

Medical 471

Chapter 471 Danger will approach from all sides

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Usually, only five Master-level experts can succeed in such missions, but this time it was obviously different. Yan Xiaobao felt that this journey had gone completely wrong. His vigilant eyes never ignored the happenings around him, his muscles were tense, constantly feeling murderous intent directed at him, but no matter where he looked or how much he looked around, he couldn't see anyone.

As the whole day passed, the mood slowly improved because nothing unexpected happened. Yet even so, Yan Xiaobao still felt like someone was watching him, someone wanted to kill him.

The four guards who had walked the day before packed away their armor when facing the harsh reality. It was impossible to continue traveling wearing such heavy armor; although it looked good, it was far from enough.

The remaining eight guards of the Yang Family didn't understand that they would encounter trouble as problems began to appear over time, as they started to pant and lag behind.

Seeing them falling behind, Yan Xiaobao immediately stopped the caravan, ordered the guards to take off their armor, and then they slowly proceeded again. Although their pace was far below the speed of the previous day, the group of mercenaries began to feel uneasy, fearing dangers approaching from all sides.

Xu Yue was not the only one feeling like someone was behind them; Xu Biao shared this premonition, his eyes darting from side to side, his forehead tense, muscles tightened.

Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but hope that whoever was behind them couldn't enter the tunnel. In the lawless world of a tunnel without light, the idea of a vicious assassin following them, in a world where no one cares about what happens to others, where people can pretend the murder was done by a magical beast, lingered in his mind.

Thinking of this, Yan Xiaobao's eyes turned cold. He walked to the back, determined to ensure no one was left behind. He had already lost two people and did not intend to lose more anytime soon.

Once the beautiful cave sky began to dim, the group stopped moving forward. Unlike the night before, where three campfires were set, there was only one campfire beside which the small horse Yang Bai was tied.

Although this group of friends was heading towards the Capital under the pretext of a visitation mission and partly for protection, Yan Xiaobao had no intention of doing a half job. Instead, he planned to work hard to send the young man to his academy, then slowly continue their journey to the Capital.

Looking at the darkness outside the camp, Yan Xiaobao once again gazed at the guards who were no longer looking somewhat cheerful, but instead, a dark and gloomy atmosphere had caught up with them. Even Deng Wu had a serious expression on his face, and Wang Julong's beautiful features were twisted into a frown as she strained her eyes in the dark.

As usual, Sha Yun sat on the ground, leaning against the wheel, her tail leisurely tapping the ground, eyes narrowed. She made no effort to hide her disdain for the guards.

When he saw the Snake Woman, Yan Xiaobao sighed. Her feelings were always apparent, even though she had every reason not to like people like them, those who felt superior to magic. Even though he felt this Snake Woman was wronged for not taking action against every insulting act, she sat there, clearly opposing the guards resting by the campfire.

Deng Wu and Wang Julong quickly walked over to Sha Yun and sat next to her. The three friends sat together as Yan Xiaobao walked over and sat down with them, none of them said anything as everyone vigilantly checked their surroundings, listening for even the slightest abnormal sound.

Every hour, the four friends would scout the perimeter of the camp but found everything peaceful and quiet, nothing out of the ordinary. During the night, none of the guards dared to stray far from the fire, and at last, the distant glow from the rising sun became visible. The young lord, his servants, and their steward finally awoke. Since none of the guards wore their heavy armor, it was possible to start at a fast pace.

Although they did not travel at the fastest speed, they no longer allowed people to fall behind, and the pace was steady. The caravan did not stop for the entire day until they reached a smaller town where they reserved the entire inn for the party to rest.

Back at the inn, Yan Xiaobao ordered his friends to get a good sleep because he believed they would be safe. The guards all slept in their rooms, while the mercenaries and four guards slept in another room. The third room was prepared for the young master and his two servants.

Although others could go several days without sleep, it would affect their judgment and ability to control their bodies to some extent. That's why he sent them to bed, while he himself stayed awake. After opening the Yin Yang Qi Meridians, Yan Xiaobao no longer needed sleep as long as he was within the essence of heaven and earth to rest.

As Yan Xiaobao walked around the inn engulfed in complete darkness and silence, he suddenly felt his murderous intent so extreme that even his red fog wouldn't lose track of it.

Walking past a window, Yan Xiaobao glanced down at the courtyard, seeing only the shadow of a person, with a Demon Beast beside him. The moonlight shone on this person, illuminating him before the elderly young man with white hair, the sight he saw shocked him to his core.

The shadow on the ground lifted its head, staring directly at Yan Xiaobao hidden by the window, silver moonlight casting on his face to reveal a disfigured face. A face that appeared to have been maimed by a beast.

Chapter 472 Danger Will Approach from All Sides_2

His face lacked any skin on the lower half; his nose was merely two holes, and his lips had vanished. Looking at that man, his face resembled a skeleton. The exposed flesh and bone on the middle and lower portions stood out grotesquely, yet his eyes brimmed with vitality and cruelty. However, as their eyes locked, that terrifying man bowed deeply, and the killing intent abruptly dissipated.

After bowing to Yan Xiaobao, the man turned around, and the massive red tiger beside him left the courtyard. Left behind was a worried young man, still able to feel the chill that made his hair stand on end.

This man and his Demon Beast were undoubtedly the ones who had been tailing them since they departed the Capital after leaving the Demon Residence Cave. His beast was evidently responsible for dispatching the two guards on that fateful night.

The Demon Beast was a massive tiger. Counting its tail, it easily measured 7 meters long and stood about 3 meters tall. Its claws were enormous, and upon inspection, they seemed perfectly suited for slicing through corpses.

Even after the man and beast left the courtyard, the young man's hair refused to settle, and he found no relief, knowing it wasn't a group tailing them, but a single man—an individual clearly not to be trifled with.

Once the man disappeared from view, Yan Xiaobao picked up a Memory Stone and used it to record all of his memories and knowledge about the scarred man. Only then did he hurry to the room where his friends were sleeping.

Bursting into the room, he finally settled down, seeing that they were all fast asleep. He decided to keep everything to himself until morning. The man had left for the night, and it was clear he had no intention of returning, allowing the group some well-earned rest through the night.

Yan Xiaobao sat on the bed and quickly entered meditation. As his body began to brighten, he felt the peak performance of his cultivation techniques. His body absorbed the essence of heaven and earth, slowly refining it into Qi, which in turn was further refined into spiritual energy.

He remained in this meditative position, resting, and didn't open his eyes until sunlight streamed through the window, reminding him that they needed to move swiftly. Yan Xiaobao opened his eyes and found the others already awake, working efficiently to prepare for their journey.

