

Medical 171

Chapter 171 The Ugly Freak

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"You, you... you're courting death!" The flamboyant young woman roared angrily, "If you've got guts, just you wait!"

"I don't have time to wait for you!" Yan Xiaobao replied, then swaggered away from the crowd, holding Ye Shanshan's slim waist.

"You think you can escape? I definitely won't let this go!" The flamboyant young woman screamed at Yan Xiaobao and Ye Shanshan's retreating figures, then pulled out her phone to make a call.

As for her threats, Yan Xiaobao couldn't have cared less. He simply treated her words like hot air, completely ignoring her.

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"Honey, I just remembered—I have something to do today. I can't go shopping. I need to head back to campus," Ye Shanshan said.

"Alright, I'll go with you," Yan Xiaobao didn't care where they were going. "Let's take the bus."

"..." Ye Shanshan was speechless.

Why take the bus when he obviously has money? What's his deal?

After getting on the bus, Ye Shanshan quickly understood the deal. She was soon blushing and her heart racing because of Yan Xiaobao...

This guy...

Twenty minutes later, Ye Shanshan led Yan Xiaobao to Binhai University's badminton court. Yan Xiaobao wasn't unfamiliar with the place—he had competed with that guy Li Zhigang there before. To be more precise, he had once used a shuttlecock to teach Li Zhigang a lesson...

As soon as Ye Shanshan stepped into the badminton court, she immediately captured everyone's attention on the field. A stunning beauty like her—who wouldn't want to steal a couple more glances?

A girl walked up to Ye Shanshan, scanning her from head to toe with an unpleased expression. "Oh! Isn't this the most popular car model? Coming to the badminton court to sell popularity now?"

This girl wasn't unattractive; she was just slightly less beautiful than Ye Shanshan—still considered a beauty. However, her expression greatly annoyed Yan Xiaobao, and her slightly shrill voice filled with sarcasm made her even more grating.

"Gong Li, what do you mean? What are you doing here?" Ye Shanshan asked displeased. She knew Gong Li—they had never seen eye to eye. Mainly, Gong Li was jealous of her and constantly found opportunities to target her.

"You still don't know, do you? The club manager is now me, not you," Gong Li sneered arrogantly, clearly reveling in her triumph.

"What did you say?" Ye Shanshan's face changed instantly. "You don't know the first thing about badminton—how can you be the club manager?"

"You don't believe me? Then go ask Yao Hongtao yourself!" Gong Li continued to smirk triumphantly.

Yao Hongtao, seeing Ye Shanshan and Gong Li facing off, quickly led his girlfriend Yang Shilan over to mediate.

Ye Shanshan directly questioned Yao Hongtao: "What's going on? How did Gong Li become the club manager?"

Yao Hongtao hesitated, then explained awkwardly: "Well... it's not completely finalized yet... Mainly because Gong Li promised she could secure three thousand yuan in monthly sponsorship, along with uniforms, rackets, and shoes..."

"Just for that?" Ye Shanshan fumed. "So this is all about money!"

Yao Hongtao's face turned red as he tried to make his case: "You know, professional badminton gear is quite a financial burden for us students..."

Ye Shanshan naturally understood. A good badminton racket usually cost over a thousand yuan, and replacing a string weekly was another expense of dozens of yuan. Quality badminton shoes, even at the lowest price, needed at least five hundred yuan, and lasted three months at most under intense training. All of this added up to money.

Still, Ye Shanshan grumbled unhappily: "If the club needed sponsorship, why didn't you come to me earlier? Do you think I wouldn't be able to secure sponsorship?"

"Ha! Do you think pulling sponsorships is easy? Don't fool yourself into thinking your looks will make every man capitulate!" Gong Li mocked her. "Anyway, I've already secured the sponsorship, so I'm the club manager now. As for you, go cool off somewhere else!"

"Honey Shanshan, what exactly does a club manager do? Is it a role you really want?" Yan Xiaobao suddenly interjected.

Honey Shanshan?

Hearing this nickname, Yao Hongtao, Yang Shilan, and everyone else froze.

"Brother Bao, so... Ye Shanshan's really your wife now?" Yao Hongtao couldn't help asking.

"Of course," Yan Xiaobao nodded affirmatively. "I've already promoted her to official wife status."

"Uh..." The crowd immediately exchanged knowing glances at Ye Shanshan.

"Promoted to official wife?" This clearly meant Yan Xiaobao had already gone all the way with her...

The belle of the sports department had just been taken, leaving every guy lamenting in silence. Nevertheless, many had witnessed Yan Xiaobao brutally taking down Li Zhigang before—they could only acknowledge his dominance.

Ye Shanshan blushed furiously, giving Yan Xiaobao an affectionate glare but saying nothing. After all, he had indeed 'claimed' her last night—a perfectly normal thing for university students. She'd get used to it eventually.

"Wow, one car show and you've successfully sold yourself off, huh?" Gong Li seized the chance to sneer at Ye Shanshan again. "But the man you chose doesn't exactly look like a tycoon!"

"You ugly freak, get lost—I can't be bothered with you," Yan Xiaobao scoffed, then turned to Ye Shanshan. "Honey Shanshan, do you really want to be that club manager?"

Ugly freak?

Everyone froze hearing Yan Xiaobao's blunt words. Even Ye Shanshan couldn't help but stare in shock. After all, while Gong Li had awful manners, she wasn't unattractive—in fact, she was quite pretty. Unfortunately, two tigers couldn't coexist in one mountain. Driven by jealousy, Gong Li kept trying to compete with Ye Shanshan for the title of Binhai University's Sports Department Beauty Queen.

But sadly for Gong Li, she had always fallen behind Ye Shanshan, and as the latter became increasingly radiant, the gap widened step by step. No matter how hard she tried, Gong Li could only settle for second place.

Still, being ranked second in the sports department clearly meant Gong Li was far from an ugly freak.

"What did you say?" Gong Li turned green with fury. "You called me an ugly freak? Are you blind? I'm the department belle, and you dare call me ugly?"

"Department belle? You? Ha! More like trumpet creeper—you're just good at blowing hot air!" Yan Xiaobao sneered.

Trumpet creeper? Only good at blowing hot air? Now that's fresh.

Watching Gong Li tremble in rage, Ye Shanshan felt inwardly overjoyed. She had long been fed up with Gong Li constantly picking on her. Now, with Yan Xiaobao fiercely putting Gong Li in her place, Ye Shanshan's mood soared.

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Chapter 172 Goodbye

Yan Xiaobao stood outside the lingerie store. Ye Shanshan said that, since Yan Xiaobao was a man, entering a store specializing in women's lingerie would be inappropriate and might make other customers feel awkward.

Yan Xiaobao sighed, leaned against the wall, and began to observe the surrounding area for anything that might catch his attention.

As his gaze swept across the area, an antique shop across the street sparked his interest.

An elderly lady sat behind the counter, reading an old book. She glanced briefly at the young man who had just entered the store. However, she quickly determined that this handsome young man didn't seem to be a troublemaker and returned to her reading.

As Yan Xiaobao's eyes quickly adjusted to the dim lighting inside the shop, his gaze fixated on rows of intriguing items. Even at first glance, Yan Xiaobao felt excited, as if embarking on a treasure hunt and uncovering a chest filled with priceless gemstones.

