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Chapter 191 Mrs. Rong Xing

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Yan Xiaobao looked at the older boy, his face showing conflicting emotions. Clearly, this misunderstanding needed to be clarified, as it could end the friendships Yan Xiaobao had gained in this new world. This realization brought a hint of bitterness to the young boy, but Yan Xiaobao lowered his head briefly, then resolutely lifted it again, gazing directly at Rong Ming.

"Yesterday, I ran into Mrs. Rong Xing," Yan Xiaobao began, "She seemed shocked when we encountered each other while I was bathing." He continued in a steady and measured tone, fully prepared to reveal the most shocking truth that might surprise Rong Ming, having already steadied his emotions. "When she realized I was a boy, she seemed very startled." Yan Xiaobao's face flushed lightly as he spoke the final sentence. It was the first time in his two lifetimes that someone had mistaken him for a girl, making the conversation undeniably awkward.

Yan Xiaobao didn't look at Rong Ming but instead fixed his gaze on the ground before him, giving off the impression of fearing the older boy, worried that Rong Ming might be angry with him. Yan Xiaobao knew he couldn't rely on strength to get through this; he would have to depend on his performance.

Yan Xiaobao quickly glanced at Rong Ming, his expression completely blank as he stared at the little boy before him. However, before Rong Ming could decide what to say, he opened his mouth several times as if unsure of his words, but at that moment, two figures strode into the tent.

Both Yan Xiaobao and Rong Ming turned their heads to see Rong Xing and Bubu entering the tent, chatting happily with each other, only to stop mid-step upon seeing Hui Yu and Rong Ming.

Bubu's face showed a fleeting, almost imperceptible expression, but it was quickly masked by a serious look.

Rong Xing immediately grasped the situation, and before the smile on her face could grow, Yan Xiaobao caught a flash of playful disappointment in her beautiful jet-black eyes. She walked over to the young boy, taking his pale little hand in hers.

Rong Ming swiftly shifted his gaze to Yan Xiaobao, whose face was darkening to an even deeper shade of crimson under the intensity of Rong Ming's stare.

"I..." Rong Ming finally couldn't hold back a word, still staring at the seemingly frightened-to-death Yan Xiaobao, who didn't dare make a sound. "I... hahaha." Suddenly, a helpless laugh escaped from Rong Ming's stunned lips, catching everyone present off guard. At first, Yan Xiaobao stiffened when he heard the laughter, but he soon realized there was no trace of anger in it. If anything, the laugh sounded rather self-deprecating.

"You... you're really a boy?" Rong Ming asked again, his face carrying a doubtful smile as his clear eyes focused on Yan Xiaobao, who wordlessly nodded, his face flushing red with embarrassment. He had to admit this was undoubtedly the most awkward situation he had ever encountered in both lifetimes—far more mortifying than when his mother walked in on him hanging out with his girlfriend.

Rong Ming slowly approached the embarrassed boy, circling him while stroking his chin in contemplation.

"How can a boy be so beautiful?" he asked in disbelief. No matter how many times he looked at this fair-haired young boy, he couldn't help but think he was far too pretty to be male.

"It's true," Yan Xiaobao finally pushed the words out in a voice of discomfort, while Rong Xing's eyes sparkled with some amused glint, and she nodded her agreement.

"I can confirm that he is indeed a boy," she said with a cheerful and confident voice. Her smile was relaxed and assured, though recalling last night's scene that she had witnessed firsthand still brought a faint trace of awkwardness.

Bubu, however, wore an expression of clear astonishment and couldn't stop himself from coughing when he grasped the implications of her words. Rong Ming was surprised as well, though he quickly regained his composure.

"This complicates things," he said in a soft voice, his face reflecting a mix of emotions that shifted between frustration, amusement, and surprise.

Looking back at Yan Xiaobao, Rong Ming sighed but soon noticed the young boy seemed worried about the entire situation. To ease his anxiety, Rong Ming gave him a soft, reassuring smile.

"It's not your fault," he gently told Yan Xiaobao. "I could never have imagined that the most beautiful person I've ever seen could turn out to be a boy!" He glanced at him again and furrowed his brow, "You should cut your hair. Your long hair paired with that porcelain-like skin easily leads to misunderstandings."

Yan Xiaobao immediately nodded in agreement. He didn't care at all about the length of his hair, and when he realized that Rong Ming continued treating him the same way even after their conversation, he felt a sense of relief.

"Alright," Rong Ming finally sighed, speaking to Yan Xiaobao. "Since you can't be my wife, you can be my little brother." He declared decisively, and this statement brought a sense of relief to Yan Xiaobao. Aside from Lan Feng, the twins were Yan Xiaobao's closest friends.

Lan Feng had entirely cloaked himself within the Qi field, completely uninterested in commenting on what was happening outside. Neither Lan Feng nor Yan Xiaobao dared underestimate Bu Huang, but even so, Yan Xiaobao could still feel the sound of laughter, proving that Phoenix was clearly entertained by the situation.

"Little brother Yan Xiaobao," Rong Ming said with a complex expression that quickly turned into a genuine smile. "Yan Xiaobao, you're so beautiful, you'll attract lots of beauties in the future. I trust you'll introduce me to someone stunning so I can find a gorgeous wife someday."

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When Yan Xiaobao heard the twelve-year-old boy talking about having a wife at his age, he was somewhat taken aback. Before his early demise, Yan Xiaobao had been over ten years older than this boy, yet even in those days, marriage had never crossed his mind.

This topic stirred a sense of displeasure in Yan Xiaobao. He understood Rong Ming's intention of pursuing a beautiful woman, a sentiment he'd shared many times himself, but the prospect of chasing a woman and planning marriage was entirely foreign to Yan Xiaobao.

Rong Xing soon noticed Yan Xiaobao's stunned expression. Although she attributed the shock to his young age and difficult upbringing, she quickly stepped in to help him out of the awkward situation. Rong Xing grasped Yan Xiaobao's pale hand and led him toward a tent where a table stood to one side.

This table was evidently meant for communication, as it bore none of the scrolls or maps that one would typically find.

"We should all have breakfast together. Do you have any errands today?" she asked with a gentle smile while watching Yan Xiaobao shake his head in reply, clearly grateful for Rong Xing's intervention.

"That's perfect. Let's spend the day together," she continued with another warm and caring smile, while setting an array of food on the table, the likes of which Yan Xiaobao had never seen before.

Yan Xiaobao glanced at Rong Xing. She was a remarkable young woman. He had met her for the first time that year when Lord Rongrong led his entourage to their village. On other occasions when they visited, she typically stayed in the camp to cultivate, leaving Yan Xiaobao little opportunity to truly evaluate her.

At first, Yan Xiaobao had presumed her to be the typical shy and noble girl whose cultivation talents were above average. Yet over the past few days, he noticed a maturity about her that could rival women he had encountered in his past adult life.

Rong Xing appeared calm and composed, but the only instance Yan Xiaobao had seen her slightly flustered was when her naked figure had been exposed the previous night.

Yan Xiaobao had to admit that Rong Xing was mystifying. She wasn't just noticeably mature; she also seemed to enjoy stirring up trouble. Evidently, she was aware of her brother's misunderstandings, but she didn't comment on them until Yan Xiaobao broached the subject.

Yan Xiaobao even remembered noticing a trace of disappointment in her eyes when the misunderstanding had been cleared. Rong Xing was clearly someone who enjoyed watching others struggle in one way or another, while she observed comfortably from the sidelines. While Yan Xiaobao felt somewhat perplexed by this, she was quick to support him and appeared to harbor no hostility toward him.

Overall, Yan Xiaobao held a favorable impression of the Rong twins. Rong Ming was lively, straightforward, and cheerful. Both of them had proven reliable and caring.