Breakfast was enjoyed in the inn's dining area, and after consuming a large quantity of food, they returned to the streets and rushed toward the tunnel.

Once they were on the road, the Memory Stone Yan Xiaobao had filled the previous morning was passed to the six mercenaries. When they examined its contents, their expressions turned grim.

"I know him," Xu Biao muttered in a low voice, keeping his revelation from the rest of the group. Even now, Yan Xiaobao could sense those haunting eyes watching them.

"He's a member of the Dragon Army's purging division. Formally known as the Black Dragon Army. This man has spent a long time in the Demon Residence Cave. Without a doubt, Zhou Long sent him to us." After finishing his statement, Xu Biao's face twisted into an ugly expression.

"This man is a King-level expert. I don't know if you're capable of handling him; he far surpasses the last King-level expert you encountered."

"I cannot handle him," Yan Xiaobao admitted, a troubled expression flashing across his face. "The power I can summon is limited, and I can rarely pull it off—once every few years at best."

Hearing this, Xu Biao looked shocked at the young man. "Once every few years?" he asked, as if something had obstructed his ears, misinterpreting Yan Xiaobao's words. Nodding, the white-haired boy's face darkened visibly, regret flickering over him for relying on Lan Feng's carefully cultivated strength in the past. Currently, he was trapped in a situation he couldn't withdraw from.

Xu Biao fell silent for a while, though his eyes grew colder as time passed. When he glanced behind them, his face twisted into a sly smirk as he searched futilely for Scarface, ultimately only spotting ordinary citizens going about their daily routines.

He nodded and turned to Yan Xiaobao, patting the boy on the shoulder. "In this kind of situation, you, me, and Elder Xie Lan should group together. If we unite, we should be able to take him down."

Upon hearing the elder's reassurance, warmth flooded Yan Xiaobao's heart, filling him with gratitude he couldn't properly express. He knew Zhou Long's vendetta involved sending one assassin after another, targeting both him and their entire team, yet his friends were resolute in helping him face the troubles he'd caused.

After putting the Memory Stone back into his pocket, Yan Xiaobao grumbled briefly, weighing his options. Although he couldn't draw upon Lan Feng's power any longer, Yan Xiaobao wasn't the type to give up easily. His eyes sparkled with a lasting and indomitable resolve.

As the caravan rolled down the road, cloaked shadows moved between two buildings. A shrouded figure emanating killing intent stood alongside a colossal Demon Beast. Gazing at the caravan, a sinister smile spread across his face, and with a flick of his sleeve, he melted into the shadows, trailing the caravan in the same direction.

The following days passed uneventfully. Without the ominous aura of killing intent, Yan Xiaobao might have believed they were merely on a peaceful journey. Everything proceeded according to plan.

Unfortunately, he remained uneasy, uncertain about how to deal with the man. Their impending entry into the tunnel would require decisive action, knowing the pursuer from the Black Dragon Army would surely follow them inside. Escape within the tunnel wouldn't be an option.

But the journey pushed forward relentlessly, and each day brought them closer to the tunnel. By the fourth day, the group could see the cave wall looming on the horizon. Embedded in the cave wall were gates leading to the tunnel and onward to the next cave. The guards were buzzing with excitement since none of them had ever left this cave before, but Yan Xiaobao's anxiety only deepened, conscious of the man who shadowed them.

Reflecting back, it seemed the man knew better than to confront them outright. They realized their best strategy was to stick together as a group, denying Scarface the opportunity to pick them off one by one.

"Don't overthink it," Xu Biao said, noticing Yan Xiaobao's tense frown and realizing the youth was lost in thought. "You're not alone," the Guild Master continued. "Just leave this man for Elder Xie Lan to handle."

Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao's gratitude surged again. Yet, he wasn't accustomed to relying on stronger individuals. Though he deeply appreciated the Guild Master's kindness, he remained determined to do everything in his power, relying most on himself.

The remainder of their journey to the cave proceeded smoothly. No one was harmed, and the organization adjusted well to the unease brought by lingering killing intent—the kind of threat their more sensitive members had learned to tolerate. Scar-faced Killer did nothing to the group directly but trailing them, in some ways, was more unnerving than knowing his full intentions.

Considering things again, Yan Xiaobao suspected that the man's inaction stemmed from waiting for them to enter the tunnel. Yet, even knowing this offered no solutions. Their destination lay beyond the network of tunnels; halting wasn't an option.

Yan Xiaobao contemplated leaving the accompanying members with his friends, as the solitary man's pursuit clearly aimed at him. However, now that he'd contacted the young Guild Master Yang Bai, Yan Xiaobao had no doubt Scarface would kill anyone connected to him.

Sighing deeply, Yan Xiaobao pressed forward. Seven days later, they finally reached the tunnel. Stewards disembarked from their carriages and presented mission documents to the guards, who then opened the gates, permitting their entourage to enter the shadowy depths.

This was what they'd anticipated. However, unlike the path between Cave's End and the Demon Residence Cave, the tunnel ahead contained a lit pathway. Though sounds of Demon Beasts echoed ominously nearby, several paths led into absolute darkness.

The illuminated road was the one Yan Xiaobao and his group chose to follow, but even with its light offering some measure of safety, they knew Demon Beasts could attack at any moment. All the friends instinctively surrounded the caravan, creating a protective barrier to guard against unseen threats.

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Chapter 473 Hunting the Demon Beast

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Yan Xiaobao placed himself at the rear guard position. If any unwanted men or beasts were to suddenly appear, he was already prepared. In front of him were Xie Lan and Xu Biao, stationed on either side of the caravan. Beyond them were eight Yang Guards, divided into two groups of four. The mercenary guards were positioned on either side of the caravan in pairs. Deng Wu and Sha Yun formed one pair, with Wang Julong leading the front.

As soon as the group entered the tunnel, the guards remained highly alert, staring at the massive corridor. Yan Xiaobao pressed ahead, driving the caravan forward. In their eagerness to exit the tunnel quickly, the mercenary group ensured the caravan moved at its maximum speed.

Unfortunately, one individual did not share Hui Yue's perspective. The door of his carriage swung open, and the young master stepped out from the security of the vehicle's interior—curious about the perilous environment.

Watching the young master emerge like this, the elderly man sighed deeply, feeling a level of frustration he had never encountered in this world. Clearly, the young master had entirely forgotten about the assassination attempts that had marked the start of their journey.

"Please return to the carriage, young master," Yan Xiaobao sighed, swiftly walking over to Yang Bai's side with silent precision. The sudden approach startled the young master; however, Yang Bai showed no signs of heeding the warning. Instead, he pouted and began wandering of his own volition, fully ignoring Yan Xiaobao's words.

