasn't around, his family, being ordinary, might be targeted.

If Anshan City couldn't hold, he could escape with his family, but not others.

No choice; in the apocalypse, ensuring survival for oneself and family comes first.

Sitting in the living room, Chen Fan accessed the Awakened Association on his phone.

Points had risen from thousands to nearly 230,000, accumulating up to 280,000.

"Wonder what new items are available for purchase now."

His eyes showed anticipation.

He decided to check cultivation techniques first.

The choice was simple; he desired the Sun Observation Technique most.

No. 1, it was complete, unlike others, which were incomplete, unrepaired instantly even if unlocked.

No. 2, cultivating this technique would significantly boost his spiritual power, making experience required for enhancing martial arts realms less.

His finger tapped on the cultivation technique tab, sorting from high to low.

Instantaneously, he widened his eyes.

Chapter 378: Give One Chance

Underground, in a spacious hall, the flame in the corner burned silently.

In this hall, more than ten to twenty black-robed figures stood, their wide hats obscuring their faces, adding a touch of eerie silence to the already quiet atmosphere.

At that moment, from the front left, came the sound of footsteps, like leather shoes stepping on the floor.

A middle-aged man in a red robe walked slowly towards them.

He looked around thirty or forty years old, with fluffy curly hair and a smile on his face, giving a sense of warmth and kindness,

"Greetings, Lord Bishop!"

More than twenty black-clad figures uniformly kneeled on one knee, looking at the red-robed man with eyes full of respect.

"With Lord Black Demon above."

The red-robed man showed an expression of devotion, touching his fingers to his body a few times and looking diagonally upwards.

Then he slowly lowered his head and his smile became even more gentle, "Stand up, everyone."

The black-clad figures then stood up from the ground.

"Lord Bishop, do you have an announcement for us?"

The leading black-robed figure asked respectfully.

The red-robed man nodded, his eyes sweeping over the crowd, "There are two matters, let's start with the first."

He clapped his hands.

In the next moment, a person nailed to a wooden frame was pushed out by two black-robed figures from a small door.

Instantly, a bloody smell permeated the hall.

The person bound to the wooden frame had no good flesh on his body, barely breathing, clearly tortured and could die at any moment.

The eyes of the black-robed figures showed pity.

Not that they haven't seen worse scenes, but because they recognized the tortured person.

Or, put differently, a few days ago, he was one of them.

"You all know him, right?"

The red-robed man asked smiling.

"Yes."

"Yes."

The crowd responded quickly.

The bound man seemed to be awakened by the commotion, struggling to open his eyes slightly, looking at everything around him.

The hall became quiet at that moment.

"L-Lord Bishop."

The man seemed to awaken fully, his eyes pleading, his voice weak, "Lord Bishop, please, give me another chance."

"Another chance?"

The red-robed man smirked.

"Yes, y-yes," the man stammered, "Last time was an accident, Lord Bishop, give me another chance, I will double the lost Sacred Artifact back, please, Lord Bishop."

If Chen Fan were here, he would recognize that the person in front of him, despite being unrecognizable, was the pawn he arranged to infiltrate the Evil Cult.

His purpose was to use this pawn to acquire information on other cult teams; to eliminate them and destroy their Black Balls for substantial Experience Points.

But from this scene, it seemed his goal had not been achieved.

"Do you think I should give him another chance?" The red-robed man asked the crowd.

The crowd glanced at each other, unsure of his stance, and remained silent.

Then the initially speaking man straightened his chest and said, "Lord Bishop, I think not."

"Oh? Why?" The red-robed man asked with a smile.

"Lord Bishop, Peng Song was ineffective, not only losing the Sacred Artifact but also causing the team members' deaths. If we let him go now, what happens next time if someone else fails? Should we let them go too?"

"Fang Liang, you, you..."

Peng Song glared at the man speaking, eyes full of deep hatred.