The four of them ate together, quietly chatting about the events of the past year at the academy and the village. Bu Huang, sitting next to the three children, couldn't help but feel a bit awkward given the scene they caused earlier that morning, so he ate in silence while observing the white-haired boy responsible.

Lord Rong Liang had previously told him that even Lord Rong Liang himself could not explain what was different about this boy. However, he had confirmed earlier that Yan Xiaobao was human, and not some divine beast disguised as a human. Despite his body being human, his spiritual energy contained attributes that could intimidate magical beasts, even highly-ranked ones.

Though Lord Rong Liang was intrigued by the boy, he maintained reason. Since it had been confirmed that he was human, he had no intention of provoking the child. However, Lord Rong Liang had instructed Bubu to observe Yan Xiaobao if they met, and Huang Bu decided to use this opportunity to do so.

Bubu stared at the little boy, frowning slightly.

"Have you been cultivating?" he asked in a neutral tone. Yan Xiaobao stared at him with wide eyes.

"Yes, Master Huang," Yan Xiaobao said fearfully. "A young teacher taught me some methods last year, and I tried my best to follow them while tending the goats," he said faintly. The more he spoke, the calmer his voice became. He was the embodiment of a frightened child, and if Lan Feng didn't need to stay hidden, he surely would have commented brilliantly on the performance.

"Uncle," Rong Ming asked brightly, "what kind of cultivation is it? Is it useful?" Rong Ming and Rong Xing were not yet strong enough to discern others' cultivation, so they relied on the elder's guidance.

Bubu glanced at Yan Xiaobao, whose heartbeat he could feel accelerating quickly. He hoped Lan Feng was hiding well; otherwise, the two of them would face a host of problems.

Bubu could sense something hidden in Yan Xiaobao's body, but he couldn't ascertain what it was. Lord Rong Liang himself decided not to spend too much time analyzing the mystery, so Huang Bu similarly felt no need to research further and instead focused on cultivating his base, raising his brows in surprise.

"He's a third-ranked star student. This isn't bad for the year," the elder assessed. For a seven-year-old to already achieve a third rank was not bad, especially since he had begun cultivating at six.

"His talent doesn't seem as exceptional as you two, but that's certainly not a bad thing," Huang Bu continued. At his current speed, it was certain that Yan Xiaobao would achieve the necessary five-star ranking before turning ten, a rating that exceeded the average.

Yan Xiaobao found himself agreeing with Huang Bu. It was indeed likely he'd reach the five-star student ranking by age ten, but the slow pace was owing to his cultivation method.

Hearing this, Rong Ming and Rong Xing broke into cheerful smiles, knowing it meant the three of them could grow together at the Royal Art Academy.

Rong Ming immediately shot out of his seat, shouting, "Stay right there!" before bolting from the tent. The three remaining inside could hear the commotion caused as the young master darted through the busy camp.

Looking puzzled, Yan Xiaobao watched as guards were pushed aside by the running boy on his way to a smaller tent. Hidden under the entrance flap, Yan Xiaobao peered at the tent wall being haphazardly shoved, accompanied by strange noises inside. When Rong Ming finally re-emerged, clutching a handful of unknown scrolls, he dashed back to the central tent and dumped them onto a clear section of the table.

"These are martial arts skills," Rong Ming said excitedly, his eyes lighting up. "They're all low-level, the highest being beginner training level. They're copies of techniques from our family collection."

Yan Xiaobao's eyes gleamed as he stared at the stack of scrolls. Though it conflicted slightly with his promise to Lan Feng, he couldn't help but feel a surge of curiosity about the skills before him.

"We'll try to explain the martial arts skills to you over the course of this month," Rong Xing said in her melodic voice, "and then you can attempt training with them before we return next year." Xu Yue nodded silently. Although he wasn't certain whether he could truly use these scrolls, he remained unaware of the Rong twins' concern for him.

With the Rong twins insisting that Yan Xiaobao visit the camp daily, the village head's grandson, Xia Lang, eventually took over goat-tending duties for the rest of the month. Their justification to the elders was that Yan Xiaobao had the potential to become a cultivator and needed their assistance to improve his cultivation methods while learning martial arts skills.

Lan Feng didn't mind Yan Xiaobao learning martial arts skills from the Rong twins. The proud phoenix wouldn't even bother memorizing the names of the three skills Yan Xiaobao had already taught him.

When Yan Xiaobao accused Lan Feng of being overly arrogant, the phoenix replied that he didn't concern himself with low-ranking techniques, confident that once Velocity Flow was perfected, he could provide better skills to Yan Xiaobao.

This response stunned Yan Xiaobao, but he refrained from retorting, knowing that Lan Feng was not boasting but merely stating the truth.

Yan Xiaobao spent the remaining month with the Rong twins and Bu Huang. Bubu eventually stopped scrutinizing him, allowing Lan Feng to cease hiding and instead participate in what was happening—though only Yan Xiaobao noticed him.

Learning martial arts skills from scrolls was vastly different from Lan Feng's earlier teachings of Mind Transformation through Velocity Flow. His body instinctively knew how to use Velocity Flow skills, mapping the Qi Flow Pattern required in the meridians directly into the body. Now, though the techniques were explained and Qi Flow Patterns were drawn in the scrolls for the meridians, the user needed to carefully apply the written skills to the body.

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Chapter 193 Martial Arts Skills

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Yan Xiaobao's previous experience in Velocity Flow and his old occupation as a university student greatly helped him as he tried to understand and practice low-ranking Martial Arts Skills. Yan Xiaobao had to admit that his success was solely due to the simplicity of the low-ranking techniques.

This month felt faster than usual, as Yan Xiaobao practiced these Martial Arts Skills and cultivated alongside the Rong twins. The goal of Rong's return was to ensure that Yan Xiaobao would master and refine these three Martial Arts Skills by the age of ten.

Upon hearing that Yan Xiaobao had sufficient skills to become a cultivator, the village was proud. They even supported the Hui Clan more than ever before. The village elders proposed to let Xia Lang take over the long-term chores of tending to the goats so Yan Xiaobao could focus on cultivation.

At first, Yan Xiaobao was somewhat irritated by the extra attention everyone was paying him. He quickly rejected the proposal to have Xia Lang take over his chores. He needed the daily trips to the mountains for privacy and to practice his Martial Arts Skills.

Fortunately, it didn't take long before the village returned to its usual rhythm. Everyone became busy with their own work while trying to survive in this impoverished village.

Month after month passed, and Yan Xiaobao spent his time practicing his Speed Flow techniques and the three skills given to him by Rong Ming. These three were known as Furious Strike, Smashing Kick Boxing, and Stone Fist.

The Rong entourage planned to revisit the village after a year passed. Yan Xiaobao would take one month off to tend to the goats, all while recalling Rong Ming's teachings and refining the three Martial Arts Skills he had acquired in his early years.

Time moved on, and Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng honed their Martial Arts Skills, refining the quality of their Qi. At times, it felt as though they were rushing, as the two of them strived to reach the five-star student level before entering the Royal Academy.

Soon, three years had passed, and ten-year-old Yan Xiaobao had advanced. Six months earlier during the frigid winter, he successfully achieved the level of Fifth Star and mastered three low-ranking Martial Arts Skills through Velocity Flow.

After years of intense training, Velocity Flow was completed a year ago. Lan Feng had since promised to teach him another advanced technique.

The new skill was a low-ranking defensive technique from the Duke Guard, called Qi Guard. An unknown cultivator developed this skill to activate a spiritual energy shield after unlocking the Middle Dantian.