The first shelf was entirely filled with vases ranging in age from five hundred to three thousand years old. Yan Xiaobao was stunned by the way these incredible artifacts were displayed.

He was convinced they were genuine. The shock swiftly replaced his initial skepticism, and Yan Xiaobao felt his heartbeat become erratic. This also caused his breathing to grow slightly uneven. If these vases were truly authentic, then what about everything else?

He slowly stepped into the shop, eager to see what he might discover next.

As he ventured further inside, he noticed treasure after treasure. Entire shelves were piled high with ancient paintings, rolled up and stacked three layers deep atop one another.

Though the shop looked dirty, there was no doubt it was a treasure trove. Hui Yue ventured deeper into the store, with each step quickening his heartbeat.

Even though Yan Xiaobao knew he was inside a shop, it almost felt as if he was touring a museum—except here, he was actually allowed to touch and examine these priceless artifacts. Glancing around, Yan Xiaobao was convinced this shop was more valuable than any actual museum he had visited before.

Yan Xiaobao passed by clothing, signs, and books until he reached the counter, where he saw jewelry displayed. The moment he arrived, his eyes landed on something that froze him in place and made him take a deep breath to steady himself.

Before him was the most stunning phoenix crown he had ever seen—a breathtaking masterpiece. It was far more exquisite than the one discovered in Emperor Wanli's tomb, and Hui Yue had never heard of such a treasure. This shop was filled with surprises.

The crown was displayed in the center of the counter. Undoubtedly, it was the most dazzling headpiece he had seen so far in the shop. Strangely, it wasn't locked away or guarded by anything. It simply sat there, allowing customers to examine it through a simple glass case.

At the very next moment, he spotted something that froze him in place again and made him take another deep breath to steady himself.

A blue phoenix brooch, its body crafted from an oval-shaped piece of incredibly pure white jade, adorned with swirling patterns of gold. Its wings were made of sapphire. Jade, gold, and sapphire entwined with one another in elegant patterns, forming gorgeous tail feathers and a long, delicate neck

that extended toward a beautiful beak and face. Near the phoenix's wings, its face was encrusted with numerous pearls, completing its appearance.

"Oh, you like the blue phoenix?" An aged voice echoed from the corner. Yan Xiaobao, startled as he had completely forgotten about the elderly lady, quickly looked at her with a respectful gaze, noticing the complex expression on her face.

Yan Xiaobao left the antique shop filled with exhilaration. He knew no one in this modern era would wear such a hairpin. However, it was so stunning that he could only think of one person whose beauty could match it. He couldn't wait to give the gift to Ye Shanshan and see the joy on her face.

"Honey!" Ye Shanshan had already finished her shopping and was waiting outside the lingerie store. When she saw Yan Xiaobao exit the antique shop holding something, she waved at him excitedly.

Yan Xiaobao ran toward Ye Shanshan, stepping into the middle of the road.

Suddenly, a streak of blue light shot up from Yan Xiaobao's body, surging toward the sky like a swirling beam.

When the blue light dissipated, Ye Shanshan was horrified to discover that Yan Xiaobao had disappeared.

Chapter 173 Crossing Through

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Yan Xiaobao floated endlessly in the blue ocean, as though trapped in an eternity. At first, he was frantic, but the boundless blue expanse swayed through his mind, quickly washing away the lingering and despairing thoughts that haunted him.

At present, Yan Xiaobao found himself submerged in an unprecedented calm. His body was weightless, drifting in the sea. He felt no anxiety as he absentmindedly observed the flickering blue embers formed by the ocean around him.

He was acutely aware that he was dead. Though the blue sea did all it could to cleanse grief away, there lingered an irreparable void of loss.

Yan Xiaobao often thought about his life with her, knowing with certainty he could never return to how things had been. Yet death didn't seem as dire as he had once feared. There was no darkness. No monsters. No long staircase descending into nothingness. There was only this endless, warm blue ocean and nothing else.

The calm blue flames eased his unrest into something intangible—a subtle assurance that everything would eventually be okay.

Suddenly, Yan Xiaobao heard a faint humming noise, startling him. A murmur coming from far away. His soul instinctively became alert, and he tried desperately to respond to the sound. Unfortunately, all he could hear was an indistinct blur; despite his efforts, he couldn't decipher the words being spoken.

For what felt like ages, Yan Xiaobao remained tense as a drawn bowstring. Fear and panic threatened to overwhelm him; yet even if he wanted to leave, doing so would be impossible. His consciousness was utterly trapped within the blue flames.

Fixing his focus on the sound, it took him time to notice how the once glowing, blue flames began flashing towards the sky above. The transformation in the sea forced the already alert Yan Xiaobao to calm himself down, focusing on observing the changes unfolding around him.

The flames swelled, consuming more space, while the ocean shrank, and an inexplicable pull began dragging Yan Xiaobao toward the deep blue abyss. As the pull strengthened, Yan Xiaobao realized the earlier murmuring stemmed from the abyss itself—the very destination pulling him in.

Yan Xiaobao felt his consciousness flicker slightly. His soul plunged downward along a dark blue tunnel, spiraling toward an unknown place. His initial fear had long dissipated, as these occurrences seemed to span years to complete. Every stage, every journey remained vividly laid out before his keen senses.

As Yan Xiaobao took note of his descent through the dim tunnel into an unfamiliar void, his speed rapidly increased. It moved from a few meters a year to breakneck rates until he felt certain the end was near, accelerating ever faster.

Though uncertain of what awaited him, a faint trace of fear settled in his heart. He couldn't comprehend how this blue sea and black tunnel manipulated time—or at least his perception of it. Still, he steadied himself with the thought that he was already dead, that he no longer had a physical form, convincing himself he shouldn't feel pain or anguish anymore.

Yan Xiaobao concentrated further to suppress his fear, determined not to trace back into fragility. He intently observed everything happening around him. Soon, he came to a halt—not abruptly, but as his movements slowed almost imperceptibly until they fully ceased.

Yan Xiaobao began noticing subtle changes in his surroundings, but for the moment, he remained incapable of understanding what was happening. Nevertheless, his heightened senses remained vigilant, as though braced for something imminent.

Silence enveloped him for a time, as Yan Xiaobao arrived—wherever he was. However, not long after, he heard the humming noise again. This time, it wasn't the soft murmur from before but instead a hurried cry that seemed to echo loudly beside him.

The darkness transitioned from the black void of the tunnel into a lighter shadow, one that felt strangely familiar to Yan Xiaobao.

Yan Xiaobao took time to comprehend his surroundings. Once he gathered some semblance of understanding, he realized he was no longer just a consciousness but had once again been enveloped in a physical body. Shock coursed through his heart, quickening its pace. The encroaching darkness was revealed to be the result of him closing his eyes, and opening them suddenly felt like an impossible task.

Yan Xiaobao froze, grappling with fear mingled with curiosity. He knew he was dead, yet now he found himself inexplicably housed within another body. He couldn't move within this vessel, as if even opening his eyes posed a monumental challenge.

As he thought of her and her face etched with fear, his terror dissipated. With the hope of possibly being reunited with her, gratitude welled up within, filling him like a far-off prayer to the heavens. Perhaps he could even manage to move within this body.