"Lord Bishop, I believe Peng Song should not be spared." Another black-robed figure spoke, revealing it was a woman.

Fang Liang frowned, appearing dissatisfied.

The woman's face was cold, "Peng Song lost the Sacred Artifact yet he dares to return. And with all team members dead, he's the only survivor. Is it possible he abandoned the Sacred Artifact and his teammates to save his own life?"

"You, you, slander!"

Peng Song's eyes filled with blood-red fury.

He remembered clearly that his teammates sacrificed their lives to buy him time to escape safely.

It was not out of cowardice or fear!

"Slander?" The woman sneered, "Even if I am, you failed your mission, should you not self-penalize? If it were me, losing the Sacred Artifact means I wouldn't return, I would perish with the enemy."

The red-robed man showed a hint of approval.

Fang Liang looked at the woman, clenching his fists tightly.

That sycophant, absolutely shameless!

The red-robed man's gaze crossed to the others, "Does anyone have anything else to say?"

People glanced at each other.

Among them were those with good relations with Peng Song, showing pity for the torment he suffered, now realizing Fang Liang's words condemned Peng Song to death.

Realizing they shared the same mission.

Today, Peng Song is tortured to death for losing the Sacred Artifact.

Tomorrow, they might be next.

Wouldn't Peng Song's fate be their cautionary tale?

So, supporting Peng Song meant supporting themselves.

"Lord Bishop,"

A black-robed figure spoke, "Peng Song dedicated himself to the cult for years, despite no merit, he has labor. Though he deserves death for losing the Sacred Artifact, Lord Bishop, would you give him a chance to redeem himself for his years of hard work and punishment?"

"Yes, Lord Bishop," others followed, "If Peng Song fails again, he won't need your intervention, he will self-penalize."

"Lord Bishop, give him a chance."

Hearing many pleas, Peng Song relaxed somewhat.

With so many advocating for him, he likely would escape punishment today.

Had he known this would happen upon return, he'd flee elsewhere, enduring pursuit over this inhuman torture.

But it's too late now.

He glanced at Fang Liang and the woman.

When the opportunity arose, he'd make them pay for today's words!!!

"Oh?"

The red-robed man smirked, "So many plead for him."

Silence fell in the hall.

Those who spoke shut their mouths quickly out of fear.

"Should I praise your camaraderie or your cleverness?"

Walking slowly, his smile vanished.

"You plead for him, actually thinking if you fail one day, you might have a way out, right?"

Everyone bowed their heads quickly.

Peng Song's anxiety grew stronger.

What did this mean?

Didn't the Bishop intend to spare him?

"Remember your circumstances before joining? Starving, homeless, risking being killed or eaten, or dying to beasts,

Now? None of you worry about food, with Awakener-level power, thanks to Lord Black Demon, thanks to the sect.

Joining, you swore to give all, even your life for the sect.

Now, after enjoying power, have you become cowardly, unwilling to sacrifice for Lord Black Demon?"

"Bang!"

Everyone knelt, shaking their heads and denying fervently.

Especially those who pleaded for Peng Song cried sorrowfully.

The red-robed man regained his smile, "Alright, stand up, I know your loyalty to Lord Black Demon and willingness to sacrifice for the sect. Your pleas showed brotherhood, however,"

He turned to Fang Liang and the woman, "Fang Liang was right, if I spare Peng Song now, what happens next time someone fails?

Should I spare them too? If every failure gets a chance, no one would care about the mission, isn't that right?"

"The Lord Bishop is right," kneeling, Fang Liang looked up, "Without rules, the world collapses, Peng Song failed and must die."

"Indeed, Peng Song brought this on himself."

"Failing and still daring to return, where's his courage from?"

"Kill him!"

"Kill him!"

"Kill him!"

Soon, all voices echoed with these three words.

Peng Song's face turned pale, not expecting his chance of escape vanished so fast.

"L-Lord Bishop."