Ever since they entered the tunnel, the pervasive aura of murderous intent had gradually faded. Yan Xiaobao keenly understood this was due to Scarface's strategy, lying in wait outside the tunnel while allowing the group to enter. Much like hunting rabbits, one lets them run freely and strikes only at their most unexpected moment.

Yan Xiaobao remained silent for a considerable duration before finally letting a smile cross his face. That smile sent a chill down Xu Biao's spine, his eyes widening in alarm. This was no time for anyone to be smiling.

"Young master," Yan Xiaobao called out, "What do you make of this unknown path to the next cavern?" he asked. His voice, filled with a subtle excitement, caused a spark not only in the young master's eyes but also among the guards. They had heard tales of those who hunted Demon Beasts within these tunnels. To try it themselves was tempting.

Yan Xiaobao had two clear reasons for venturing into the dark tunnel. Firstly, Sha Yun could decipher a way through the maze-like cavern system, and if navigating proved impossible, they could simply rely on brute force. Sha Yun had previously demonstrated this was a feasible solution, one that had even left them impressed.

Secondly, venturing into the black tunnel made it harder for the Hui Clan and their pursuers to locate them, significantly reducing the chances of their assassination.

Tracking them down wasn't the only obstacle. Scarface would have to overcome countless beasts along the way. This meant stealth would no longer be an option. This dynamic pleased Yan Xiaobao immensely. After all, the beasts within the tunnel might be powerful, but they were still no match for the strength of both the guards and the mercenaries. None of the beasts inside the tunnel should pose a true threat to their group.

Hearing these thoughts, excitement rippled through the group—particularly among the guards and members sent by the Yang Family. Sha Yun and Wang Julong exchanged glances. Though they were far from close companions, both were struck by memories of the grueling days spent in the black tunnels as they awaited the Dragon Army.

Back then, they had lived within the perilous darkness for what felt like endless stretches of time, yearning desperately for sunlight. True, this experience had strengthened their cultivation practices, but the world they had ventured into was so harsh that if given a choice, neither of them would willingly return.

But alas, no choice remained. The young master Yang Bai, visibly astonished by the proposal, found his eyes brimming with excitement. He believed the black tunnel to be one of the most incredible prospects he'd ever encountered. As part of his studies, he would eventually have to train in similar tunnels, but entering this inner labyrinth now offered him an early advantage. It also presented an opportunity to boast when he reached his academy—especially if he managed to subdue a Demon Beast along the way.

Though Yang Bai fantasized about taming a Demon Beast, such thoughts were mere dreams. Real combat was far beyond his reach, but for a boy as young as he was, dreaming was everything.

With the young master consenting, the caravan randomly chose a path and began its slow advance. Yan Xiaobao and Wang Julong took out their light stones, which they had purchased in abundance from the city. Before delving deeper into the labyrinth of tunnels, they distributed the illuminating stones to each member of the group.

The first few hours of their journey passed swiftly as they traversed the tunnels, encountering no Demon Beasts to block their way. All they found were damp walls and faint traces of beasts.

Eventually, after traveling deeper into the black tunnels for an extended period, they stumbled upon a small cavern inhabited by a white, furry, monkey-like beast. Its blood-red eyes glowed, and its large, sharp claws gleamed menacingly.

The beast, seemingly delighted to confront the humans attempting to take its lair, charged without hesitation. Yan Xiaobao issued an order for the guards to handle it, leading to a fierce battle that lasted nearly an hour. Yan Xiaobao and his companions deliberately conserved their energy, knowing full well

that, contrary to Yan Xiaobao's calculations, Scarface might still be tracking them. If Scarface did catch up, they would need all their strength to defeat him.

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Among the twelve guards, two were injured, but none were seriously hurt. After the monkey beast was killed, Yan Xiaobao began dissecting it, cooking some of the meat while drying other parts. The hide was treated and cleaned, and the bones ended up stored in Yan Xiaobao's storage stone.

The guards and the Yang Family members were deeply shocked by Yan Xiaobao's expertise in dismantling such a large creature. They finally began to grasp the stark difference between mercenaries and household guards.

The night was spent in the cave, with Yan Xiaobao and Xu Biao staying awake all night. Neither of them needed sleep, as both had activated specific meridians. Yet nothing approached the campsite or the fire they had set up.

Feeling somewhat secure, the pale-haired boy couldn't help but wonder if he was truly safe. Was it simply that Scarface hadn't deliberately followed them, or had he failed to catch up?

In the dark tunnels, there was no distinction between day and night—everything was enveloped in darkness. Rest was taken whenever the opportunity arose. After a few hours, Yan Xiaobao woke up the entire team.

Sha Yun sat down and merged with the earth, her tail transforming into stone. The stone continued enveloping her body until it reached her embrace, where it seemed satisfied to merge with only a third of her form.

Moments later, Sha Yun's eyes opened, her body returning to flesh and blood. Her eyes sparkled as she conveyed her findings to Yan Xiaobao.

"Alright, everyone. If we keep moving like this, we'll remain parallel to the paths illuminated by light stones. Let's keep going."

As they traversed the dark tunnels, it wasn't long before the party encountered demonic beasts. Sometimes, they stumbled upon territories belonging to certain beast groups, and other times it was a rogue demon beast that crossed their path.

Yan Xiaobao's approach to dealing with these demons was straightforward. He commanded all his companions to stand back and instructed the guards to fight them.

He did this for several reasons, but the main purpose was to train the guards. These guards had never killed anything before—not a person, let alone a demon beast. Everything they had learned came from training sessions within the cave, making their skills suited for training rather than actual combat.

One more day in the dark tunnels passed, and the guards began to harden. Their previous innocent views of the tunnels changed as they now understood the sheer effort required to traverse the unlit sections.

Had they chosen the lit paths, the party could have progressed through the tunnel system much faster. However, by sticking to the dark areas, everyone—even the young master and his two servants—gained a fuller understanding of how serious the world was. The strong survive; the weak do not.

Though it was the guards who killed the demonic beasts, they split the demon cores among themselves. The rest, however, all belonged to Yan Xiaobao, as he provided them with warm meals each day and dried meat as desired.

When they entered the tunnels, their team consisted of twelve guards, six mercenaries, a noble young master, and his two servants. Midway through the journey, the guards had transformed into fully-fledged mercenaries. No longer did they hesitate to deliver the killing blow, nor did they feel nauseous at the sight of blood.