Though this guard wasn't as strong as a spiritual energy shield, it was still the most powerful defensive skill a practitioner below the Master level could achieve. Yan Xiaobao hoped Lan Feng would give him a powerful offensive Martial Arts Skill, but Phoenix had already drunk and grumbled that ever since Hui Ming had received Rong Ming's three attack skills, Yan Xiaobao didn't need another from Lan Feng.

Yan Xiaobao stood in the village square, blessing his parents and all the other villagers who had gathered to wish him well before heading off to the Royal Art Academy.

The Rong entourage had visited the Magic Forest, but this time, they wouldn't return directly to Liluo City. Instead, they would return to the village to pick up Yan Xiaobao.

Both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng were incredibly excited, as they finally had the opportunity to leave the home where they had lived for the past ten years in this new world. Although Lan Feng was native to this world, he couldn't discern whether he was still in his old Kingdom or what had changed since his last visit.

The boy and Phoenix both realized the risks involved in entering the Royal Art Academy. Although Lan Feng could nearly perfectly conceal himself within Yan Xiaobao's body, there were still variables that needed to be accounted for.

Lan Feng used his Holy Position ranking to hide himself, but if he were to encounter another Holy Position expert, they could recognize Lan Feng's presence. Additionally, experts ranked under the King and Emperor might sense that something was concealed within Yan Xiaobao's body. However, they wouldn't be able to penetrate the defensive layers Lan Feng had established in Qi Cave at his home.

Furthermore, although Lan Feng was concealed within Yan Xiaobao, he couldn't entirely suppress his aura, letting part of it seep out, which would scare off any Demon Beasts that came near.

Nonetheless, both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng thought that, despite the dangers, they needed to seize the opportunity to attend the Royal Art Academy's enrollment ceremony.

Joining the Royal Art Academy would greatly aid Yan Xiaobao in his cultivation. Lan Feng had promised that once he reached the disciple level, refining Qi would become significantly easier. To achieve this, he would need to rely on cultivation rooms rich in natural essence and pills that could directly increase the amount of Qi. Otherwise, since each Star required increasingly refined Qi, both Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao would be stuck at the student level for a long time. Now, the requirements to break through to higher Stars had soared, as Yan Xiaobao had already reached the Fifth Star level.

The village was thrilled to have produced someone capable of studying at the Royal Art Academy. They saved up enough money to buy him a new set of clothes.

Yan Xiaobao dressed in his new garments, a white robe embroidered with blue and tied with a blue silk sash at the waist, awaiting Rong's envoy to take him away. This fabric was far more luxurious than anything Yan Xiaobao had ever owned. He felt deeply moved, knowing the cost of such clothing was undoubtedly a considerable burden for this impoverished village.

The village women also took time to mend and wash all his remaining clothes to ensure they were in the best condition when Yan Xiaobao arrived at the Academy.

Yan Xiaobao was acutely aware that his family couldn't afford any fees associated with attending school in the town. Fortunately, the Royal Art Academy had no tuition costs, and lodging and food expenses were covered by the Royal Family. Clearly, the Academy's nationwide presence was often used to discover and cultivate talent, instilling a sense of belonging to the Royal Academy, and thereby loyalty to the Royal Family.

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Yan Xiaobao pulled his thoughts back to the present, lowering his gaze to the gravel road leading out of the village. He was wearing new white clothes, with a small bundle strapped to his back containing spare clothes and a few personal items.

He had been waiting since morning, unsure when the Rong twins and their family guards would come to fetch him. The sun had long risen high into the sky, and now it was past noon, yet Yan Xiaobao continued to wait patiently.

The villagers decided to only tend to the absolutely necessary chores today so they could see off their promising young boy. Each villager approached Yan Xiaobao, wishing him success in his endeavors or reminding him to visit them occasionally. Some even implored him to become a great man, someone who could bring fame to this unknown village.

Hui Lifen and Hui Guang stood on either side of their son, their faces filled with contrasting emotions. They were incredibly proud of Yan Xiaobao, yet at the same time worried about letting him venture into the world. They had agreed to let him go because they trusted the Rong Family would support him.

Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao were both eager to move to a big city, every second feeling like an eternity. They both had grown weary of village life. Though Hui Lifen and Hui Guang showered the white-haired boy with all their love and care, he had never needed to mature in the way a young child typically does. All he remembered were the yearly moments shared with the Rong twins during the last ten years he spent growing alongside Lan Feng. It was time to move forward.

"I promise to come back often," Yan Xiaobao smiled and reassured his parents. "I won't stray far, just until school begins," he added, trying to ease their worries.

"This will be an exciting adventure," Yan Xiaobao said to Lan Feng, feeling the Phoenix nod in agreement.

"It's been four thousand years since I last wandered this world. I'm truly curious to see how it has changed."

Lan Feng was even more restless than Yan Xiaobao. The four kingdoms had transformed from the properties of the descendants of the four Divine Beasts. He couldn't be certain whether he was still in his homeland.

The history from over four thousand years ago was known as the Dark Era in this age, and only the strong knew what had transpired during that time. Everyone else was forbidden from knowing the past of these nations, not even the Rong twins were allowed to understand it. This restriction piqued Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng's curiosity. The taboo nature of the topic only made them more intrigued. Rong Ming and Rong Xing seemed disinterested in the matter, as they had grown up being taught to avoid such mysteries.

Lan Feng could easily tell which nation they currently resided in the moment they arrived. Nations might change names and erase historical accounts, but it was impossible to move the four mountain ranges created by the four Divine Beasts that divided these lands.

However, unraveling the truths of the Dark Era wasn't easy. But as Yan Xiaobao grew stronger, this mystery would eventually be solved.

Three hours passed before Lan Feng suddenly woke with a start. "I hear someone!" he exclaimed in an urgent tone. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but grin widely. They were finally here, and he was brimming with excitement!

The minutes before the magical beasts and riders reached the horizon felt like an entire year. Rong Ming, Rong Xing, and Bu Huang rode at the forefront; Rong Ming grinned broadly, while Rong Xing's eyes shone brightly, filled with star-like excitement.

"How will this work?" Bu Huang frowned as he looked at Yan Xiaobao and asked. The plan was to have the white-haired boy ride one of the magical horses. However, these horses were rearing on their hind legs or trying to flee from the innocent boy's presence.

"What if he rode with me?" Rong Ming suggested, but he quickly realized that idea wouldn't work either, as his young Qilin also seemed uneasy around the boy. Rong Xing then attempted to lend her help, but her Qilin reacted similarly.

Bubu sighed heavily. The child certainly carried some incredible secrets. His desperate expression made it clear that if the magical beasts continued to shy away, Yan Xiaobao might never leave his village.

No one yet knew the vow Yan Xiaobao had made to Lan Feng in his heart.

"We have no choice. You'll have to ride with me," Bo Bu finally said firmly. Despite his Qilin's discomfort around Yan Xiaobao, its cultivation level far surpassed that of any other Magic Beast, granting it superior intelligence. The Qilin, having been raised by Bu Huang since it was a foal, had a bond of trust deep enough to manage this situation.

Happiness gleamed in Yan Xiaobao's eyes as he grasped Bu Huang's hand, allowing the stronger man to lift him up to sit in front of him. The young boy waved goodbye to his family and the villagers still present, as the Rong entourage set out from the unnamed village once again.

Yan Xiaobao had never truly left the village. Although he had explored the various hills surrounding the settlement, merely ten minutes atop this magical beast had already taken him further away than ever before.

The scenery was breathtaking. It wasn't long before they left the hillside and entered a sparse forest. Riding through the forest felt like descending a slope, moving downward.

"Your village is situated within a valley," Huang Bu explained. "Technically, your village is inside the Magic Forest, but it's at the very edge, making it relatively safe." The recollection surprised Yan Xiaobao.