Yan Xiaobao resolved to test his limbs, attempting to prod them into action. When he noticed they partially obeyed his commands, a wave of relief surged through him. Yet even so, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong.

His entire body felt foreign, drastically different from the sensations he was accustomed to before his death. But Yan Xiaobao decided such details could wait for later examination. What mattered most was the thought of seeing her radiant smile once more. The realization he possessed control over a physical body again calmed him. He gathered his resolve, focusing everything toward the effort of prying open his weary, sealed eyes.

As his eyes finally opened, Yan Xiaobao let out a piercing scream. His heart seemed on the verge of bursting from his chest, while fear blazed wildly through his gaze.

Chapter 174 Crossing_2

Next, he saw a giant's face looming before him. It was a rugged man with a scruffy beard, making Yan Xiaobao certain that if he stretched out his arm, the man would extend his hand towards him.

After screaming, Yan Xiaobao dared not make another sound, let alone move a muscle. The fear in his eyes was evident even to the giant, but he seemed unfazed. These events left Yan Xiaobao deeply shaken.

Yan Xiaobao's first thought was to escape immediately, to find a safe place where he could focus on understanding the reality that seemed to be shifting around him. Yet now, with the giant staring at him, escape was impossible.

At least the giant appeared to harbor no hostility. However, waking up in a new body, completely defenseless, still felt like a dangerous predicament.

Yan Xiaobao was terrified. He had expected to see her—his entire mindset had been positive—but now everything had plunged into chaos, and he was worried about his future. He was anxious about his suspicious new life.

"Don't get so close, you're scaring him, darling." A weary yet gentle voice sounded beside them. Yan Xiaobao slowly turned his head toward the source of the voice.

Moving his head—even widening his eyes—was incredibly difficult, but he forced himself to do so as he currently had no choice but to remain alert. To remain vigilant and comprehend what was happening around him.

When Yan Xiaobao turned his head, he noticed he was currently situated in a shabby bedroom of a rundown cottage. Looking at the hovel, Yan Xiaobao frowned and wondered if he had traveled back in time. The interior resembled a wooden hut owned by commoners in ancient China.

The air here was far richer than what he was accustomed to, but more importantly, the giant was no longer there. Yan Xiaobao suddenly realized he was in another world.

The bedroom's bed was currently occupied by a woman who was evidently beautiful, though her striking features were now awash with exhaustion and pain. The lower part of the bed was stained with blood, and a young girl was attending to the wounded woman.

As he stared at the bed, his eyes widened, and Yan Xiaobao felt both fear and confusion. The entire situation was something he completely failed to understand. The giants didn't appear hostile, but as Yan Xiaobao watched the two adults, he thought they must be observing him as well. He continued pondering for a while but decided the simplest way to obtain information was to simply ask them.

Though he had resolved to seek aid from the friendly giants, he spent several breaths to calm himself down and stabilize his nerves before finally opening his mouth.

"Goo goo... Gah... Uwhaa!" Yan Xiaobao attempted to say, "Excuse me, could you explain what's happening here?" However, the words that came out of his mouth were completely meaningless. He stilled himself, wide-eyed, and felt a strange and discomfiting foreboding.

"Look, darling," said the bearded giant, reaching out to carry Yan Xiaobao closer to the exhausted woman. "Our son is already trying to talk." His voice was filled with warmth, and the woman's face also revealed the same tenderness.

"Obviously, it's due to my extraordinary power," said a smug voice from somewhere within Yan Xiaobao's mind, causing the already frightened youth to become even more alarmed. The voice seemed eerily familiar.

"Who are you?" Yan Xiaobao tentatively asked as he tried to recall where he had heard this voice before. The instant he focused on it, he remembered—it was the voice he had heard at the moment of his death.

Yan Xiaobao immediately became alert and refused to relax even the tiniest muscle in his new body. He understood that he was in an extremely perilous situation. He had a baby's body, which left him seemingly powerless to fight back given his current condition.

"Is he the Death Reaper?" Yan Xiaobao questioned himself while choosing not to speak further. However, as he remained silent, it seemed insignificant, for the voice emitted hearty laughter.

"Haha! You're not a bad kid!" the voice exclaimed, sounding as if praising a dog's behavior. "I am the legendary Blue Phoenix, sealed within that cursed hair clip you bought."

"You... you're the one who killed me?!" Yan Xiaobao roared internally with hostility swelling in his heart.

That voice belonged to the entity responsible for taking him away! This Blue Phoenix had stripped away his hopes for the future and stolen his parents' only child. The self-proclaimed Phoenix filled him with indignation.

"Eh, I merely took the opportunity to merge with you," the voice said blandly, sounding uninterested in Yan Xiaobao's death, which only served to stoke the young man's fury further.

"You should be thanking me, you know," the voice remarked as if sensing the hostility aimed at it. Nonetheless, it retained an unmistakable tone of disdain.

"If I hadn't merged with you, your reincarnation wouldn't have been possible so quickly." The voice once again grew conceited, pointing out how much Yan Xiaobao owed to it.

Yan Xiaobao suspected it was lying. He felt irritated—this being clearly didn't care about him, so why would it bother lying about such matters? After pondering for a while, Yan Xiaobao reluctantly decided to believe the arrogant voice in his mind. Ultimately, if he wanted information, he didn't have much of a choice.

"When you say you helped me reincarnate, what do you mean? Where am I?"

As soon as Yan Xiaobao asked these questions, he heard the Phoenix sigh, and somehow he understood the Phoenix's emotions.

He felt a mix of impatience, annoyance, and even traces of hope. Yan Xiaobao was surprised to realize he could currently discern the feelings of the voice in his mind. The revelation stunned him deeply, but he remained unsure why the Phoenix would allow him to experience this.

"I'll tell you a very long story," the Phoenix eventually said after a brief pause.

"I have nothing but time. I'm just a child you know," Yan Xiaobao noted, observing that his new mother had already fallen asleep. Yan Xiaobao pretended to sleep as well, lest he disturb them while conversing mentally. If Yan Xiaobao hadn't been transported to another world, he would surely think he was losing his mind.

"Listen quietly to my story," the Phoenix said, shattering an increasingly suffocating silence. Its behavior reminded Yan Xiaobao of a child throwing a tantrum.

"It truly is a very long story, so you'd better listen, because I'll only say it once," the Phoenix declared emphatically, but Yan Xiaobao remained silent, waiting for the bird to begin its tale.

Yan Xiaobao had a feeling that the Phoenix could understand everything about him—his thoughts, his emotions, everything. Even in the absence of direct communication, he felt the bird could comprehend him. Unfortunately, this understanding didn't seem to work both ways.

"Hmph," the Phoenix grumbled before deciding how to start. "This world is completely different from your previous one. Here, power matters above all else; the stronger you are, the better your prospects in life."

The Phoenix paused for a second, then continued, "This world was created by four Divine Beasts: Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, and Xuanwu. Prior to this, the four beasts created countless worlds; however, they chose to settle in this one. They laid their bodies down as the foundations for their

respective nations, imbued their consciousness into new forms they could inhabit, and walked these lands to experience normal lives."

Hearing about these four beasts left Yan Xiaobao utterly stunned. He had never imagined they could be real. In China, these animals were revered by naming constellations after them, even symbolizing China itself. To think these beasts were real and that he existed in a world they had created was simply unbelievable.