"I don't think he's here following us," Xu Biao remarked, gazing at the guards cleaning their weapons after battling a pack of savage blood rats. Despite being called rats, the creatures had little in common with their namesakes. Unlike ordinary rats, they stood one and a half meters tall, with sharp, jagged teeth that could effortlessly tear apart anything they encountered. Their fur was black and sleek, rendering them invisible in the dark tunnels, and their two-meter-long tails were often used to pin down their targets.

Though the guards managed to defeat the entire pack, injuries were still sustained, prompting the caravan to decide on a short rest. By now, everyone had completely lost track of time; their resting periods never exceeded a few hours before they resumed their advance through the black tunnels.

"Should I open a path to the lit roads?" Sha Yun asked curiously, watching the guards busy tending to the injured and Wang Julong treating those with multiple scratches.

Sha Yun knew Yan Xiaobao well. He hadn't just chosen this path to avoid being tracked down by Scarface; he had also selected it to toughen the guards. Now, looking at the guards, no one would believe they were the same people who had entered the tunnels with them. Everything about them had changed. Yan Xiaobao's goal had been achieved.

Upon hearing her question, the pale-haired youth shook his head. Though one of his objectives had been fulfilled, he still hadn't figured out how to deal with Scarface. As such, he didn't feel comfortable entering the lit tunnels—they were still far too dangerous.

Yan Xiaobao knew that if Scarface passed through the tunnels, it was likely he did so effortlessly, waiting in the next cave for them to appear. Even this scenario would be better than encountering the cold-blooded killer within the current cave. Much better.

What Yan Xiaobao didn't know was that the tunnel systems between caves were guarded by the Dragon Army. As they set up tables to demand entrance fees from all who wished to enter or exit the tunnels, they also patrolled the illuminated paths to ensure peace and eliminate any demon beasts that occasionally wandered into the lit areas.

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Unaware of the guards on the other side of the thick stone wall, Yan Xiaobao continuously led his faction toward the entrance. Suddenly, an arrow sliced through the air and embedded itself in the head of a guard who had been laughing loudly just moments before.

Without needing orders, silver and golden glows surged from each member of the group. A protective barrier formed around them, constructed from their spiritual energy. As the rain of arrows descended from above, a metallic clink could be heard as they struck the shields. Some arrows buried themselves into the wooden carts.

Although the arrows sank into the wood, the thickness of the caravan walls prevented them from piercing all the way through. Meanwhile, the young captain inside his carriage remained safe.

"Attack!" a shout came from the front. Yan Xiaobao sneered as he saw a large group of cultivators rushing toward them, their weapons raised high and their faces filled with murderous intent.

"Take no prisoners!" Yan Xiaobao responded, his blue eyes flashing dangerously under the dim glow of the lightstone. With heavy stomps on the ground, the young man charged directly at the enemies, one hand wielding Black Blood, the other igniting with crimson flames. The fire flared from his hands, igniting one target after another, wreaking havoc as throats were slashed or pierced by daggers.

The guards turned pale, frozen in place, their bodies refusing to respond as they stood trembling in fear.

Seeing Yan Xiaobao leap into the fray, Wang Julong quickly followed. A magnificent crimson staff materialized in her hands, and with precise movements, she struck at the enemies' heads, shattered their ribs, and sent anyone who approached her flying. The staff seemed to glow, and the moment Wang Julong infused it with her spiritual energy, a formidable aura unfurled, sweeping across everyone nearby. Though the young woman battled fiercely against the frenzied enemies surrounding her, the aura began to take the shape of a red weasel.

The red weasel twisted and coiled around Wang Julong's body. As soon as it touched her skin, a surge of immense power filled her. The staff danced in her hands, felling enemies one by one. However, this power was short-lived as her spiritual energy was rapidly exhausted.

Everyone watching was deeply shocked by the power Wang Julong displayed, but they were equally surprised by the hidden military might contained within her staff.

Though stunned momentarily, Yan Xiaobao quickly regained his composure and shouted loudly, "Wu, take Zhu Long far away! Sha Yun, stand your ground and start eliminating these fools!"

After issuing his orders, Yan Xiaobao refocused on the battle in front of him. Initially, he had estimated that the opposing group numbered around twenty to thirty people. However, by this point, he had single-handedly taken care of at least fifty, leaving him to wonder how many were dealt with by Wang Julong.

Though the attackers' original intent was to steal valuables, as they charged toward Yan Xiaobao, their reddened eyes burned with rage at the loss of so many of their brethren. Their screams pierced the air, raw with emotional agony.

Sha Yun heard Yan Xiaobao's orders and began to merge with the earth beneath her feet, parts of her body transforming into stone. Closing her eyes, she channeled her power, causing a multitude of Earthen Spears to shoot up from the ground, accompanied by bloodcurdling screams as numerous men were impaled on the spot.

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Chapter 476 The Damned Snake Woman

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"You damned Snake Woman, watch out!" Yan Xiaobao's voice suddenly echoed across the ground, and those words helped Deng Wu and the exhausted Wang Julong locate the young man. He rarely spoke to Sha Yun in such a manner; however, when their eyes fell on him, they instantly understood why.

Yan Xiaobao stood on the ground in front of the carriage. The earth was littered with corpses and severed body parts, yet he appeared uninjured. His robes were completely destroyed, as though someone had slashed his chest, revealing a small shallow cut. His arms bore similar wounds, though they were far more severe—white bone could be seen amidst the crimson flesh.

Both Deng Wu and Wang Julong felt a pang of sympathy for him as they gazed upon his injuries—not wounds inflicted by his opponents in combat, but the result of Sha Yun's crude earth spear ability.

Seeing their opponent wounded, the bandits cheered and rushed toward Yan Xiaobao, only to be repelled by a barrage of Fireballs.

With a sigh, Deng Wu stepped forward, walking slowly toward Yan Xiaobao while taking his time searching for a particular scroll. As he reached the side of the white-haired young man, seven soul shadows of black wolf beasts materialized around him. They all roared, though strangely, no sound emerged—only vibrations coursing through the ground and walls. The power they emanated was enough to make the bandits' faces turn ashen and flee one after the other, desperate to escape the corrosive wolves.

Deng Wu was a lazy man, feeling it unnecessary to pursue the already retreating bandit group. Instead, he reformed his beast's soul shadow within the scroll and supported Yan Xiaobao as they returned to Wang Julong.

Sha Yun had long since disengaged from her merger with the earth, her face showing an overwhelming sense of guilt as tears streamed down her cheeks. Seeing this, Hue Yue couldn't bring himself to be angry or blame her, as he understood her target was the enemy and not Yan Xiaobao. He had simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Yan Xiaobao patted her on the head, then sank beneath the surface and leaned against the wall of the tunnel. Using his hand, he managed to retrieve a pill from one of his storage stones and tossed it toward Wang Julong.