From what he had heard from the villagers and the Rong twins, the Magic Forest was an incredibly dangerous place. Yet, the villagers' farming land was quite low, leaving them vulnerable to attacks from magical beasts.

Typically, mercenaries or cultivators were hired to venture deeper into the Magic Forest, seeking medicinal herbs or magical beasts to extract beast cores. Aside from the Rong Family, Yan Xiaobao had never seen anyone else near the village.

Bubu seemed to understand the thoughts racing through the young boy's mind, continuing with a soft laugh. "Your village is hidden in a valley most people wouldn't dare venture into. When you enter this part of the forest, it feels as though you're leaving it, but that illusion is actually the only entrance to your village. Few are willing to take such a risk."

Hearing this answered several of Yan Xiaobao's lingering questions, and he refocused on his surroundings. It was obvious they were about to exit the outskirts of the Magic Forest and enter the outside world. As excitement surged within him, Yan Xiaobao's heart began to race.

Stretching before them was a road cutting through vast fields. There was a village not far from where they were, a settlement far larger than the one he had just left. A wooden barricade surrounded the village, manned by two guards at the entrance.

The guards greeted them respectfully, allowing them passage into the village.

The houses here were far bigger than what Yan Xiaobao was used to. He also noticed training facilities and even areas where groups of children were cultivating beside stones that radiated a peculiar glow.

Yan Xiaobao stared everywhere, shaking his head from side to side, trying to take everything in all at once. He spotted a large building bustling with villagers of all ages entering and exiting, clutching various scrolls.

"This village is very different from yours," Rong Ming remarked cheerfully, riding beside Yan Xiaobao and clearly enjoying the look of awe on his younger friend's face.

"On our way to Liluo City, we'll pass through several villages like this, but these villages are more like family estates." Yan Xiaobao looked at Rong Ming, puzzled, prompting the older boy to laugh.

"This village is owned by a Hei Clan family, meaning the land and its profits belong to them. Every year, they sell their agricultural yield in Liluo City."

"But they seem highly focused on cultivation?" Yan Xiaobao observed, pointing at the many training facilities.

"Yes," Rong Xing answered calmly from the opposite side. "They require strong cultivators to protect their land." Yan Xiaobao remained quiet, staring at Rong Xing, urging her to continue.

"Every child under the age of ten learns to cultivate. Those who reach the five-star level by ten are sent to the Royal Art Academy to study, while the rest will spend their lives working the fields."

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Chapter 195 Survival Methods

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"Every village does this," Rong Ming took over the explanation, "The village or patriarch must be a strong person, and he needs to have a group of experts around him so that they can fend off other villagers. If a village loses its experts, they will lose their land. Stronger villagers will take it."

Although this was very unfair, Yan Xiaobao had no choice but to clench his fist and nod. This was completely different from the village he came from. This world was entirely different from the one he came from.

"Your village is special," Bubu suddenly said, "Not many villages can survive in their way, so it's important that you don't tell anyone the location of your village. These families might go there and take it by force."

Yan Xiaobao nodded again because he understood the importance of keeping quiet. Now it made sense, he understood why his village didn't even have a name.

The landscape occasionally shifted from crop fields to pastures. As Rong Ming had mentioned, the entourage continued to traverse several villages, and Yan Xiaobao noticed that each village had equipment to cultivate. Every one of these villages showed great respect for the Rong family's entourage.

Liluo City was closer than Yan Xiaobao expected. The entourage traveled most of the time, during which the young boy saw towers in the distance. The closer they got, the more the city revealed itself.

The city bore a striking resemblance to the ancient cities Yan Xiaobao had studied in his old world. The entire city was surrounded by a twenty-meter-high black stone wall. The wall looked thick, with guards stationed atop it. A gate four meters wide and eight meters high was opened at the end of the road, guarded tightly by guards with the emblem of Liluo City on their chests.

The buildings inside the city seemed similar to Chinese architecture from the Tang Dynasty. Yan Xiaobao could see several great pagodas on the high walls, topped with multiple yellow roof tiles.

As they got closer to the city, it became harder to see the buildings hidden behind the gigantic city wall, but Yan Xiaobao felt a sense of mystery about the elements. The architecture was very familiar, yet at the same time, everything was different from what Yan Xiaobao knew.

Riding on magical beasts, it took less than a day to travel to Liluo City. However, the same journey took Hui Guang and the other men two days on foot.

As he looked at the city before him, a sense of awe quietly crept into Yan Xiaobao's heart. This place would mark the beginning of a new life for Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng.

Suddenly, a loud noise crossed the sky, dragging the young boy out of his inspiring thoughts.

"The young Master has returned!" a guard shouted from above the city wall. Bu Huang, Rong Xing, and Rong Ming nodded to the guard and slowed their pace as they entered the bustling streets through the seven-meter-thick city gate.

In ten years, Yan Xiaobao's eyes had grown, and he had realized his first return to the civilized world.

"Tonight we will hold a feast," Rong Ming said with a smile, noticing the excitement in Yan Xiaobao's eyes, "Tomorrow we will go to the Royal Art Academy, where you will take the entrance exam."

The sun rose, casting beautiful tones in the sky and promising a day of clear weather. Yan Xiaobao admired the breathtaking view from the window while feeling joy in his heart. No matter where he was, sunsets were always beautiful.

It was his first time in a city in ten years. However, this city bore no resemblance to the multicultural and technological world he once knew, everything was new to him. Watching the sunset reminded him of the place they arrived at the day before.

The Rong entourage arrived the day before and traversed the city. Along the way, Yan Xiaobao saw many shops and stalls, and even markets owned by different noble families within the city.

However, due to their fast-paced travel, Yan Xiaobao did not manage to observe well, and everyone in the city gave way on the crowded roads to let the City Lord's guards and the Rong twins pass undisturbed.

Arriving at the City Lord's mansion greatly surprised Yan Xiaobao. His mansion was very much like a Chinese palace.

It had many buildings, some surrounded by walls, others by moats. Some were storerooms, others towered buildings, and even four pagodas could be seen within the outer walls.

As Yan Xiaobao walked through the gates, he noticed that every building had its own courtyard. Some appeared to be small businesses, while others were residential areas. Between these different types of buildings were beautiful gardens and exquisite statues.

In the center of the palace stood a large building, erected on a hill with hundreds of steps leading to its entrance. It looked similar to the Taihe Palace in the Forbidden City that Yan Xiaobao had seen. The difference was that this building was erected on a hill, at least twice the size of the Supreme Harmony Hall, but the building itself wasn't as large.

"This is the city hall," Huang Bu explained, "where all matters related to the city are decided."

Yan Xiaobao nodded, realizing that a city under its protection had an insane amount of land, definitely requiring a rather large hall to accommodate every scholar and government official working for the city.

Bu Huang, Rong Ming, and Rong Xing were heading towards another large gate, which they called the East Splendor Gate, strictly controlled by experts from Duke University.

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Behind this grand door lay the private quarters of the City Lord, yet even so, its sheer expanse surprised Yan Xiaobao.

The accompanying city guards were left outside the East Splendor Gate to rest at the military camp for the next few days.

Bu Huang, Rong Ming, Rong Xing, and Yan Xiaobao proceeded together, reaching one corner of the City Lord's Attic building. Along the way, Yan Xiaobao was placed on the ground and instructed to remain behind, lest his presence disrupt the magical creatures within the stables. He obediently complied, taking in the breathtaking surroundings that made him feel as though he had traveled back in time.

"This style has been around for thousands of years in this world," Lan Feng murmured, his voice carrying a quiet introspection, only speaking now that they were truly alone. "Its popularity in your world is likely due to some expert visiting this plane and bringing back designs or concepts."