Though Yan Xiaobao felt excitement and awe, he refrained from speaking. Instead, he honed in on Lan Feng's words, determined not to miss a single detail. He certainly didn't want to risk forgetting, Yan Xiaobao thought miserably.

The Phoenix spoke again: "After the Divine Beasts created this world, thousands of years passed, and they began families in their respective nations. Their descendants were not Divine Beasts; instead, they were ordinary humans." Hearing this bizarre revelation, Yan Xiaobao felt waves of nostalgia wash over him. He immediately found it strange, for he had no reason to feel nostalgic, which made him suspect these emotions belonged to the Phoenix.

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Chapter 175 Four Divine Beasts

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"Time passed, and eventually, the Four Divine Beasts decided to enter eternal slumber. They had already buried their original bodies far beneath the surface of this world, and with their remaining energy, they created four massive mountain ranges, dividing the continent into four equal parts. These four sections represented the locations of their bodies. In the center was a grand castle they built when they first arrived in this world. Each Divine Beast designated their eldest offspring as the inheritor of the Four Beast Palaces in the continent's center. It was there that they passed down their legacy, as well as some of their power and the right to lead their kingdoms. Once the ceremony concluded, they returned to their initial dormant state and entered eternal sleep."

As these final words were transmitted, a wave of sadness and longing washed over Yan Xiaobao. Although these feelings didn't belong to him, they deeply influenced his emotions.

Yan Xiaobao wasn't a slow person; he immediately understood this was part of the Phoenix's story.

'The offspring did well and lived peacefully for several millennia. Civilization flourished, and humans began cultivating their inner strength. However, four thousand years ago, someone deceived the descendant of the Sky Blue Dragon and used his power to seal away and exile the leaders of the Beast Clan from this world.'

This time, he felt a mixture of hatred, regret, and pity as he grasped part of the reason why the Phoenix had ultimately become a hairpin.

"Are you the eldest offspring of the Vermilion Bird?" Yan Xiaobao asked, determined to confirm his assumptions. He had many questions he needed answers to.

"That's correct," the Phoenix replied with a proud tone, and Yan Xiaobao understood he had every right to feel proud.

'Then why are we trapped in a baby's body instead of one that matches our age?' Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but ask. For a twenty-four-year-old man, being stuck in an infant's body felt entirely surreal.

'Why don't you try being sealed in a hairpin for four thousand years?' The Phoenix snorted, 'At the time, I had nearly no power left. Only a small portion of my strength remained when we merged. Now that we share a vessel, I'm unfortunately restricted by this arrangement,' he continued disdainfully.

'Hey, don't complain about the body. You chose it!' Yan Xiaobao laughed, pointing at the incredibly arrogant Phoenix. Every time the Phoenix displayed his displeasure, Yan Xiaobao felt an odd sense of satisfaction.

Though Yan Xiaobao was intrigued by the Blue Phoenix hairpin, he was somewhat repelled by this self-proclaimed Phoenix. It was hard to explain why he felt this way, as he couldn't come up with any valid reason; yet, something about the Phoenix irked him.

That said, Yan Xiaobao truly loved hearing about this new world he had ended up in. Especially the story of the Four Divine Beasts made his heart race with excitement.

The Phoenix also had good reasons for his arrogance. Not many could claim to be the firstborn offspring of the Fumilion Bird.

"I didn't have many bodies to choose from," the Phoenix replied. 'You should be grateful. If I hadn't helped you reincarnate, you'd still be trapped in the Netherworld, with God only knowing how long this world will last. You wouldn't even be able to remember anything from before.'

"You're the one complaining," Yan Xiaobao said, laughing as he heard the Phoenix try to convince him to be grateful.

'Shut up. Do you want me to continue the story?' Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao decided not to argue further and waited for the Phoenix to proceed.

"The last time I was here was four thousand years ago, so I have no idea how the kingdoms are divided now, nor who controls what. But I do know cultivation—that's one thing that never changes."

When he heard the word "cultivation," Yan Xiaobao's interest piqued even further. He had practiced cultivation in the past, though he had never found it particularly useful.

"Every place in this world is infused with the essence of heaven and earth. Everyone has something called a dantian. Within it, people can refine the essence of heaven and earth into Qi and store it in the Qi spiral. Cultivators increase their strength by gathering essence and refining it into beneficial Qi. Refinement is the first step in cultivation in this world. The better the quality of Qi, the better the results. There are three dantians in the body, but if you're strong enough, you'll only need access to the latter two."

Yan Xiaobao thought, as the bird explained, that he was thoroughly confused. Within a short period, the Phoenix had explained quite a lot about this world, leaving Yan Xiaobao with little understanding of the matter. All of this led to a slight headache.

'It's not my fault it's confusing!' the Phoenix said unapologetically, quickly continuing his monologue and leaving Yan Xiaobao no time to digest the previous information.

"Alright, listen carefully. Cultivation personnel are divided into ten ranks, each rank further split into nine levels. The first rank is Student, followed by Disciple, and then Practitioner. These three rely entirely on the lower dantian, refining essence into Qi."

After this, the voice paused for a moment, prompting a smile to appear on Yan Xiaobao's infant face.

Although the Phoenix claimed not to care whether Yan Xiaobao understood, he still paused and allowed Yan Xiaobao a brief moment to digest the provided information.

"If a person has sufficient Qi quality and a certain cultivation talent, it's possible to break into the rank of Master," the Phoenix continued in an assertive tone, pretending the earlier pause had never happened. Yan Xiaobao found it amusing but chose not to comment on how the Phoenix acted aloof yet was actually quite considerate.

Chapter 176 Four Divine Beasts_2

'Master level, then Great Duke, and lastly Duke. When a cultivator reaches these three levels, they still absorb essence into the Lower Dantian and refine it into Qi, but they also open the Middle Dantian.

The Phoenix took another brief pause before continuing. "Qi moves from the Lower Dantian to the Middle Dantian, further enhancing spiritual power. It is far superior to ordinary Qi, allowing cultivators to utilize higher-level techniques for other purposes." The Phoenix didn't elaborate much on spiritual power, as long ago, only Yan Xiaobao had encountered those who could wield it. Yan Xiaobao could only agree with this decision; he already felt overwhelmed by the influx of unfamiliar information he was trying to sort out.

"The next three levels are King, Emperor, and Saint. To reach the King-level, you need to open the final Dantian, the Upper Dantian. It allows the user to refine their spiritual power into Wu Wei. Wu Wei is the ultimate power. Once you achieve this, you will be on an entirely different plane, standing far above all cultivators below this rank. However, it requires some insane foundational work built in the Lower Dantian and relentless, arduous training through the Middle Dantian. One can only hope to reach the Emperor-level, as they are exceedingly rare." The Phoenix fell silent for a long time, ensuring it had conveyed all the necessary information.

This silence was welcomed by Yan Xiaobao, who was working at the fastest pace he could manage. He slowly absorbed all the information, making sure to remember it all.

As he pondered over everything the Phoenix had said, a frown appeared on his boyish face. "Are there only nine ranks?" Yan Xiaobao asked with slight confusion. "What's the tenth?"

"That is God's rank," Lan Feng quickly replied. "But you don't need to worry about that right now. First, it is entirely different from the ranks dependent on Denise. Secondly, to my knowledge, there are only four Gods."