Crying, he begged, "Please, give me another chance, I won't disappoint you."

"It's not me denying you, it's they who deny you."

The red-robed man sighed, producing a Black Ball twice the size of the previous.

Suddenly, red and black energy flew from Peng Song into the Black Ball.

His body shriveled, aged, turning to a pile of clothes in seconds.

Just like those he'd sacrificed before.

The crowd watched this with cold, fearful eyes.

Withdrawing the Black Ball, the red-robed man looked at the kneeling crowd, satisfied.

"Now, the second matter is about Anshan City, very important, listen well, for it's a rare opportunity for both me and you."

Chapter 379: What, is there no one willing to go?

"About Anshan City?"

Everyone looked at each other.

The Lord Bishop, could he be planning to make a move on Anshan City?

Thinking of this, an unconscious shiver ran through their hearts.

They knew that this city was a small one nearby, with a population of around a hundred thousand, a tempting number to them.

The key issue was that a small city would have several C-level Awakened guarding it, and B-level Awakened even more so.

The majority of them could not match the combat power of a C-level Awakened.

Therefore, choosing a village of two to three hundred people was the safest option. Even if there were some Martial Artists inside, they wouldn't be a threat. If no other targets were found, they could join forces with other bishops to attack a village of one to two thousand people.

A city of a hundred thousand people?

They all knew better than to target such a place. How could the Lord Bishop even consider it?

"Everyone, calm down and hear me out."

The man in the red robe said calmly, "Of course, I know that targeting a small city is very difficult and highly risky. If we fail, even I will be in danger, but this Anshan City is different from other cities."

"Different?"

"That's right. Let me ask you, can you find a way to stay overnight in a city?"

"This...?"

They all looked at each other in dismay.

"Lord Bishop, if it's a village of around a thousand people, we can spend some money and time to settle in, but a typical small city is very difficult."

"Exactly, only Awakened or Entry Force Martial Artists can stay inside. Our power comes from Lord Celestial Demon's blessing, so we can't pass their assessments. Even if we could, we wouldn't get the chance..."

"If it's neither, then even if we have money, getting in within a year or two is unrealistic."

Everyone voiced their concerns with furrowed brows.

The man in the red robe nodded in satisfaction and smiled, "What if I told you Anshan City allows people to settle in freely?"

"What!"

The room fell silent momentarily before erupting in noisy discussions.

"Anshan City lets people move in freely? That's impossible, right?"

"Yeah, even larger villages don't allow free settlement, let alone a city."

"But the Lord Bishop said it himself. Would he lie to us?"

"Exactly, since the Lord Bishop said so, it means Anshan City really is like that now."

"But how is this possible?"

"Nothing is impossible."

The man in the red robe spoke calmly, "I received word that two days ago, people living outside the city moved in without having to pay any price to do so.

Not only that, even those living in nearby small villages were taken in by Anshan City's Awakened."

This news shocked everyone even more.

What on earth is going on in Anshan City?

Are they that short on people?

Shouldn't they need powerful Awakened or Martial Artists instead of bringing so many ordinary people into the city?

Isn't this making it harder for them?

"You don't need to doubt the authenticity of this information. I'm telling you this mainly to ask if any of you are willing to volunteer to infiltrate Anshan City and investigate the situation for us."

Upon hearing this, the entire hall fell silent.

The previously chatty crowd now seemed like they had their mouths sewn shut, lowering their heads, not daring to make a sound.

That's Anshan City!

These people usually only dared to target small villages, but going to Anshan City, once exposed, they might die on the spot. Even the Lord Bishop himself wouldn't dare to easily set foot in such a place.

Not to mention, even if they escaped, the fate of Peng Song was right before their eyes; how much better could their outcome be?

"What, no one is willing to go?"

The man in the red robe frowned in displeasure.

He needed to gather a total of a hundred thousand people, and with less than a month remaining, they were still short by over thirty thousand.