"You can travel between worlds?" Yan Xiaobao asked in shock, his voice filled with utter astonishment.

"Yes," Lan Feng replied casually, as though it were common knowledge. "If you're strong enough, you can carve your own road between planes. Because of this, you'll find countless styles and cultures on various planes. Everyone borrows ideas from elsewhere."

Yan Xiaobao nodded thoughtfully, realizing that every part of Earth had distinct designs and styles depending on where one traveled.

"When you become an expert, your lifespan increases. The stronger you grow, the longer you can live. If you reach the level of God, and that is your desire, you can achieve immortality," Lan Feng continued. "But imagine living eternally in a single place. It's hardly enjoyable. After a few millennia, you'd have memorized every pebble in your yard. So most experts eventually venture to other planes."

Yan Xiaobao furrowed his brow. "Didn't you say earlier there were only four Gods and four Divine Beasts? How can there be others?" he asked skeptically.

"I've only met four Gods," Lan Feng clarified. "And while I've lived on this plane, there have indeed been only four deities here. However, the world consists of countless planes, and Gods can create planes if they wish to. This particular plane is considered very young, comparable in age to the one you come from." This revelation shocked Yan Xiaobao, who had thought millions of years held no youth, but before he could comment, Lan Feng continued. "Obviously, with so many planes, there are bound to be numerous experts. I don't even know how many Gods exist or where they reside. If I were to travel outside this plane, even as a Saint, I would be considered weak."

Overwhelmed by this wealth of information, Yan Xiaobao involuntarily took a sip of water.

"Don't stress too much," Lan Feng sighed, noticing Bu Huang and the Rong twins approaching, and quickly withdrew into the Qi Acupoint. "When you reach God's rank, we will retrieve your girlfriend's soul so the two of you can tour as many planes as you wish." His voice grew quieter as he retreated into the Dantian, eventually fading into silence.

The Rong twins, now significantly taller and far more mature than when they'd first met, laughed without reservation as they playfully dragged the younger Yan Xiaobao, proudly showing him their favorite spot in the gardens.

They spent considerable time exploring before finally arriving at Rong Liang's main residence and eagerly entering the dining room, where an extravagant feast awaited the three young guests.

Lord Rong Liang stood waiting for them and greeted the children warmly before departing to another room with Bubu to address pressing matters that required consultation.

Yan Xiaobao looked over the table, taking in the numerous dishes he'd never encountered before—some shellfish, others mysterious meats. There were salads and sauces, vegetables and stews, various kinds of soups and breads. It was the grandest banquet Yan Xiaobao had ever seen.

"Don't be too nervous about tomorrow," Rong Ming remarked as he eyed a chicken leg on his plate.

"Your cultivation level is high enough to pass the academy's entrance exams, and we'll accompany you to ensure everything is fair," he added with a reassuring smile before tearing half the meat off the bone and chewing contentedly.

"I just hope Mr. Wang isn't officiating the tests," Rong Xing remarked calmly, prompting a puzzled look from Yan Xiaobao. "He dislikes common folk," she explained. "Sometimes, he even cheats during exams to make sure they don't gain admission."

"But don't worry!" Rong Ming promised mid-gulp through his food. "When it's your turn, we'll make sure there's no foul play." Rong Xing nodded firmly in agreement.

"Once you're accepted, we'll stick close from the start," Rong Ming continued. "We'll ensure you attend the right classes on time. No one would dare bully you while you're with us," he said, grinning broadly before swiftly picking up a root vegetable that resembled soil and handing it to Yan Xiaobao. "Try this—it's delicious!" he said with his mouth full.

The three spent the remainder of the evening at the table, but try as they might, they couldn't finish everything. By the time the outside sky turned completely dark, Rong Xing led Yan Xiaobao to a small two-story house near the City Lord's residential complex, complete with its own private courtyard.

"Stay here tonight," she said with a smile, clapping her hands to illuminate crystals inside and outside the building. "We'll come get you tomorrow," she added, hoping Yan Xiaobao wouldn't miss it, before turning away to head back to her own home.

Though Yan Xiaobao tried to sleep, anxiety about the next day made his attempts futile. The academy entrance exams were incredibly important to him; passing meant accessing resources critical for swift advancement in student rankings. But should anyone at the academy discover Lan Feng's presence, things would take a dire turn.

"Bubu is a five-star King Ranking Expert, while Rong Liang is ranked nine stars. Both of them know you're hiding something, but so far, they've been remarkably considerate. Don't expect such understanding from others," Lan Feng warned, and Yan Xiaobao nodded in solemn agreement.

"If we notice anyone else unlocking the Upper Dantian, we'll have to stop," Lan Feng continued. The two quietly planned potential escape routes throughout the night as a precaution against exposure. Before they realized it, the sunrise painted the sky in warm, beautiful hues.

If he were still in the village, Yan Xiaobao would've been on the hillside tending to goats by now. Despite only two days passing since he completed his chores there, it felt like an entirely different world.

Moving through Liluo City felt like wandering in a dream. While everything appeared familiar, it also held an air of strangeness. He had seen chickens before, eliciting a sense of familiarity—but upon closer inspection, he would notice the horn atop its head and the shrunken tail behind. Even the most familiar things concealed elements of mystery.

Yan Xiaobao spent the peaceful morning listening to tranquil sounds and enjoying the serenity. He had anticipated the city would be bustling with noise, but the grand city lord's residence was far enough from the commotion that no sound reached its grounds.

Initially, the only sound Yan Xiaobao heard was that of guards chatting idly as one shift handed over to another. But as the estate gradually woke up, servants rushed back and forth to ensure everyone's breakfast and essentials were prepared for another busy morning.

Before long, scholars darted around, fetching scrolls and manuscripts as their teachers prepared for a busy day in their offices. Gradually, the entire mansion burst into life and activity, just like any other day.

A servant came to Yan Xiaobao's courtyard to invite him to join the Rong family for breakfast. Yan Xiaobao accepted swiftly, only to discover Rongrong and Bubu already there upon entering the dining hall.

The young, white-haired boy quickly raised his hands and bowed gently to the two adult men, who nodded slightly in return before resuming their conversation.

The Rong twins and Yan Xiaobao enjoyed a hearty breakfast featuring fruits and yogurt, meats and breads, milk, and freshly squeezed juices. The sheer volume of food prepared for every meal always left Yan Xiaobao in awe.

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Chapter 197 Hostility

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"Don't worry, the leftovers from the buffet always go to the Martial Arts School managed by my father," Rong Ming said proudly, noticing Yan Xiaobao's judgmental look. "Children under ten can go to the Martial Arts School, learn how to cultivate, and they get a meal every time they show up," Rong Xing explained. "Father wants to help them learn cultivation so they can help their families make money instead of living in poverty."

"But Mr. Wang doesn't like the Martial Arts School," Rong Ming said in a low voice. "Many poor commoners have gained access to the Royal Art Academy because of it. He thinks teaching Martial Arts to commoners is stupid and undermines ruling them."

Yan Xiaobao knew this wasn't a topic to be discussed at school, but he instantly felt more positively about Lord Rong Liang.

"That's because Elder Wang's family is part of the "Hundred Great Names,"" Rong Ming grumbled but still kept his voice low, ensuring that the two adults in their discussion couldn't hear him—or so he thought.

Rong Xing sighed. Her twin brother was always blabbering about things he didn't fully understand, so once again she assumed the role of translator. "The Hundred Great Names are families that can trace their lineage back to the Dark Era. Only one hundred noble families survived. They're all spread across the three allied nations, so belonging to one of the Hundred Great Names is quite remarkable."

Yan Xiaobao nodded. That meant their family histories went back at least four thousand years, truly a legacy for any noble family. He engraved Elder Wang's name in his memory, deciding he'd tread carefully when dealing with potential issues involving that person.