When Wang Julong caught it, she saw it was a pill meant to replenish energy. Grateful, she consumed it and then sat down to begin meditation.

While Wang Julong meditated, Xie Lan approached Yan Xiaobao. With gentle hands, streams of green energy flowed from her warm palms, swiftly numbing his pain. Gradually, the wounds on his arm began to heal. Muscles and tendons reattached, and eventually, even the skin closed up, leaving no trace of injury.

Yan Xiaobao smiled cheerfully and nodded at Xie Lan. He was deeply thankful for her help with his wounds and equally glad that she was fulfilling the role of Wang Julong's mentor. With a sigh, Yan Xiaobao realized he had much to be grateful for.

Yan Xiaobao sat on the ground, leaning against the cavern wall, and popped a pill into his mouth—the same type he had given to Wang Julong. After a moment, he stood once more.

Just as he lifted the door of the carriage, it opened, but the young white-haired man darted toward them and shut it again. "I apologize, young master; this is not a scene one would wish to witness," he said in a genuinely apologetic tone.

The sight was indeed unsuitable for the young master. Bodies were strewn across the ground—some intact, others mangled. A few bandits still clung to life, writhing in pain and stubbornly holding on with sheer willpower.

The ground was no longer dry and dusty, but instead ran with streams of blood from the corpses, and the stench was truly unbearable.

"You can handle the cleanup," Yan Xiaobao said, addressing the guards as he gestured toward the corpses. "You'll have to get accustomed to dealing with bodies sooner or later." Stretching his body, he continued, savoring the returning strength coursing through him.

"Stack the bodies on one side of the road. Let those who are still alive leave. The remaining bandits will return later."

Hearing the orders, most of their faces immediately turned pale, with one individual even vomiting, his complexion paler than the others.

Yan Xiaobao let out a deep sigh, signaling his disappointment. He then began stacking the corpses to clear a path for the carriage to pass through the blood-soaked ground so they could move toward their destination.

He was not the only one struggling with the task; his companions joined him in moving the bodies. Soon, every one of them was covered in blood. The only positive thought they clung to was that encountering so many people might mean they were nearing the tunnel's exit.

Reaching the exit of the tunnel would mean finding a place to wash up—a dream every one of them harbored as they piled the bodies.

Once they finally completed their task, everyone had to change their clothes and use some bottled water to clean themselves up a bit, removing the red clots from their skin. However, until they could bathe, the stench clung to them relentlessly.

Having left the massacre behind, they quickly returned to the main illuminated road as Yan Xiaobao pointed out that they had hunted for long enough. After slaughtering the bandits, none of the guards wanted to linger in the black tunnel longer than necessary. Although the young master had felt somewhat deceived during the entire attack process, sheltered inside his carriage, and later allowed to see the aftermath, his two attendants quickly managed to convey to him that life was not all fun and excitement.

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Rejoining the illuminated tunnel, people could see they were nearing the next cavern, as the road was crowded with people and guards. Initially, everyone stared at the mercenaries and the convoy of guards emerging from the side path, but after a few meters, no one paid them any more attention, and they continued forward.

Back in this new cavern, Yan Xiaobao remained on high alert, even more so than when he had just left the tunnel. Inside the tunnel, he was confident in his ability to defeat his opponents; here, however, it was completely different. If the Scar-faced Killer were to appear, Yan Xiaobao wasn't sure what he could do against him. This uncertainty forced him to stay focused and vigilant. To him, the more crowded the area, the more dangerous it became.

Yet, for now, he didn't sense anything out of the ordinary. He also couldn't feel the killing intent they had previously experienced. Gradually, his paranoia lessened. As long as the whole team was together, they should be fine, especially in an area without as many guards.

Trying to calm himself, Yan Xiaobao nodded, as if agreeing with his own thoughts. Just as he concluded they should be safe, he noticed they had arrived at another doorway.

Like the gates leading to the Demon Residence Cave, this person was issuing Dragon Corps passes while collecting entrance fees, allowing mercenaries, travelers, and others to enter the cavern.

Stopping at the entrance, the steward disembarked from the carriage and paid the entrance fee for the entire party before they passed through the open gate into the third cavern.

"This is the Golden Lion Cave," Xu Biao whispered to Yan Xiaobao beside him, introducing the place they had entered. "Unlike most other places, it is led by a Royal Family. Although they work together with the Dragon Army, the army is the second most powerful authority here."

Continuing onward, the group suddenly found themselves amidst a flood of people entering the cavern. Xu Biao quickly stopped talking and, without any resistance, they allowed the wave of humans to push further into the cavern, until the road finally cleared a little. This enabled the group to begin searching for an inn.

As they entered the new cavern, the sun was setting. After a while, the steward managed to find a tavern with available rooms, and they all followed him inside.

This time, each of them had their own private room with an attached bathroom, which the mercenaries especially appreciated, as they were still covered in blood, their aura feral. Just walking around the tavern, everyone averted their eyes, quieting down with a faint air of fear.

After bathing, the mercenaries gathered in Yan Xiaobao's room, their faces twisted with ugly expressions.

"I think," he began, his face becoming even more unpleasant for a moment, "I believe we don't need to worry about the Scar-faced Killer right now."

"Because of Zhou Long, the Scar-faced Killer is undoubtedly part of this mission. He knows we're heading to the Capital. Why would he wait for us in a place like this? Without a doubt, he'll be waiting for us in the Capital, using all his time to prepare for our arrival."

Hearing his words, the others slowly nodded. Compared to the constant uncertainty about their group's journey, this made much more sense.

Their faces also grew quite grim, but after a while, Xie Lan slammed her fist onto the table with fierce determination.

"That's fine!" she assured them. "When we get to the Capital, we'll be much stronger than we are now. If we know he's waiting for us, no one can say we won't be ready to face him!"

Seeing Xie Lan as the person pulling them out of their gloom surprised Yan Xiaobao. When he nodded in agreement, a faint smile appeared on his face. What she said made sense.

"Tell us about this place," Yan Xiaobao looked toward Xu Biao and asked.

"This is the Golden Lion Cave, about the same size as the Demon Cave. Both are considered mid-tier-ranked caverns, meaning most cultivators here rely on intermediate-level Dantian."

"Unlike other caverns, this cavern is controlled by the Golden Lion Royal Family, a household that collaborates with the Dragon Army. However, the Dragon Army cannot act within this cavern without the Royal Family's permission."

"Surprisingly, the Dragon Clan allows the Royal Family to have higher authority than they do," Xu Biao continued in a low voice. "If they wanted, the Dragon Clan could easily remove the Royal Family, but instead, they merely demand a minimal annual tax from them."