At the current rate, the task would surely not be completed on time.

If he failed, his fate would be no better than that of the recently deceased Peng Song. Even if he survived, he would be stripped of his bishop position and demoted to the lowest level of follower, subjected to others' whims, which he absolutely could not accept.

But if he succeeded...

He would receive special attention from above, his power would soar, and his status within the church would rise. He might even advance from a bishop to an archbishop.

"I understand your concerns." He scanned the crowd, speaking softly, "I'm not sending you to your deaths. Think about it, although we can't undertake large efforts, small ones are easily manageable.

I just said that Anshan City has now lifted its restrictions. Anyone can obtain permanent residency there. The city will be filled with strangers from various places, all unfamiliar with each other.

If you enter now and target small groups first, as long as you are discreet, no one will know. Those people could be there one day and gone the next."

Hearing this, many heads began to lift.

"What if someone notices the disappearances?"

The man in the red robe continued, "There are already about fourteen or fifteen thousand new residents. How long would an investigation take? Even if the C-level Awakened themselves came, they wouldn't know where to start, right?"

Think about it. You go to villages of one or two hundred people, put in a lot of effort, and only manage to sacrifice a few hundred. At Anshan City, people are everywhere, and you can easily achieve that number in one night."

These words truly tempted most of them.

Indeed, they risked encounters with Fierce Beasts to find offerings. Sometimes, a village they'd found after much effort turned out to be empty, wasting their time and energy.

But the Bishop's words opened new possibilities for them.

Since anyone could settle in Anshan City, so could they, right?

Offering dozens to hundreds of sacrifices in one night would be effortless. Being a bit bolder, hundreds wouldn't be impossible.

By being cautious during the day and blending in with the ordinary people, how could they be exposed?

Isn't this much better than relying on luck outside?

"Lord Bishop, I am willing to lead people to Anshan City," Fang Liang gritted his teeth and stood up first.

"Lord Bishop, I too am willing to lead a team immediately!"

The woman who spoke earlier stood up as well.

"Lord Bishop, I..."

"Lord Bishop..."

Others soon followed, despite initial hesitation.

After all, completing the task meant rewards, and exceeding the target meant even greater rewards.

"Enough."

The man in the red robe looked around and finally focused on Fang Liang and the woman beside him, approval in his eyes. "You two shall lead the teams. Too many people will increase the risk of exposure."

"Yes!"

Both were delighted to hear this.

Especially the woman, who felt secretly pleased.

Luckily, she had reacted quickly. Otherwise, someone else would have taken this opportunity away from her.

Sure, the task was risky, and failure meant a miserable death like Peng Song's, but could she really be that unlucky and get caught immediately? As long as she returned with the Sacred Artifact, the mission wouldn't be a complete failure.

"Lord Bishop, we'll gather our people and set off immediately!" Fang Liang said urgently.

"No rush. Listen to me first, then you can depart." The man in the red robe waved his hand. "Although Anshan City is now a haven for all sorts, you still shouldn't be careless. Spend some time investigating quietly. Target those who pose the least risk of exposure. If you reveal yourselves early on, not only you but everyone will be in danger."

"Understood." Fang Liang nodded repeatedly. "Lord Bishop, don't worry, we'll act cautiously and ensure there is zero risk of exposure."

"Indeed, Lord Bishop, please await our good news."

"Very well, go ahead, but remember, be careful."

"Yes."

Fang Liang and the woman exchanged glances, each leading a few people towards the door.

As they neared the exit, Fang Liang sneered and said to the woman, "Zhang Ru, you're really like my shadow. Whatever I say, you say. Whatever I do, you do."

Truth be told, he had tolerated this woman for a long time.

Previously, when the Lord Bishop asked about handling Peng Song, he had just changed his attitude, and Zhang Ru immediately followed suit.

Earlier, when the Lord Bishop asked who would scout Anshan City, he stood up, and Zhang Ru followed suit right after.