The meal was soon finished, and Rong Ming busied himself telling Yan Xiaobao about some of his friends at the Royal Art Academy.

Yan Xiaobao wore some of his usual clothes today. Though they were tattered, they were incredibly comfortable. However, a maid quickly brought him a set of new white garments. They had been cleaned overnight, and the Rong twins insisted he wear them. They wanted to show off their beautiful friend.

Letting out a sigh, Yan Xiaobao obliged and swiftly changed into his finest outfit. Secretly, he hoped they could persuade the infamous Elder Wang that Yan Xiaobao was someone worthy of studying at the Royal Art Academy.

A carriage was waiting for them outside the manor. It was pulled by four Qilin. Although related to Qilin, these were more elegant. If the Qilin were a mix of horse and dragon, these creatures were more like deer fused with dragon. They were graceful and poised, with lean muscles rippling under sleek hides.

Rong Xing explained, "The Royal Art Academy is nestled in the mountains behind the city. It's not far from us, but we're expected to take a carriage when heading from the city to the academy."

The journey through Liluo City was much like the day before. Yan Xiaobao had no time to examine anything closely, but he consoled himself since he didn't have the money to enjoy the city's delights anyway. The city was fun only for the wealthy.

The trip to the Royal Art Academy didn't take long. As soon as the carriage passed beyond the city walls, it picked up speed, almost flying toward a distant mountain peak. Drawn by the Qilin, the carriage reached its destination in just half an hour.

The carriage stopped at the foot of the mountain, where numerous children and their entourages congregated. Some children, huddled in groups and looking ragged, made Yan Xiaobao assume they were the commoners whom Mr. Wang despised, while others were accompanied by numerous experts and servants, there to assist them with the examination.

Beyond the children and their entourages stood seven elderly figures, lined up in a straight row before the mountain gate. There was exactly three meters between each elder, and in front of them was a small table.

On each table lay a book, a pen, and a white stone slab. Standing before the elders were about ten children. One by one, each child stepped forward, stated their name and age, and then placed their hands on the slab. The elder would then instruct them to insert some Qi to activate the slab, which would record the child's true age and cultivation level.

Since the highest-ranking elder among them was a Four-star Duke, while the others were Nine-star Masters, Yan Xiaobao furrowed his brows slightly. "These elders wouldn't be able to detect the presence of Lan Feng."

Their skilled experts must be lurking within the academy,' Lan Feng said, his voice eerily calm.

"Oh no," Rong Ming muttered beside him. He had been nervously fretting about being discovered. "Mr. Wang is here. Let's queue up over here," he continued, grabbing Yan Xiaobao's arm and pulling him toward a different elder.

Yan Xiaobao felt confused. Mr. Wang was supposed to hold a high position in the academy, yet none of these experts posed any real threat to him or Lan Feng. Suddenly, a thought struck Yan Xiaobao, and he narrowed his eyes slightly. "What rank are academy instructors?" he asked.

"Uh, most of them are Masters. Some are Master Stars, and we also have a few Duke University-ranked experts," Rong Xing answered after thinking for a moment. Enlightened, Yan Xiaobao felt reassured. After all, this was just the outer disciples' area. The students here all relied on the Lower Dantian for cultivation, while those who'd opened their Middle Dantian had been transferred to the Capital's Royal Academy.

It made perfect sense that instructors with higher cultivation levels would teach more advanced students. For now, there didn't seem to be any major issues for Lan Feng or Yan Xiaobao to worry about as they moved through the academy.

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While he stood in line, Yan Xiaobao was in a good mood, eagerly waiting for his turn to be tested. The Rong twins stood beside him. Despite already being students of the Royal Academy and permitted entry, they refused to leave until Yan Xiaobao was accepted as well.

The City Lord's two children standing next to this unknown, strikingly beautiful boy undoubtedly caused a stir, with many noble families speculating about the mysterious origins of this child.

Because all three were aware that his heritage was a secret, Yan Xiaobao and the twins showed no interest in the incessant rumors. Before long, Xu Yue calmly approached the elder—a radiance emanating from within that seemed incongruous for someone of his age group.

"What is your name?" The elder asked in a friendly tone. After all, this child had evidently earned guidance from two of the Academy's high-profile students.

"Yan Xiaobao," came the clear response.

"Place your hand on the slate," the elder instructed. Yan Xiaobao complied. A second later, the elder placed his fingertips on the same slate, drawing out some of his Qi. An instant later, letters emerged on the surface, prompting Yan Xiaobao to remove his hand.

"Five-star student ranking. Ten-year-old boy." The elder muttered aloud as he recorded the results on a nearby desk. Then, he reached into a pouch and pulled out an emblem. The emblem was small, pentagon-shaped, and adorned with five petals encircling a sun.

"You're good to go," the elder said, handing the emblem to the child before him. "Spend your years at our academy wisely and stay safe." With a wave of his hand, the elder turned his attention to the next child in line, while the Rong twins led Yan Xiaobao toward the mountain's entrance.

The entrance was unadorned. The three children passed through a stone pavilion, where Yan Xiaobao noticed his student badge glowing faintly as he stepped inside, though no apparent effect followed. Soon, the strange light disappeared altogether.

"This is the key," Rong Xing explained. "Only individuals possessing a Royal Academy badge can enter the grounds." The Rong twins revealed their own badges, which looked identical to Yan Xiaobao's.

"The gold indicates you're an inner disciple of the Capital Royal Art Academy. Teachers have a white emblem," Rong Xing elaborated.

"This is the worst part of the Academy," Rong Ming lamented with a sigh. Glancing to the side, Yan Xiaobao followed his gaze and saw endless stone steps leading to the mountain's summit.

The three children smiled at each other before beginning their ascent, one step at a time. Despite being cultivators, the climb taxed their energy. Half an hour in, Rong Ming—bored of the monotony—complained incessantly.

"We have many friends at the Academy, and I'm sure they'll grow to like you as well," he remarked, his tone both weary and optimistic. "Many of them are commoners, but in this world, strength matters more than lineage. That's what Father always taught us."

"I usually hang out with Gao Yan, Ma Kong, and Deng Wu," he continued as the trio climbed steadily upward. "Gao Yan's family is incredibly poor, but his talent rivals mine and Xing'er's. Father instructed us to look out for him from the start; he's a truly remarkable individual. Most of the commoners at the Academy look up to him. Ma Kong is from the Ma family. They hold noble status now, but since their title is still recent, most other nobles disdain them. Then there's Deng Wu. He's an odd character. The Deng Family is among the top hundred, but Deng Wu is more of a skirt-chaser. He's been tagging along with us since the beginning, purely for Xing'er."

After thoroughly detailing the backgrounds of different friends, they reached the top of the stairs. Yan Xiaobao took a deep breath.

The summit, which should have been the peak of a mountain, unfolded instead as a bustling city teeming with teenagers. Suspended bridges stretched across its expanse, connecting various peaks. Flying Demon Beasts hovered in the skies, awaiting their masters.

The four mountain peaks were riddled with clusters of small houses, roughly a thousand per peak, which Rong Xing explained were dormitories. Each student resided in their own room. Every peak also had a cafeteria serving free meals three times a day.

To their left were the peaks with dormitories; to the right stood towering buildings. Each structure bore a distinct plaque. One read "Martial Arts Skills Hall," another "Qi Theory Class," and yet another "Cultivation Methods."

Some peaks had been entirely leveled to serve as training grounds, while others had been converted into battle arenas.

Directly ahead of Yan Xiaobao was a colossal pagoda—the main building of the Royal Academy. It housed the most advanced martial arts techniques and served as residence for all instructors and teachers.