"Meanwhile, the people living here pay a rather considerable amount in taxes. This is something the Dragon Army should see as resistance."

"There's a possibility they've struck some kind of deal unknown to the rest of the world," Yan Xiaobao speculated, his brows furrowing as he wondered what could possibly justify such treatment.

"It's also possible that they are trading something the Dragon Army truly needs," Deng Wu interjected, though he wondered what the Dragon Army could possess that might compel them to relinquish control of the cavern.

"The law," Yan Xiaobao responded softly, his eyes as icy as freshly fallen snow, a deep frown forming on his face. "What they originally could have traded is the Original Law."

Hearing Yan Xiaobao's words, Deng Wu, Wang Julong, and Sha Yun's demeanor completely changed. Their faces became grave, and their hands clenched tightly as they recalled the deal Cave's End had tried to strike to avoid paying taxes for the sun.

Thinking back to how the sun was treated, it was evident those original laws were immensely important to the Dragon Army, no matter how obscure their motives appeared to be.

"Xu Biao," Yan Xiaobao called out. "Has the Dragon Army ever issued a mission to search for specific humans?"

Xu Biao considered for a moment, recalling missions he had seen from the Dragon Army. Frowning, he seemed to finally recall something.

"They once issued a mission, stating they needed individuals with strange eyes. However, that was about seven years ago. It's not something people remember now," Xu Biao said, furrowing his brows as he pondered the task.

"Actually, it doesn't make much sense," he continued. "The reward for individuals with strange eyes was up to three thousand beast cores, yet it didn't specify who those people were or set a time limit for the mission. Even now, the task remains available."

Thinking about his friends who lived in the forest of Cave's End, Yan Xiaobao's bright eyes darkened. The thought of laws being repurposed for something unknown to him filled him with uneasiness.

"When we arrive in the Capital, we can get some answers," Sha Yun said softly. Yan Xiaobao nodded, determined to uncover the truth of what was happening.

Sitting in silence, the group reflected on their time in the forest. When Deng Wu gazed out the window, his eyes darkened significantly. After all, he had the most interaction with the five juvenile laws.

Looking at Deng Wu, Yan Xiaobao sighed before deciding to shift the topic.

"Julong," he called out, and the woman looked at him. As their eyes met, Yan Xiaobao's heart began to race, and he cleared his throat awkwardly before continuing, "What happened in the battle with your staff? It seemed far stronger than we expected."

Hearing Yan Xiaobao's remark, Wang Julong picked up her storage stone, recalling the red staff that appeared in her hand. She stood up straight and infused some spiritual energy into the staff. Soon, the crimson weasel emerged again.

With the spiritual energy of the crimson staff aiding it, a red, translucent weasel manifested from the aura of the weapon. It spiraled around Wang Julong's body before finally resting on her shoulder.

The weasel glared at the humans in the room and let out a piercing screech, filling the room with an imposing aura. The weasel slid off her shoulder, merging with the aura; the crimson hue emanating from the weapon intensified the aura's malicious energy.

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The aura was extremely fierce. Holding the staff, Wang Julong felt energy surge into her body, boosting her combat power at least one or two levels above her actual ability.

Unfortunately, as before, the spiritual energy drained from the young woman, leaving her exhausted and utterly fatigued, collapsing on the ground as she let out a loud gasp.

Yan Xiaobao grabbed Wang Julong's staff. Strangely, he infused some of his spiritual energy into the staff, eagerly waiting to see what would happen.

Nothing happened. The staff felt no different from an ordinary staff. It wasn't like the weapon he'd just witnessed; a weapon that, at the moment spiritual energy was infused, surged in its strength. It appeared just as he'd seen it when Wang Julong wielded it.

Yan Xiaobao let out a slight hum and handed the staff back to the exhausted woman. She quickly tucked it away, once again accepting a pill from her white-haired friend to aid her faster recovery.

During the exchange of the pill, Yan Xiaobao gently brushed his fingers forward, causing Wang Julong's face to turn, and she immediately withdrew her hand. At her reaction, laughter escaped his lips as he discovered a new joy in teasing the steadfast woman before him.

Witnessing the encounter, both Deng Wu and Sha Yun were a bit taken aback. However, Deng Wu looked on with a curious glint in his eyes that held a hint of amusement, while Sha Yun's eyes burned with rage. Her lips pressed tightly together as she refrained from voicing her complex emotions.

Deng Wu cleared his throat, finally deciding to break the incredulous tension hanging in the room, a tension only Yan Xiaobao seemed to enjoy. Shamelessly, he continued watching the increasingly embarrassed expression on Wang Julong's face, a gentle smile playing on his own.

"Well, it seems that aside from the Giant Dragon, no one else is able to summon the Weasel," he remarked, instantly drawing Yan Xiaobao's attention back to him, his gaze turning serious once more.

Wang Julong let out a breath of relief, but Sha Yun continued to stare daggers at the dark-haired woman. If looks could kill, she would have been long dead.

"What do you think is wrong with the weapon?" Yan Xiaobao asked curiously but heard no reply. Instead, he sat down in meditation, letting his consciousness drift into the Dantian Cave beside Lan Feng.

The Phoenix frowned, illuminated by a golden hue, as one drop at a time of Yan Xiaobao's spiritual energy entered his forehead, causing the droplets to sparkle momentarily, then dull once again.

It was clear that Lan Feng was refining Wu Wei, something Yan Xiaobao absolutely did not intend to interrupt. Instead, he quietly observed the bird until the golden hue dimmed, darkened, and finally vanished altogether.

'What do you want?' the Phoenix asked in an annoyed tone. "I can't give you any more power right now; I'm trying to recover my own strength!"

"I don't need your power," Yan Xiaobao quickly replied, raising both hands defensively. "You've been so busy recently that you missed something." He continued, then began to explain what had happened with Wang Julong's weapon, piquing Lan Feng's interest with every detail he shared.

'I see.' Lan Feng paused quietly for a moment before continuing, drawing a tempting air from Yan Xiaobao, who could hardly contain his hope for answers.

"Do you remember when I told you humans can fuse their souls with Divine Beasts, or even extremely powerful Magic Beasts?" he asked first, to which Yan Xiaobao nodded. It was something he'd learned on the same day he realized Lan Feng had deceived him, a detail he could never forget.

"Not only can humans fuse with the souls of Magic Beasts or Divine Beasts, but while soul fusion into weapons is much harder, it is still possible. Considering the level of power she gained when the Weasel emerged, I believe it's either a King or at most an Emperor-ranked beast.