Usually, it might be excusable, but for this mission, the more people involved, the higher the risk of exposure.

Besides, they were competitors.

"You're overthinking." Zhang Ru glared at him.

"Is that so?"

Fang Liang's eyes flared with anger.

As they approached the exit, he turned and said, "Zhang Ru, I hope you don't drag me down once we reach Anshan City. If you get caught, it's best to end your own life. Don't come looking for me. The Lord Bishop won't spare you, and neither will I."

"Worry about yourself, whether you'll get caught." Zhang Ru retorted, leaving without looking back.

"Tch." Fang Liang snorted disdainfully and also disappeared through the exit with his team.

Chapter 380: Supreme Martial Arts! Divine Demon Martial Arts!

Inside the villa.

Chen Fan opened the Cultivation Technique section in the Awakened Association Mall.

The first thing that caught his eye was a martial art priced at a whopping 250,000 points!

Sacred Heart Technique (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 250,000 points. Although it's a Supreme Martial Art, it possesses the power of Divine Demon Martial Arts, containing several eerie attack heart methods, such as Sacred Heart Four Extremes, Four Tribulations of the Sacred Heart, etc. Cultivating to the highest realm allows the use of a unique secret technique, Seven Wus Extreme Realm, which can transform the body into particles, ready for reassembly anytime, anywhere.

It is said that this cultivation technique can grant its possessor immortality, even resurrection.

Unfortunately, most of the techniques and heart methods have been lost through the ages, except for the Sea-Embracing Sacred Heart Mantra, Cold Heaven Extreme and Profound Ice Extreme from Sacred

Heart Four Extremes, and Shocking Gaze Tribulation from Four Tribulations of the Sacred Heart. Buyers are advised to be prepared.

Note: To cultivate the Sacred Heart Technique to the highest realm, the user must possess Phoenix Blood within their body.

After reading, Chen Fan took a deep breath, his gaze landing on the words Supreme Martial Arts at the top.

So, above Supreme Martial Arts are these?

And above Supreme Martial Arts...

Chen Fan's gaze moved down to the words Divine Demon Martial Arts.

What kind of martial arts can be called Divine Demon Martial Arts?

"I wonder how many points are needed to unlock the right to purchase Divine Demon Martial Arts, but even after unlocking, it may not be a good thing."

Chen Fan mused.

For instance, look at the Sacred Heart Technique in front of him. The extent of its incompleteness alone is daunting. Completing it surely won't be easy.

Even if he were to obtain an even more powerful Divine Demon Martial Art, what good would that do?

It's not like it's complete; he can't cultivate it as soon as he gets it.

As for whether it would be complete or not? Just the thought of it makes it clear that it's impossible.

His gaze returned to the Sacred Heart Technique.

The strength of this martial art is undeniable. If possible, he'd want to buy it right away and try all ways to complete it.

Unfortunately, he didn't have enough points.

Furthermore, there was a small line at the end stating that to cultivate to the highest realm, the cultivator must possess Phoenix Blood within their body.

This caused Chen Fan to feel a bit uneasy.

Phoenix Blood?

Where would he find such a thing?

Find a Fierce Beast similar to a Phoenix? Use its blood as a replacement for Phoenix Blood?

"It seems feasible," Chen Fan nodded.

In fact, he had a vague suspicion in his heart.

That was to directly add points. As long as he had enough experience points, perhaps even without Phoenix Blood, he could enhance the skill level to Perfection Realm.

"No rush. When I have enough points later, it won't be too late to consider."

Chen Fan continued to read downwards.

Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 200,000 points. Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect is said to be the highest realm of swordsmanship. Once executed, the ten thousand swords return to their sect like servants to their master, like worshipping a deity. This sword technique, once the move is released, an unmatched, fierce sword strength emanates from the body, powerful qi spreads, and countless sharp swords whirl like a storm, majestic and spectacular. It can also control ten thousand swords to launch an attack.