Yan Xiaobao glanced around at the students. Some were young and visibly anxious, while others, older and more seasoned, navigated the bustling academy grounds with a sense of comfort and belonging.

This was Yan Xiaobao's new home—a place where he could feel joy bubbling inside him. A brand-new world full of adventures awaited his exploration.

"Rong Ming!" A voice called out from nearby, prompting Yan Xiaobao to turn and see a young man rushing toward them.

Yan Xiaobao watched the approaching youth closely as he shouted Rong Ming's name, his wide grin lighting up his face. The tension in his muscles quickly dissipated, conveying a clear lack of hostility between him and Rong Ming.

"Hey, Gao Yan," Rong Ming greeted the newcomer cheerfully as the young man reached them. Seizing the moment, Yan Xiaobao subtly hid behind Rong Xing, observing this boy carefully. Based on the earlier explanations, Gao Yan possessed talent equal to Rong Ming and Rong Xing. Born into an extremely poor family, his gifts were discovered solely because of Lord Rong Liang hosting a martial arts school in Liluo City.

Initially, Gao Yan only noticed Rong Ming—his good friend—but he quickly spotted the pale-haired boy hiding behind Rong Xing. Just as Gao Yan opened his mouth to say something, a theatrical voice interrupted him.

"He's a boy, and you're a commoner," it said. Though the tone carried a hint of arrogance, its expression of "commoner" felt more affectionate than derogatory.

Yan Xiaobao turned his attention to the newcomer, noticing immediately that this young man was strikingly handsome. Though he appeared around the same age as everyone else, he exuded an air of maturity beyond his years. The tallest of the group, his lean, well-toned physique stood out prominently.

With long hair as dark as coal and eyes resembling two dazzling obsidian gemstones, the youth's gaze sparkled mischievously. Happiness danced like tiny stars in his eyes, as though the world around him was his playground. His simple black attire—though understated—was undeniably of superior quality. This person was undeniably a young master.

The young master strode gracefully toward the group, presenting a flower to Rong Xing before kneeling before her.

"Ah, the woman of my heart. The long summer leaves me yearning to see you as a parched wanderer craves water in a scorching desert. The sole force driving me is the hope of beholding your beautiful face—a vision that lends me the strength to live and serve as a slave within your heart."

Yan Xiaobao widened his eyes in disbelief at the new arrival. The words spoken were so over-the-top that Yan Xiaobao couldn't fathom how anyone could take this person seriously. Yet, what shocked him most was how solemn the young man appeared while declaring his undying love for Rong Xing.

Adding to Yan Xiaobao's astonishment was Lan Feng laughing uncontrollably. Phoenix's laughter couldn't be contained, as he'd never encountered anyone this dramatic before.

"This is incredible," Lan Feng exclaimed, surveying the flamboyant youth. "We need to stay here; the people are amazing." Yan Xiaobao almost retorted that they weren't here for entertainment but to cultivate themselves. However, he stayed silent as the newcomer turned toward him, his eyes gleaming.

"My name is Deng Wu," he softly announced. "Why not call me Brother? You should keep me company for a while." He continued with a calculated wink.

Rong Xing swiftly reacted to his flirtation, defensively pulling Yan Xiaobao into a protective embrace while shooting a sharp glare at Deng Wu.

"You said he was a boy, and yet you act like this?" Gao Yan questioned Deng Wu, his expression puzzled as he tried to process this sudden turn of interest from the charming young man.

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"My heart belongs to Rong Xing, and only Rong Xing," Deng Wu said proudly, "but if I don't appreciate beauty and desire to conquer it, who would I be?"

Rong Xing opened her mouth, about to argue, but her expression quickly shifted from indignation to delight as another young man strolled toward them, lazily waving his hand.

Yan Xiaobao was no fool; he quickly deduced that this young man must be Ma Kong. Compared to the others, his hair was relatively short and a fiery red. His eyes were light brown and tranquil, reminiscent of a sturdy tree that would stand strong in any storm.

"What an adorable kid," Ma Kong said upon reaching the group, patting Yan Xiaobao's head like he was some kind of pet before greeting everyone present.

Yan Xiaobao looked at everyone present. He already trusted Rong Xing and Rong Ming. Both had proven in the past few years that they genuinely cared about him, and it seemed their friends were also quite dependable.

The addition of these three to the group was exceptionally different yet mutually complementary. Ma Kong was the calm supporter of the team, likely the one capable of thinking through practical matters alongside Rong Xing. Gao Yan was an energetic, talented individual who acted impulsively without considering the consequences—very much like Rong Ming. Then there was the overly dramatic and amusing Deng Wu. However, Yan Xiaobao could sense that behind those smiling eyes lay an intelligence not to be underestimated.

"I think it's time to introduce our new beauty," Deng Wu said with a flourish after regrouping, once again fixing his gaze on Yan Xiaobao. Rong Ming couldn't help but smile faintly while shaking his head.

"His name is Yan Xiaobao. He's a friend of our family, and we've known him for five years now. He came to this academy solely because of us, so we'll take care of him in the future," he introduced calmly, without delving into any specific details. Deng Wu and Ma Kong noted that some details were left out, but neither asked any questions. Gao Yan didn't seem particularly concerned about anyone's background.

"Well, well, little brother Yan Xiaobao," Deng Wu said in his melodramatic tone. "My dorm is Room 3007. If you need help, you're not just welcome to visit me; especially at night," he concluded with a laugh. Rong Xing once again shot a fierce glare at the black-clad youth, hissing viciously at him.

"If you so much as touch Yue, I will never forgive you and will personally ensure you never lay a hand on anyone else," she said coldly, hugging the small boy tightly to her chest. Seeing normally quiet Rong Xing so vividly express herself left the boys arching their eyebrows.

"Got it," Deng Wu said in a theatrical tone, shaking his head in feigned sorrow. "My dear, beautiful little Yue, I won't let forbidden romance flourish between us. My wife forbids it; who am I to hurt my wife?" Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but smile faintly, and the others joined in, predictably amused by Deng Wu's display of affection for Rong Xing.

"Oh my, my," a cocky voice suddenly rang out behind them, "Look who we have here. Haven't you realized that nobles don't allow themselves to stoop to play with commoners?"

Yan Xiaobao squinted at the speaker as he observed him. The man was attractive, but not conventionally handsome. He seemed taller than average and carried himself with an air of arrogance. His lips curled into a condescending smirk as he looked at Gao Yan and Ma Gang with eyes full of disdain. It was obvious he didn't accept new nobles or commoners. Behind him stood a group of ten young people of varying ages. Some appeared closer to twenty rather than the fifteen years shared by Rong Ming and his group.

After sneering at the pair, his gaze swept toward Rong Xing and the slightly older woman holding the young Yan Xiaobao in her arms. Suddenly, a lascivious gleam flashed in his eyes.

"Young lady," he said in a gentle tone while approaching Yan Xiaobao, "Don't waste time with these people. They'll only ruin your beauty. Instead, come with me. I am Wang Jingshen, from one of the Academy's hundred most prestigious families. I can ensure you a comfortable stay at the academy." The young man claiming to be Wang Jingshen reached out and licked his lips, attempting to grab Yan Xiaobao by the arm.

"Hahaha!" Gao Yan burst into laughter, followed by faint smiles from the other four, further aggravating Wang Jingshen, who frowned at the chuckling boy. "What are you laughing at, you piece of trash?" he snarled, his face twisted in a cold sneer, visibly irritated by the laughter.

"Oh, nothing really," Gao Yan replied, wiping away tears of mirth. "It's just your masterful misjudgment, claiming to be an admirable high society gentleman, yet failing to notice that little brother Yan Xiaobao is a boy. How could you miss that? Or maybe you did notice it, but you just happen to fancy pretty young boys?" Gao Yan's words were dripping with mockery, but he maintained his composure and etiquette as any civilian would when speaking to a noble.