"What was your rank before you were sealed?" Yan Xiaobao asked curiously, not expecting a candid answer given their earlier interactions. Surprisingly, the Phoenix answered honestly. "I was at the Holy Rank before. From what I know, there have historically only been four Gods, and they are the Four Divine Beasts."

"If you're a Saint, you're not that powerful then, are you?" Yan Xiaobao's hostility toward the Phoenix waned slightly as his curiosity about his only companion deepened. The thought of staying away from her still caused him a great deal of pain, but if he focused on cultivating the essence of heaven and earth, he might overcome his heartbreak.

"I used to be strong," the Phoenix answered with satisfaction. However, this self-assured feeling was quickly replaced by something more resigned.

"Now I can't use my powers properly. I'm trapped in this body along with you. If I were foolish enough to use my powers, I guarantee this body would explode, and we'd both die a horrible death."

"But can't you reincarnate again instantly?" Yan Xiaobao asked. He doubted it was likely but still wanted to ask all the questions only the Phoenix could answer definitively.

"Do you think I'm omnipotent? When you die, your soul goes to the Netherworld. In the Netherworld, it wanders until you lose all memory of your past life. Whether it's you or me, we would forget everything. I was able to prevent this because I used the last traces of my remaining power, but don't expect me to do something like this again anytime soon."

The Phoenix snorted softly, its voice cutting off, and Yan Xiaobao could feel the sting of implied insult. Nonetheless, he continued asking questions undeterred.

"So, after entering the Netherworld, do the Four Divine Beasts turn into other beings?" he asked with curiosity, wondering what would happen if a God were to reincarnate.

"They never entered the Netherworld. They fell into a state called Eternal Slumber. They are asleep, and they will remain asleep forever. Legends say there is a way to awaken them, but no one has ever discovered it." The Phoenix sighed, a hint of yearning in its voice. Yan Xiaobao understood; even after thousands of years, this bird still missed his kin.

"What's your name?" Yan Xiaobao suddenly asked. After asking so many questions, he felt a pang of guilt. He had been told the entire life story of the Phoenix and yet hadn't sought such a personal answer before. "Lan Feng," the Phoenix replied. Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng fell silent for a long time.

"So, what do we do now?" Yan Xiaobao finally sighed, unsure of the steps he should take in this new world that seemed to be waiting for him.

"I want revenge. Once we manage to kill the person behind the betrayal of the Sky Blue Dragon's descendant, I should be able to return to my own body. That is the goal," Lan Feng replied immediately, fury flaring in his voice, stirring something primal and faintly aggressive even in Yan Xiaobao.

"What's that person's rank?" Yan Xiaobao asked out of interest. If he could help, he might as well try, he thought casually.

"He's an Emperor."

"I see." Yan Xiaobao said at first, but then realized the significance of what Lan Feng had just said. "But if you can't return to your own body, then you'll be trapped in mine, won't you? You expect me to fight someone of that rank?" He began to panic. He was a perfectionist and, while curious about this so-called cultivation, he had no intention of committing suicide.

"Yes, I will help you cultivate," Lan Feng assured him as if the matter were already decided and Yan Xiaobao had no say in it.

"Why should I do something so dangerous? Give me a reason." Suppressing his anger toward Lan Feng, he had no intention of risking his life again for this stranger. His previous anger resurged. Lan Feng might claim it wasn't his fault, but Yan Xiaobao still felt Lan Feng was his executioner.

"When you reach God's rank, you can reunite with that girl you saved." However, Lan Feng said this matter-of-factly, and his words sent waves through Yan Xiaobao's soul.

"Her?" he asked, breathlessly.

"Was that her name? The one you saved before your death."

"Are you certain?" Yan Xiaobao asked skeptically. The thought of never seeing her again after his death was unbearable. When he reincarnated, he hoped that she hadn't died, that she would be there the moment he opened his eyes.

Yan Xiaobao's expression grew grim. Unsure whether Lan Feng was lying or not, deep down, if there was even the smallest chance of reuniting with Li Fen, he didn't care if he had to go through hell to achieve it. So, he waited patiently for Lan Feng to continue.

"Yes," Lan Feng replied, but before he could carry on, he was interrupted by the deeply disheartened Yan Xiaobao.

"If I reach God's rank, wouldn't she have likely moved on with her life or already passed away?" he asked in a dejected voice as reality began to settle in. Lan Feng sighed and answered, "That's why I told you to reach God's position. When you become an expert of the God rank, you can safely venture into the Netherworld to find her soul; then you can create a body for her and restore her memories." Lan Feng made this knowledge explicit, luring Yan Xiaobao in. Both of them needed each other to achieve what they desired most. Yan Xiaobao understood this clearly, and even if Lan Feng asked him to jump off a cliff, he would willingly do it, as long as it meant reuniting with her.

"I will help you cultivate to God's rank, and you will help me take revenge. Once your lady is returned to you, our deal will be concluded, and we can go our separate ways. Do you agree to form a soul contract?" Lan Feng asked, a little nervous until he noticed the determination in Yan Xiaobao's soul.

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Chapter 177 Soul Contract

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"Tell me what to do," Yan Xiaobao replied firmly.

Yan Xiaobao was resolute. He agreed to do whatever the Phoenix required; however, despite his agreement, he couldn't help but feel uneasy about this unknown entity.

"He seems very happy," Yan Xiaobao thought to himself, sensing Lan Feng's emotions surging through him. Although the Phoenix hadn't said anything, these emotions were pleasant, causing Hui Yue some concern.

"I did say we need a soul contract, but unfortunately, we can't accomplish that right now," Lan Feng complained gently. The Phoenix clearly didn't pay attention to Yan Xiaobao.

"In order to form a soul contract, we need to gather at least the minimal required amount of Qi. But given that we're currently trapped in an infant's body, this will take some time to achieve," he explained straightforwardly.

Hearing this sentiment brought a variety of emotions rising within Hui Yue. At first, he breathed a slight sigh of relief because he wanted to learn more about this so-called soul contract. He wasn't entirely satisfied with the idea of willingly becoming someone's servant, but the promise of reuniting with her solidified his determination. While he felt comforted at the prospect of not being a slave yet, he was also somewhat disappointed at the crude soul contract not being fulfilled—this being the first step toward reuniting with Li Fen.

However, to form this type of soul contract, Yan Xiaobao must work hard and refine the required amount of Qi. "At what age do children usually begin cultivation?" Yan Xiaobao asked anxiously, wanting to know when he could sign this contract with Lan Feng.

Sensing Lan Feng's impatience but calm demeanor, Yan Xiaobao also calmed down. His initial worry and unease about the entire soul contract were only present because of her; now, he felt more at ease.

Suddenly, he had a feeling that Lan Feng wouldn't deceive him. Nonetheless, he was certain there were some hidden motives in his body, though he didn't question them.

Although Yan Xiaobao was now somewhat confident, the Phoenix wasn't intending to deceive him; he became increasingly impatient with how long they had to wait. Neither of them was stupid—they both knew there was a long road ahead to reach their goals of reunion and revenge.

Yan Xiaobao realized a new path lay before him. He would become a master, a hero among heroes! He couldn't wait to take the first step into his new life as a cultivator!