Black Tortoise True Skill (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 200,000 points, is a martial art created by fusing the Ten Strong Martial Dao of the Ten Strong Martial Artists. The Ten Strong Martial Dao includes: Unparalleled Saber Technique, Heaven-Questioning Spear Technique, Celestial Destiny Sword Dao, Great Yi Halberd Manual, Tiger Roar Staff Collection, Black Tortoise Divine Palm, Mountain and Sea Fist Scripture, Fierce Strong Leg Extreme, Harmonious Golden Finger, Armored Dragon Claw, Step Technique named Vertical Walking Plum Blossom, Lightweight Skill named Speed Water Traceless. Each martial art is a Supreme Martial Art.

If the techniques are merged, it can enable Defensive Technique Invincible in All Directions, Killing Technique All Directions Kill, Annihilation Technique All Directions Destroyed, Secret Technique Ten Strongest Dao, and the ultimate techniques Heavenless Sword Tiger Technique, Celestial Devouring Sun Breaking, with astonishing power. This martial art has an extremely high upper limit. When cultivated to the extreme, it is no less powerful than Divine Demon Martial Arts.

Compassion Sword Manual (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 150,000 points. Though it's a Supreme Martial Art, it contains profound meanings. The manual comprises thirteen Chapters, divided into three major realms, from Telepathy to Sword Heart Clarity and then to Death Gate. It is said that above the Death Gate, there is the fourth realm. If one can glimpse through it, there is a chance to break the void.

Seeing this, Chen Fan was increasingly shocked.

Although he was accustomed to using a saber, the description of Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect made his heart move greatly.

But his Basic Sword Technique level was too low. If he really learned it, the experience points consumed would probably far exceed those of saber martial arts.

"Wait until the points are sufficient and the experience points are not much of a difference, then I'll learn it."

Chen Fan thought.

More skills do no harm.

Besides, in the future, if he wanted to create another persona, using swordsmanship would offer more confidentiality.

Next up, Black Tortoise True Skill.

Chen Fan took a deep breath, something he had longed for.

As described, any one of the Ten Strong Martial Dao alone isn't particularly strong, but when combined, it is incredibly impressive.

Including the recorded ultimate techniques, which aren't all that this martial art encompasses.

Therefore, the upper limit is extremely high!

But this also posed a problem, that is, the difficulty of completion greatly increased.

Of the Ten Strong Martial Dao, five involve fists and kicks, which don't bother him, but the other five, like Unparalleled Saber Technique, Heaven-Questioning Spear Technique, Celestial Destiny Sword Dao, Great Yi Halberd Manual, Tiger Roar Staff Collection, he only had one saber technique to show off. To deduce the Black Tortoise True Skill, he must first deduce these five weapon martial arts from top-level weapon martial arts.

Even with these incomplete secret manuals, it would still require considerable effort.

Chen Fan smiled wryly.

Earlier, he was torn over whether to cultivate Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect, but now it seemed entirely unnecessary.

If he could complete Black Tortoise True Skill, Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect wouldn't be a problem at all.

The third one, Compassion Sword Manual.

In terms of power, it surely couldn't compare to Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect. After all, it only cost 150,000 points to buy.

But the profound meanings contained in it and the words break the void piqued his interest.

"Even if it really can break the void, whether it can be completed to the fourth realm is questionable."

Chen Fan muttered.

He continued to read.

The techniques above were excellent, but unfortunately, he couldn't afford them with his current points.

Even if he could afford them, it wouldn't be an overnight task to complete them.

Three-Part Returning Essence Qi (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 150,000 points, combines the Cold Yin Inner Power of Celestial Frost Fist, the Fierceness of Cloud Dispelling Palm, and the Long Reach of Wind God Leg. Derived from the essence of the Three Ultimate Techniques, fuses into Unity of the Three, with immense power, hard to resist, and can form a protective shield immune to divine weapons and sharp tools.