Strangely, every word seemed to tint Rong Ming's face faintly red, and Rong Xing had to cover her small mouth with her hand to stifle her laughter.

Wang Jingshen's complexion alternated between an angry crimson and ghostly pale, and he said nothing. Instead, he cast a venomous glare at Yan Xiaobao, as though blaming him for his humiliation. Eventually, he turned on his heel, signaling his followers to leave, which they did after enduring the laughter aimed at Wang Jingshen and his group.

Chapter 200 Conquest_2

"Don't worry about them," Ma Kong said with a smile, gently placing his hand on Yan Xiaobao's shoulder. "He may be loud, but ultimately, as long as you're with us, he can't do anything to you. Indeed, his family is one of the top names, but so is Deng Wu, don't forget the twin brothers here. Not

to mention me. Even though my family recently gained nobility, we do have the capability to support our rank. And never underestimate Gao Yan and his connections in Liluo City."

Yan Xiaobao nodded gratefully after the red-haired youth's explanation, but inwardly, he was mildly curious. The Ma family was not as simple as he first expected, let alone the connections of Gao Yan.

"It seems your intuition is improving," Lan Feng commented with satisfaction, "We need to study the various power struggles within Liluo City. We already belong to the Rong Family, so thinking this doesn't concern us would be ignorant. We need to prepare for whatever might happen in the future."

Yan Xiaobao fully agreed with Lan Feng. It was important for the two of them to know which powers were on which side, whether there were actual power struggles, or just minor family grievances against each other. Yan Xiaobao's eyes grew more determined as he decided to sit down and talk with others later to truly understand the situation.

"Go on," Rong Xing said softly, pushing Yan Xiaobao into a closed room within the academy office building. Inside the enclosed room, there was an old man sitting behind a desk. Behind him, the shelves were filled with thick, dusty books.

Upon entering the room, Yan Xiaobao took a deep breath. This person was undoubtedly the most powerful figure within the academy, the first expert in the King Ranking. Yan Xiaobao quickly assumed he must be the academy principal.

Fortunately, the academy principal showed no interest in examining Yan Xiaobao, focusing all his attention on the book in front of him. Hui Yue gazed at the book, noticing that each page was very thick. The pages were filled with numbers, and next to the numbers were small markings Yan Xiaobao couldn't recognize.

The old man never lifted his eyes from the book but raised his finger, making a beckoning gesture, causing the student badge to react immediately, flying from Yan Xiaobao's hand toward the book.

It settled into one of the small unknown markings. To Yan Xiaobao, it seemed quite random. However, the elder frowned and started grumbling. He poked at the badge several times, but it didn't change its position, not even an inch. Finally, the old man glanced at Yan Xiaobao before standing up and turning around.

He grabbed another book from a shelf behind him, summoned the student badge once more, and transferred it to the next book. It quickly resolved into a specific position, and the old man finally sighed before sitting down.

"You'll be living in courtyard number 1009," the old man said in an annoying voice, and as he mentioned the number, the badge flashed with a magnificent light.

"Your badge will act as a key. Bind it with your B so no one can steal it. If you lose it, even if it is stolen, we won't give you a new one. There is a place you can retrieve a bound key if it's stolen, but you can ask other students." Finally, the old man refocused on the book, starting to mumble something unrecognizable, making Yan Xiaobao realize that it was time to leave.

Outside of Rong Ming, Rong Xing, Gao Yan, Deng Wu, and Ma Kong all patiently awaited his return. When they saw him leaving the academy office building, they all focused their attention on the white-haired boy.

"So, which courtyard did you get?" Gao Yan asked, cutting off Rong Ming, as they were all curious.

Yan Xiaobao frowned, not understanding why it mattered, and replied, "Apparently Wanyi 1009."

This answer caused surprise on all five young people's faces, and Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but feel a bit confused.

"What's wrong with that place?" he asked, recalling the elder's complaints when he saw the room number.

"There's nothing wrong," Rong Xing explained, "Every mountain peak has its own number. The first mountain, all numbers start from zero, the next start from one, and so on. Courtyard numbers on the mountain peaks range from 1-10, so your courtyard is on the second peak. Everyone wants the top-tier courtyards because they have thicker essence energy to refine better spirits than other courtyards. Typically, only a few geniuses have the right to live there from the start, and then during the academy tournament, five geniuses are rewarded."

"We all live at the top of building three, but we had to work hard to earn the right to live there," Gao Yan said, "You need to be careful now. Don't let anyone know you've got a top-tier place."

"Why?" Yan Xiaobao asked curiously,

"If you have a top-tier courtyard, you must accept challenges from cultivators of the same rank as you. If you lose, you'll have to switch places with the winner. Many nine-star students will definitely challenge you." Gao Yan explained, "The Rong twins got their room for their talents, and so did I, but Deng Wu and Ma Kong had to challenge the previous owners to get their rooms next to ours."

"That's good," Lan Feng's voice echoed in Yan Xiaobao's mind, "You'll definitely need some combat training, but you're too weak now to handle magical beasts. Sparring with students of ranked cultivators should be greatly beneficial to you. It might even accelerate your cultivation."

The five young individuals quickly led Yan Xiaobao to his new home. Along the way, Gao Yan was busy recounting every duel he had won in the arena, explaining each of his Martial Arts Skills.

The bridges were all built, about ten meters wide. Students were constantly traveling back and forth between residential areas. It was clear that this place was home to thousands of people.

They quickly passed through the first mountain. Although it appeared big, they couldn't comprehend just how large these mountains were until they reached the second mountain, where he would live for the coming years.

The road was carved onto the side of the mountain, with courtyard after courtyard positioned along the high roads, giving students a certain amount of privacy. Each courtyard had a small garden for students to cultivate outside without being disturbed.

The road continued, and as Yan Xiaobao moved further up the mountain, he felt how dense the essence energy was around his body. Finally, they were almost at the top, and Yan Xiaobao felt how the essence energy autonomously entered his body and began sprinting through his meridians, prompted to refine. Initially, he worried about whether the quality was adequate, but he soon relaxed as he noticed the controlled Qi within his Qi Acupoint taking over and continuously refining the essence until it had a pearly luster, much like the Qi personally refined by the Hui Clan.

"Oh my," Lan Feng's voice rang out upon hearing their arrival at the mountain top, "Looks like you have your first challenger."

Right before them stood Wang Jingshen and the same group of people that were with him earlier. They stood outside the courtyard marked 1009 with sly smiles plastered on their faces.

"This is my younger brother Wang Julong." Wang Jingshen introduced, revealing a small boy behind him. He looked like a miniature version of Wang Jingshen, but his eyes were even more arrogantly condescending, "He's a freshman, just like you. He's one of the greatest talents of our family, and when he found out he had neighbors at the mountain top, he got excited, so why don't you two exchange pointers?" Wang Jingshen asked, maliciously grinning. This led to all his followers behind him grinning like monkeys.

"He's an Eight-star student ranking expert," Lan Feng calmly stated, "You should try to fight him. You need some practice. The worst-case scenario is he'll defeat you, but don't worry, I'll ensure you won't be crippled."

Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but chuckle at the kind help Lan Feng offered, but he wasn't someone who enjoyed being bullied. Regardless, he'd accept this challenge to prove his point to the Wang Family. At the same time, he was very curious whether his Velocity Flow skills were in alignment with his current understanding of the Qi Guard.

As he stepped forward, Yan Xiaobao wore a big smile and extended his hand in greeting toward Wang Julong. Yan Xiaobao's appearance could convince anyone he was an innocent and kind-hearted fairy tale.

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