"If a child begins early cultivation, they typically start around the age of four. However, generally speaking, it's more common to begin at six or seven years old," Lan Feng said with a mocking tone. Yan Xiaobao sunk back into despair upon hearing his response, believing the laughter was ridiculing his character and causing his anger to rise once again. His hostility toward the Phoenix hadn't faded.

"I have to wait four years to cultivate? What do you expect me to do in the meantime?" he demanded aggressively, interrogating the ignorant Phoenix. "He's the one who said he would help me!" Yan Xiaobao thought to himself, wanting to see exactly how his supposed plan would help him.

"It's not that bad," Lan Feng replied to the angry Yan Xiaobao, his mocking tone still present in every word he uttered, showing little regard for Yan Xiaobao's feelings.

"I mean, you should think about it first." Lan Feng sighed pleasantly before continuing, "We're currently nesting in a pair of enormous sparrows. Personally, I wouldn't mind spending a few years here."

This comment left Yan Xiaobao dumbstruck, suddenly wanting to explode at Lan Feng inside Hui Yue, but he couldn't be sure if the Phoenix was being sarcastic. Unfortunately, they were both able to feel each other's emotions, and the Phoenix projected a familiar sensation. Now, Yan Xiaobao believed this creature to be shameless.

"She's our mother!" Yan Xiaobao was overwhelmed by the emotions surging through him. Unfortunately, he tried to make Lan Feng abandon his inappropriate ideas, but it had little effect.

"Oh, come on. Sleeping on something grand is everyone's dream!" Lan Feng chuckled mischievously. Yan Xiaobao was powerless against the Phoenix, who seemed to enjoy both their current embrace and Yan Xiaobao's distress.

"You're insane!" Yan Xiaobao muttered, giving up on the topic. He realized now that arguing with this self-righteous bird was impossible. It didn't help that every time he tried to argue, a ridiculous sense of bliss washed over him. Clearly, their animosity was mutual at the moment.

"It's fine. I'm just a beast. Driven by my beastly desires, it's natural for me," Lan Feng said proudly. Sharing a body meant that both souls could feel the body's sensations, taste the flavors on its tongue, and see what the body saw. The only difference was that when Yan Xiaobao controlled the body, Lan Feng sat back, purely experiencing the sensations of the five senses.

A thought suddenly struck Yan Xiaobao, and he furrowed his brow. Something about this so-called beast wasn't being said.

"I recall hearing your story before," he told Lan Feng. "I'm very certain you told me that the descendants of the four Divine Beasts are humans—not beasts like you."

Yan Xiaobao was somewhat bewildered and slightly annoyed. He was sure Lan Feng was a descendant of the Vermilion Bird, but he was also certain Lan Feng had said his offspring were human. This meant he was either lying about being a beast, or he was lying about his heritage.

Chapter 178 Soul Contract_2

No matter what, Lan Feng lying to him is something Yan Xiaobao is unwilling to accept. If the truth proves he was indeed lying, then who knows which parts of the earlier story were real and which were fabricated? This made it nearly impossible for Yan Xiaobao to trust anything he was told.

"I was once human, that's a fact," Lan Feng stated plainly, as though he had no intention of hiding anything from Yan Xiaobao. "But when we received our father's inheritance, we transformed into beasts."

Hearing that it was possible to change from human to Divine Beast completely shocked Yan Xiaobao. It made no sense! A deep fear emerged within him—was there really nothing immutable here, not even one's race or gender?

One thing was certain: the Phoenix could easily answer any of his questions. This answer seemed trivial—as long as the question concerned the world they now inhabited, the bird was willing to respond.

Lan Feng's quick reaction stirred feelings of guilt within Hui Yue. He considered himself someone fair to others. Some people judged others with malice. However, for some inexplicable reason, he currently harbored prejudice against Lan Feng.

Lan Feng claimed he had not killed Hui Hui; he also claimed he hadn't summoned the truck to harm Li Fen. Even though Yan Xiaobao adhered to the rule that everyone is innocent until proven guilty, he had shifted his belief, laying blame for everything squarely on this bird.

He had arrived in this new world where everything appeared absurdly laughable to him. He feared and worried about how he would survive, but this time the Phoenix stepped forward to help him understand where he was and what he was.

But even though Lan Feng answered all of his questions, he couldn't shake his annoyance at that damn voice in his head. Its smugness and arrogance were simply insufferable. The condescension dripping from its tone made Yan Xiaobao want to land a good punch on Lan Feng's face. For someone newly reincarnated, his corrupt thoughts were far too sinister.

A sigh escaped the baby's lips, gently stirring the sleeping mother, bringing a sense of approval back into Yan Xiaobao's mind. This sound was enough to sweep away any guilt currently plaguing Yan Xiaobao, replacing it with anger instead.

While it was intriguing, now was not the time to delve into Lan Feng's past or fret about humans transforming into beasts, as this would not currently aid his survival.

"Are there many Magical Creatures in this world?" Yan Xiaobao asked. He had assumed Divine Beasts were relatively rare. However, for one to transform into a Divine Beast, the evolution seemed necessary. This idea gave him several hypotheses he wanted to clarify.

Even though this was a question Yan Xiaobao had arrived at after some serious thought, it still made Lan Feng sneer. To him, the question was idiotic. Nevertheless, no matter how silly the question, Lan Feng still provided a serious answer.

"Of course, there are many Magical Creatures here," Lan Feng replied confidently, making Yan Xiaobao feel foolish for having asked. "They live everywhere. Some are tamed and domesticated, but most reside in forests and mountains."

Yan Xiaobao nodded in understanding of the concept. This sounded just like the animals in his old world. However, he now began to wonder if there were non-magical beasts in this world. Even though Yan Xiaobao wanted to ask this question, he waited until Lan Feng finished his explanation about Magical Creatures.

"Domesticated beasts are always weaker than those roaming in the wild. If you're strong enough, you can force some Magical Creatures to serve you. Most bred Magical Creatures are mounts, guard dogs, or have similar responsibilities. Nonetheless, this world has far more Magical Creatures than humans," Lan Feng continued.

Upon hearing this, Yan Xiaobao wasn't surprised; however, he was a bit shocked to learn that domesticated beasts were weaker than their wild counterparts. He had assumed people would breed and mix monsters to create hybrids. He had a feeling this information would become useful later.

"So, are all the beasts in this world Magical Creatures?" Yan Xiaobao finally asked, knowing Lan Feng had finished his explanation. He continued trying to learn more, but once again he heard a snort, and suddenly a wave of pity washed over him.

Lan Feng pitied him for being so stupid! This triggered another surge of emotion within Yan Xiaobao. However, even though he was angry, he had no intention of expressing his feelings; instead, he remained silent. He needed the Phoenix to explain how this world worked, and he had to endure the enraging answers.

"No, only beasts capable of cultivation are considered Magical Creatures," Lan Feng replied. Once again, even though he truly pitied Yan Xiaobao, he gave a rather satisfactory answer.

"Then, if they learn to cultivate, any beast might become a Magical Creature, but it rarely happens because they're too stupid." Yan Xiaobao nodded, thinking this made sense.

Cultivation was a fascinating topic. Yan Xiaobao was surprised because theoretically every living being could cultivate, but it seemed some lacked talent while others did not care at all. Some knew how to cultivate; others did not.

Regardless, Yan Xiaobao lacked the ability to cultivate, so he redirected his focus to Lan Feng's next explanation.