City-Overturning Love (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 150,000 points. Though it's a Supreme Martial Art, its power rivals that of Supreme Martial Arts. This sword art requires a pair of true

lovers with telepathy, along with the Yin Yang Unrivaled Sword to perform. Once executed, the words City-Overturning Love appear in the sky, transforming into rain of light descending from the heavens, any struck by the sword qi are doomed to die.

Holy Spirit Swordsmanship (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 150,000 points, with a total of 23 moves. The first move can defeat countless martial artists, with the most powerful twenty-third move called Six Extinction Selfless Sword Twenty-Three, containing profound meanings. If one masters the twenty-third move, it can rival Divine Demon Martial Arts. Unfortunately, it has been lost for a long time.

Dao Heart Demon Planting Technique (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 150,000 points, a scroll from the Celestial Demon Strategy in Divine Demon Martial Arts. The Celestial Demon Strategy is the supreme tome of the Demon Sect, said to be a demonic skill heart method left by the war god Chi You. The tome consists of ten scrolls, involving the mysteries of heaven and earth, with formidable power. The Dao Heart Demon Planting Technique is said to be the most profound and supreme Chapter in the Celestial Demon Strategy. Cultivating to the highest realm can break the void.

After reading four martial arts in a row, seeing the Dao Heart Demon Planting Technique, Chen Fan widened his eyes, not wanting to miss any detail.

After finishing, he started over.

After a while, taking a deep breath.

So, Divine Demon Martial Arts refer to techniques created by mythical figures?

Then the Emperor's Qi Observation Skill I'm completing right now could also be considered a Divine Demon Martial Art?

But from the description, it seems to be just a Supreme Martial Art, not even reaching Supreme Martial Arts.

"Perhaps the Emperor's Qi Observation Skill's combat power is merely ordinary, hence it's considered a Supreme Martial Art?"

Chen Fan mused.

For instance, the Celestial Demon Strategy description involves the mysteries of heaven and earth, with earth-shattering power.

The Emperor's Qi Observation Skill doesn't have such grandeur.

His gaze went back to the Dao Heart Demon Planting Technique.

Three-Part Returning Essence Qi, this martial art intrigued him greatly. From the description, gathering Celestial Frost Fist, Cloud Dispelling Palm, and Wind God Leg should allow completion.

He recalled the previously purchased fist and kick martial arts, which didn't include these three,

Clearly, they are Supreme Martial Arts.

"It might cost several hundred thousand points to buy."

Chen Fan felt a bit distressed.

Next, City-Overturning Love.

Even a dog would shake its head.

Are you kidding? The conditions for using this martial art are too harsh!

It not only requires a pair of true lovers but also two swords. Where would he find those two swords?

Wouldn't learning Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect be better?

Then there's Holy Spirit Swordsmanship.

Master the Six Extinction Selfless Sword Twenty-Three, and it rivals Divine Demon Martial Arts.

Of course, knowing that completing the twenty-third move is incredibly difficult, it might also have usage conditions.

After all, it's just a Supreme Martial Art, with limits placed there. Even if its power rivals Divine Demon Martial Arts, but Divine Demon Martial Arts aren't just powerful.

Chen Fan continued reading.

Unexpectedly, the first thing he saw was a very familiar martial art.

Undying Golden Body (Incomplete): Supreme Martial Arts, priced at 100,000 points. Once this martial art is executed, a protective gang qi forms outside the body, rendering it invulnerable to any weapon, even divine weapons. Not even Ten Thousand Swords Return to the Sect can do anything against it. Unfortunately, it has a Cultivation Gate. If the Cultivation Gate is broken, the Undying Golden Body will be shattered.

"What?"

Chen Fan was astonished.

At first glance, this martial art seemed weak, with a Cultivation Gate, incomparable to his Vajra Indestructible Divine Skill.

But upon closer thought, that wasn't the case.