"She is indeed fortunate," Lan Feng continued, now finding a good reason to speak again. He decided to use the knowledge residing in his mind after thousands of years of existence to stun his friend.

"When a soul resides in a weapon, it requires the soul to willingly lend its power to the wielder. That said, I don't know anyone who's ever been accepted," Lan Feng said, noticing Yan Xiaobao's attempt to open his mouth.

"Just feel fortunate for her. The Weasel will protect the girl, and she won't die so easily anymore." Somehow, hearing Lan Feng's words made Yan Xiaobao's heart tremble, as though a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

Wang Julong was not weak, but she had chosen a path of cultivation focused on healing and aiding others rather than fighting and killing. Her attacks mainly relied on plants, and she herself could only rely on her Martial Arts Skills or her abilities, but she was far weaker compared to most who specialized in combat. Knowing that the staff was no ordinary weapon, housing a powerful Divine or Magic Beast that had willingly chosen to protect her, was something Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but deeply appreciate.

Lan Feng smiled faintly at the joy visible on Yan Xiaobao's face before closing his eyes again, golden light radiating from his body. As he watched the bird, Yan Xiaobao had a sensation as though it was preparing for something, waiting for an important event to unfold.

The thought made Yan Xiaobao more vigilant. Could it be that Lan Feng had already sent them into a sacred underground city, knowing they would later have to rely on his strength? Even Little Dragon remained hidden, and Deng Wu could not glean answers from the lizard, just as Yan Xiaobao heard no further sound from the Phoenix.

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He let out a deep sigh, knowing that if he actually asked the bird, he wouldn't get an answer, so instead, he returned to his body and opened his eyes. Then, he explained the cunning individual to everyone present.

At first, Wang Julong felt slightly uncomfortable with the idea of a weapon harboring a trapped soul. However, when she thought about how the entity accepted her, that discomfort quickly transformed into honor. Clenching her hands tightly, she nodded firmly, her eyes brimming with resolve.

In the inn, Yan Xiaobao and the others sat down to relax, as there was no apparent murderous intent in the air. From the adjacent room, they could easily hear the loud drinking of beer purchased from the downstairs restaurant.

Xie Lan and Xu Biao were nowhere to be seen, but Yan Xiaobao wasn't worried. It was possible the two were quietly working on different tasks in their rooms or perhaps enjoying some quality time together.

Although everything was peaceful and relaxed, Yan Xiaobao couldn't fully let down his guard. Though he was certain that Scarface would await him in the final cave, there was still a possibility that it was wishful thinking and that Scarface might already be nearby.

This kept Yan Xiaobao wary even as he relaxed with his friends. When everyone else went to sleep, he remained awake all night, watching for any movement in the courtyard.

The sound of snoring surrounded him. No one walked on the stairs outside, and no one moved in the darkness. As the night thinned and the sun pierced through the sky, Yan Xiaobao once again reassured himself that the man would be waiting in the final cave. Yet, a small voice in his mind warned him to stay vigilant—there was always that slim chance things wouldn't go as planned.

The day began, and the group set out once more. The Golden Lion Cave, much like the Demon Cave, was massive. After a week's travel, they reached the capital of the cave system. However, unlike their arrival at the Demon Residence Cave's capital, nothing particularly exciting happened here.

They rested for a day, but it was spent in their hotel rooms. The next morning, they hit the road again, their caravan quickly heading towards another tunnel system.

Yan Xiaobao stayed alert every day and remained awake every night, keeping watch on his surroundings. But as days passed without incident, Yan Xiaobao began to feel that his alertness was a waste of energy. Gradually, he allowed himself to take advantage of the quiet nights for cultivation. Ultimately, his strength was nowhere near sufficient to contend with the Scar-faced Killer, so he had to use every moment he could to improve.

At the end of the Golden Lion Cave, another tunnel system awaited them. This time, the group decided to travel along the brightly lit main roads. While journeying the illuminated paths, they weren't alone—they encountered other travelers crossing through. Tunnel after cave and cave after tunnel, everything

started to look the same. Soon enough, Yan Xiaobao and his group safely reached the midpoint of their journey and the headquarters of the Dragon Company: the Dragon Core Cave.

The cave they now stood in was the same one where they would have to bid farewell to the young Master Yang Bai and his entourage.

They had arrived at the cave a few days earlier, and now they were headed towards the Academic City, a city that existed solely because of the academy rooted there. The cave, known as the Thousand River Cave, was named for the many rivers running through it. Some of these rivers converged into a great lake, covering half the ground of the cave.

Their destination was the lakeside, where everyone hurried towards the academy. The team had been traveling for half a year, during which they had experienced significant growth. Yan Xiaobao was on the brink of breaking into the Master level; Deng Wu was about to become the second Master Star among them, while Wang Julong and Sha Yun had both reached the ninth tier of the Master Level.

With few distractions on their journey, the group had been able to focus entirely on their cultivation, a fact they were all deeply grateful for. However, Yan Xiaobao found himself stuck at a bottleneck, unable to progress further until he faced some form of battle to push his cultivation base to its limits. Sparring alone would not suffice to bring about a breakthrough.

Wang Julong and Sha Yun had reached the ninth tier of the Master Level due to their unrelenting effort, prompting even Yan Xiaobao to admit that the two women had worked far harder than he had anticipated.

As he gazed at the lake before him, dotted with beautiful water lilies and home to various white birds gliding gracefully, Yan Xiaobao decided the party needed to stay in this beautiful cave for a while to regroup. Whether they chose to take on another quest or go their separate ways to journey independently, this was a decision Yan Xiaobao would have to make soon. But first, as they headed towards the lake and the city, they passed by a caravan they nodded to—one bound for their eventual final destination.

Standing by the lakeside, Yan Xiaobao marveled at the beauty of the cave. The rivers flowing into the lake sparkled with sprays of water, surrounded by medicinal herbs and stunning flowers.

Beside the rivers and streams were intricate gardens, small glasshouses, and towering pagodas. The entire land seemed designed for aesthetics rather than agriculture, and spread across the lake were many boats carrying couples enjoying the scenery.

"The money in this place comes from tourism and their academy. Everything related to food and materials is imported from other caves, and anyone seeking a stroll or vacation comes to this cave," Xu Biao said, his voice low as the white-haired boy observed the surroundings.

Nodding slightly, Yan Xiaobao had already guessed this cave was extraordinary, but upon hearing that it served as a vacation destination, he understood why the atmosphere felt so welcoming and relaxed. To break through to the Master level, he couldn't imagine a more fitting ambiance. The world here seemed saturated with the essence of heaven and earth.