"Wild Demon Beasts are typically hunted by cultivators," Lan Feng continued explaining Magical Creatures.

"Humans gather their cultivation base within their three cores, while Magical Creatures collect theirs in the cores within their heads. Their cores look like gemstones and contain their essence and Qi. The cores of beasts can be used in various medicinal recipes to boost cultivation or can be extracted to enchant armor and weapons. There are many ways humans use them, but they are never consumed. Eating a core would instead absorb all the carefully cultivated Qi within a person."

Yan Xiaobao nodded once more. All the information provided was incredibly valuable. These gemstones seemed highly prized, but he wasn't foolish enough to immediately seek them out.

Noticing Yan Xiaobao's interest spark, Lan Feng laughed. "Demon Beasts are divided into cultivation levels just like humans; however, a human must possess far more refined Qi to compete with a beast of the same level. Frankly, if you have strong Martial Arts Skills, you can prevail, and I can help teach you those."

Lan Feng once again spoke with such smug arrogance that this time it simply made Yan Xiaobao chuckle. Lan Feng indeed had the right to be self-satisfied, as he likely harbored a wealth of knowledge in his fiery mind.

"In this world, death truly seems like a pervasive phenomenon," Xu Yue thought as he pondered the information Lan Feng had provided, feeling somewhat melancholic. For some reason, this made him hesitant about the new life he was forced into.

He grew up in a world where murder was condemned, but to survive in this world, there was no doubt he would eventually have to kill.

This thought repelled him. His stomach churned, and he felt like vomiting. Murder shouldn't be a big deal, yet the thought of striking someone down made his complexion pale and nausea wash over him.

The idea of blood splashing everywhere, the imagery of torn flesh—all of it made Xu Yue's stomach turn. He had no intention of imagining what it would be like to kill someone.

"You need to forget your old world," Lan Feng said gently, sensing Yan Xiaobao's discomfort. "We have a goal, and to achieve that, you cannot be weak."

Yan Xiaobao knew Lan Feng was right. Thus, he reinforced his resolve to achieve his goal. Despite his current stomach discomfort, he understood there was no turning back. Even the slightest hesitation could result in his death, which would prevent him from reuniting with Li Fen.

He replied, "I refuse unnecessary killing; I will not lay a hand on those who do not harm me. But if someone tries to kill me, I will kill them! If they obstruct me, I will remove them. If you're prepared to kill, you must prepare to die yourself."

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Chapter 179 Begin Cultivation

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"If family or friends rebel against you for revenge, what will you do?" Lan Feng asked. Phoenix follows a philosophy that compassion often leads to pain later on.

'Let them come. I will fight anyone who opposes me, but I will not touch those who remain harmless.' This was the rule Yan Xiaobao set for himself. In this way, he could preserve some aspect of his humanity.

Hearing this, Lan Feng shook his head slightly but said nothing. He understood that Yan Xiaobao's current mindset was still unstable. The chaos and discomfort from the moment of his death lingered. Although Yan Xiaobao claimed he could kill, saying something and truly acting on it were entirely different. Now was not the time to impose ideals on Yan Xiaobao.

"I am glad that you at least accept the idea of killing," Lan Feng said with a smile. "We can accomplish something, despite being trapped in the body of an infant."

Hearing the laughter within Lan Feng's voice, Yan Xiaobao let go of thoughts of murder and instead sighed in despair. He worried that their sharp discussions from before were beginning to resurface.

"Children usually don't start cultivating before the age of four because mastering the required techniques is extremely difficult."

Lan Feng spoke slowly, sensing a glimmer of hope within Yan Xiaobao's heart. "The most important part of cultivation is ensuring that the Qi you absorb is refined into pure energy. The purer the energy, the stronger you become. Do you recall what I mentioned earlier?"

Lan Feng asked. Suddenly, his usual arrogance and pride were replaced by a newfound seriousness. Yan Xiaobao nodded. He indeed remembered it from before.

Hearing the seriousness in Lan Feng's tone made Yan Xiaobao realize the importance of their current conversation. It seemed that some form of animosity between the two was finally beginning to evaporate within his heart.

"What we need to ensure is that you build a very strong and pure energy foundation. Typically, to gather and transform essence into Qi, meditation is required. Another reason cultivation is so difficult to start is that in the beginning, a specific posture is needed to assist the cultivation process. The more accustomed you become to refinement, the easier it will be to constantly absorb essence—even while in motion."

Yan Xiaobao nodded; this information made sense. However, he was still unsure how this would help him, as he had several years until he could start meditating.

"But, I know of another way to gather essence," Lan Feng said slowly. "However, this method is extremely significant—and entails a longer process than naturally meditating."

Excitement overtook Yan Xiaobao, and his breath halted. When he heard Lan Feng mention another method to improve his chances, hope began to stir within him. He quickly gasped for air and exclaimed,

'So, I can start cultivating now!?' His voice carried anticipation, and Lan Feng felt immensely pleased by his eagerness. After all, Yan Xiaobao's revenge and revival hinged on his strength.

"It's possible," Lan Feng continued. "But I must tell you, starting cultivation this way truly takes far longer compared to other methods. When a four- or five-year-old begins meditating, they often reach the First Star Level of student rank within a day of proper meditation. Using this method, however, it may take you six months to a year to achieve the same level. That's the level we need to reach to execute the soul contract."

Yan Xiaobao was surprised by the significant difference in how essence was gathered, but he remained determined to pursue it. Even if it took him a year, it was still better than waiting until he turned four. Thus, he waited patiently for Lan Feng to explain the process.

"Our current body is very small, so the amount of essence we can absorb at one time is negligible. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing," Lan Feng began to explain. 'The smaller the amount of essence you absorb, the more effort you can dedicate to refining it to higher quality. Remember, you must refine it to the highest quality; otherwise, we will never achieve the Emperor's rank," Lan Feng said strictly. Yan Xiaobao nodded in acknowledgment; he understood how crucial a strong foundation was.

'This method allows you to achieve better quality than your peers, but you'll need to invest more time and effort. That's why most children don't use it—they lack the patience for it," Lan Feng said with a laugh. Reincarnation had certainly given him new opportunities.

"For now, I need to explain everything to you, but once we complete the soul contract, I will be able to directly transmit my knowledge to you," Lan Feng said with a sigh. The sigh clearly expressed his frustration about the time wasted explaining everything. However, despite his impatience, he ensured that he explained everything thoroughly.

"Close your eyes and hold your breath," Lan Feng gave his first instruction, and Yan Xiaobao quickly complied.

Anyone looking at the newborn baby would be completely unaware of the conversation happening in Yan Xiaobao's mind, as their two souls communicated within their shared infant body. Lan Feng knew that Yan Xiaobao couldn't cultivate with his current physical form, so he decided to teach him how to refine essence into Qi solely using his consciousness.

'I need you to immerse yourself in your own body and locate your lower Dantian. Flow through your blood vessels until you reach the area below your navel," Yan Xiaobao followed Lan Feng's words, letting his blood pulse through his veins. Consumed by focus, he noticed his spiritual projection standing amidst the structural pathways within his body, and the discovery filled him with awe.