As this thought settled in his mind, the travelers meandered towards the lakeside academy, which was to become Yang Bai's home for years to come. Until he graduated and became a King-level expert, he would not be returning to the Demon Residence Cave.

Walking through the Thousand River Cave, Yan Xiaobao could almost feel the richness of the heavenly and earthly Qi, its density unlike anywhere else. He surmised this was also why the cave could sustain itself on tourism alone. Anyone seeking secluded meditation would come here to purchase a glasshouse where they could meditate amidst the breathtaking landscape and boundless energy.

After spending half a year together, Yang Bai had grown deeply attached to the team. Though only thirteen years old, as they drew closer to the academy and their ultimate destination, unshed tears shimmered in his eyes.

Their months of traveling through tunnels and caves had long since turned the guards into something more like mercenaries. They had sharpened their skills in dispatching Demon Beasts and even learned to perfectly dissect their prey without wasting any part after undergoing meticulous lessons from Yan Xiaobao.

Yang Bai wasn't the only one to feel a strange nostalgia. Yan Xiaobao and his friends shared the sentiment, having journeyed together for half a year. During this time, the young master had done his best to become an integral part of their team. Although he didn't travel with them during the day, he spent every evening by the campfire, listening to tales of their past adventures.

He learned how they had met at an academy, become inseparable friends, and shared their adventurous days at the academy.

While the young travelers spoke of their time at the Royal Academy, they never mentioned its name, leaving the naive Yang Bai to assume it was the Dragon Core Academy. He believed they had all studied at the most magical academy within the entire Azure Dragon Caves.

Whenever the four friends recounted their friendships and past experiences, Yang Bai wasn't the only eager listener. Xu Biao and Xie Lan also found the stories fascinating, especially since they knew these tales belonged to another world.

Yet, knowing the group hailed from a world beyond, Xu Biao found it startling how similar the tunnels and cave systems of his world were to what they described.

There were magical beasts living in the depths of forests, main cities akin to those within the caves, and lands designated for agriculture. The main difference he envisioned was that people aboveground didn't need to traverse tunnels to reach other cities. What struck him most about the upper world was the freedom—a place where cities had no walls and there was no ceiling overhead. Aside from that, it all sounded remarkably like life beneath.

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Chapter 480 Capital Journey

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Xu Biao noticed the part of their tale that omitted another key detail: the Dragon Army. In these tunnels and caves, the Dragon Army was the ultimate force. They held real power in every cave, and their presence was everywhere. Typically, the most respected position in each cave, the Capital City Lord, was held by a member of the Dragon Cave. Only two caves were different.

One of these caves was Cave's End. A cave so fragile and insignificant that the Dragon Army had long decided to do nothing there except for collecting its annual tax.

The other cave was Golden Lion Cave. As for how they managed to turn the cave into a kingdom, Yan Xiaobao didn't know. His theory was that it had something to do with the original law.

"We're finally here." A sigh escaped the servant's lips. Unlike the others in the group, the servants and the butler had finally entered the academy, feeling relieved. They hadn't enjoyed having to live out of the carriage during the journey. Now, in a proper environment, they could take care of their master.

Hearing the sound, Yan Xiaobao was pulled out of his thoughts, a sorrowful smile appearing on his face. They stood in front of the academy gates. The gates were closed, and the guards were King-level experts.

Entering the academy was impossible, but the guards alerted a professor, who quickly came to meet them. When the professor hurried down the slope, his robes billowed against his frame.

"Young Master Yang Bai?" he asked curiously. With a nod from the young master, a smile spread across his face. "Greetings, I am Professor Lin. I'll lead you to the dormitory. Did you bring guards and servants? Oh, these people? Good, very well. Please follow me. Say goodbye to your friends for now. We'll get you settled and ready to begin at the academy tomorrow morning."

Everything happened so quickly. Once Professor Lin arrived at the gate, it opened, and the guards, servants, and butler were brought inside with Yang Bai. Soon after, the gate shut again, leaving behind four guards, friends, hired mercenaries, and Yan Xiaobao.

Looking at the gate, Xu Yue chuckled and flashed a smile before turning around. "Come on, let's find a place to rest for a while." He said, heading out of the academy city, walking down the path to the capital. The beautiful Thousand River Cave.

These capitals were typically well-known, as their names mirrored those of the caves themselves, with signs along the road leading toward Thousand River City. The city was famous for its beauty and its small canals that spanned the entire place.

This journey to the capital took twelve days, and everything went smoothly. All was calm within the cave, and every traveler they encountered along the way was friendly, greeting them with smiles.

The dense air was infused with the essence of heaven and earth, allowing Yan Xiaobao's cultivation techniques to operate faster than usual. However, no matter how focused his spirit was, his body showed no sign of breaking through to Master Level. Instead, the size of his Spiritual Energy Ocean

continued to grow. It was reaching its limit, but the boundary didn't expand. Instead, the ocean kept clashing against an unknown barrier. A barrier preventing him from advancing his cultivation base.

The closer they got to the city, the more rivers they saw along the way.

"Why don't we rent a boat?" Yan Xiaobao finally said as they walked along a road beside a river. Boats passed by one after another, and docked along the riverbank were vessels, all offering a ride to the city in exchange for a few Demon Coins.

After half a year of relentless migration, the group was utterly exhausted. Their clothes were saturated with dirt, their bodies aching and worn. While the journey had been simple with little incident along the way, it had been long and continuous, with only brief stops here and there that never allowed them enough time for proper rest.

There had been no time to relax, as the young master needed to hurry to the academy. Now that they finally had the chance, Yan Xiaobao felt they ought to indulge themselves.

"Let's take a boat and relax a bit in the capital." Yan Xiaobao sighed, his words prompting a chorus of agreement from his friends, who all loudly expressed their relief.

Seeing the next boat, Yan Xiaobao headed straight for it, his friends following closely behind. When they boarded and sat down inside, joy was evident on their faces. Finally, they could take a moment to observe their surroundings rather than focusing solely on moving forward.

The boat was quite large, oval-shaped, with an upper deck and a lower deck. It permitted passengers to either enjoy the views from the upper deck or settle into underwater rooms below for cultivation. Some passengers chose the latter.

Their boat journey lasted three days, during which they traveled in a relaxed manner, giving them a chance to glimpse the beautiful city long before their arrival.

Upon reaching the city, the canals ran through the entirety of the stunning metropolis, offering another means of travel.

The group disembarked from the boat, one of the larger vessels entering the city. Once they reached the Inner Circle, boats were no longer permitted to proceed further. Only smaller vessels were allowed into the city's internal areas.

The rivers winding through the city were dotted with docking points, and their boat stopped at one of them. The group stepped off and began walking along the dusty roads.