Chapter 180 Begin Cultivation_2

'Focus!' Lan Feng commanded in a stern voice. Yan Xiaobao, who was engrossed in observing the peculiar structure within himself, jumped in surprise. He let his soul sink lower and lower until it reached his Dantian, where Lan Feng was waiting for him.

Inside him was a void. A cave-like space that gave him a strange sensation. As his consciousness entered, he quickly noticed Lan Feng's flame waiting there for him. Taken aback, he looked around in awe, never imagining he would discover such a cave within himself. Even more astonishing was how his consciousness appeared exactly as it did before his misfortune. Within his awareness, he was no longer a mere infant.

"It's quite spacious," Lan Feng remarked approvingly, surveying the surroundings. "This cave will be capable of collecting a considerable amount of Qi." Yan Xiaobao had an inkling that this was likely because both he and Lan Feng now resided within his body.

"Sit down, cross your legs, and place your hands into the Bird Hand Seal," Lan Feng instructed. Yan Xiaobao initially hesitated, surprised by the unusual command. Yet, he quickly complied, crossing his legs and forming the hand seal as directed.

'Calm your breathing and guide the flow of blood toward your skin. Once it reaches the outer layer of your body, open a suction and maintain a steady rhythm. Allow it to circulate throughout your body in one complete cycle before returning to your Dantian,' Lan Feng explained as thoroughly as he could. Yan Xiaobao nodded slightly in understanding, before his awareness transformed into a beam of light that coursed through his veins, drawing in essence from the outside world.

It took him half an hour to complete a full circuit through his body. When he returned to his Dantian, a small wisp of spirit floated within his consciousness, resembling a valley gathering mist on an early morning.

In his field of view, Lan Feng nodded.

"Sit again as you did before. This time, make certain you use the Bird Hand Seal. No matter what happens, do not open your eyes," he commanded, satisfied to see how Yan Xiaobao obediently followed every instruction without question.

"Keep your breathing steady. With each breath, draw in some essence from your surroundings. Let it cycle within you like a whirlwind until it becomes as white as freshly fallen snow. The purer the white, the higher the quality," Lan Feng said, issuing his final order before falling silent. The Blue Fireball watched quietly as Yan Xiaobao refined the essence.

Yan Xiaobao spent five hours refining the essence. By the end, all the surrounding essence had dissipated, replaced by a fine Qi thread. It was the purest shade of white, gleaming with a brilliance that spun continuously at the center of his Dantian Cave.

Exhausted yet content, Yan Xiaobao marveled at his labor's fruit—a solitary strand of Qi within the void that carried the weight of his hard work.

Yet even though it was just a single thread, it was a testament to Yan Xiaobao's tenacity, filling him with an immense sense of satisfaction.

'Hui Yue has done well. The quality of this Qi is excellent,' Lan Feng remarked joyfully. Never before had he seen Qi of such caliber. Hui Yue had surpassed his expectations, even taking longer than anticipated. 'Rest for today; we'll continue tomorrow. This process takes time,' he added. Though Xu Yue hoped to become someone truly exceptional, he quickly acknowledged the need for patience. Achieving greatness was far from easy.

Time flowed steadily. Yan Xiaobao dedicated about six hours each day to absorbing essence and refining it into Qi. Though he wished to perform the process twice daily, Lan Feng forbade it, warning that over-exertion would diminish the quality of the Qi.

Understanding the reasoning, Yan Xiaobao agreed, striving only for Qi of the highest quality.

Deep down, he was grateful for Phoenix's assistance. The initial enmity between them had almost entirely vanished. In turn, Lan Feng's attitude toward Yan Xiaobao softened slightly as he became impressed by the boy's persistence.

Yan Xiaobao never complained, enduring daily struggles to absorb and refine essence. His Qi was now purer than anything he had previously refined, and his unfailing obedience earned Lan Feng's growing admiration for the stubborn young boy.

Aside from his cultivation efforts, Yan Xiaobao was beginning to understand his humble origins. Born into a poor family, he had no siblings, and his parents were still young. His mother, Hui Lifen, was even younger than Hui Yue had been. Yan Xiaobao found the entire situation quite peculiar.

His father, Hui Guang, made a living by venturing into the forest to gather medicinal herbs. However, he could only collect low-grade herbs, as they posed minimal danger. Both of his parents were cultivators ranked as students; his mother was at the Four-star level, while his father was at the Seven-star level.

Lan Feng explained that this was a result of passive absorption of essence during daily life rather than deliberate cultivation. Without resources or proper guidance, everyone in their village ranked somewhere within the student tier. Even those who managed to reach the nine stars of the student rank had Qi too impure to break through further.

Everyone in the village relied on harvesting medicinal herbs for survival. Once a month, they would travel to Liluo City to sell their gathered goods.

Since none of them were technically cultivators, they were forced to accept the absolute lowest prices for their herbs. Yet, it was just enough to sustain the village. Despite their poverty, the villagers helped one another, fostering a strong sense of community.

Yan Xiaobao's new mother tended a small vegetable patch near their hut. During the day, she also helped care for the village's few livestock. She brought Hui Yi along with her to watch over him, though Yan Xiaobao would mostly sleep.

Yan Xiaobao spent his nights cultivating and pretended to sleep during the day, observing life while feigning childhood innocence. Though he didn't play with the other children, he carefully blended in with those around him. Lan Feng would occasionally take breaks or impart bits of knowledge related to the world they now lived in.

Yan Xiaobao was a beautiful baby. Everyone adored his large, sparkling eyes and fair complexion. His skin remained untanned, no matter how much his parents exposed him to the sun. Even the village

elders likened him to a noble lady in terms of delicacy. His jet-black hair and eyes contrasted starkly with his porcelain-like fairness, making him the beloved darling of the entire village.

As time flew by, eight months passed swiftly. During this period, Yan Xiaobao worked tirelessly, quietly gathering essence and refining it into Qi. From the very start, the quality of his Qi never diminished. What began as a single Qi thread had grown into numerous threads spinning around his Dantian Cave. But on that day, something extraordinary happened upon completing his latest Qi thread. All the threads converged and intertwined, merging into a single, long strand of Qi. Coiling into a tapered spiral, it spun upon itself at the center of the cave. This Qi rope was so white, it sparkled with a dazzling light.

The light radiating from the spiral permeated Yan Xiaobao's infant body, filling him with a strength he had never experienced before. As he realized he had finally advanced to the rank of a One-star student, his face lit up with a mix of shock and elation!

'Well done!' Lan Feng praised, moving toward the blue fireball that was now heading for the Qi Spiral. "Now, Yan Xiaobao, are you willing to form a Soul Contract with me?" he asked while inspecting the spiral. Yan Xiaobao nodded eagerly, excited to see what would happen next. As soon as Lan Feng received his answer, the blue fireball erupted in flames, consuming the entire Qi Spiral.

Yan Xiaobao froze in place, stunned as eight months of grueling work disappeared in an instant. The Qi entered the blue fireball, causing it to expand with an immense surge of power before bursting into flames, leaving behind the shape of a human figure.

Anger, long dormant, began to rise again within him. But just as it did, he noticed that the human silhouette left behind had begun to move.

As the figure straightened itself gradually, Yan Xiaobao stared in astonishment. It was a boy, appearing in his early teens. His sky-blue hair and eyes radiated an ethereal charm, while pure white feathers covered his body, exuding a celestial aura.

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