

Medical 521

Chapter 521: Cold and Cynical

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Yan Xiaobao and his friends slowly approached the building where the law resided. Lan Feng controlled his body, and every guard they encountered found themselves decapitated.

One guard after another fell to Lan Feng. As Phoenix approached the building, she was cold and cynical. Sha Yun and Wang Julong entered the alley, dragging the corpses there. Before moving on to the next guard that Lan Feng would kill, they took the storage stones from the bodies.

One after the other, killing as they advanced toward the house. The gray-haired young man's body flickered in the wind as he appeared behind one King Expert after another, killing them without allowing a scream or any alarm to be raised.

One expert after another fell, culminating in twenty guards lying on the ground. Lan Feng emerged from the shadows, his hands bloody, his eyes cold, showing no trace of emotion.

Inside the building, Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng saw many laws still trapped there; however, after picking up each Memory Stone, one law after another disappeared inside. Once they had fully collected them, Yan Xiaobao handed the stones to Sha Yun and Wang Julong.

One by one, the young women receiving the stones took them without saying a word. The plan they had conceived earlier that day was finally set in motion, and Yan Xiaobao adhered to it, even though Zhong Hui's interference made him nervous.

As he absorbed each law one by one, he glanced toward the doorway. When he saw Zhong Hui standing a hundred meters down the road, his eyes narrowed. Zhong Hui's gaze playfully lingered on Yan Xiaobao's actions, yet the young man quickly looked away. He didn't have time to focus on this expert; instead, he had to bring his friends to safety. Only once they escaped could he breathe a sigh of relief.

The struggle to collect the laws in the Memory Stones was swift and painless, filling Yan Xiaobao with hope that the rest of the plan would proceed just as smoothly. His friends and himself could leave the Underworld without anyone noticing that they had escaped with the laws.

Leaving the building, Yan Xiaobao realized Zhong Hui had vanished. As soon as he registered that the man was gone, cold sweat began to trickle down his back, yet he maintained a positive attitude. Despite this, he now felt even more vigilant than before.

Walking through the empty streets, no one came to stop them. Using Wu Wei to scan the surroundings, Lan Feng determined that no one was truly present around them — at least no one weaker than him. As for whether Zhong Hui was watching... that was something they couldn't confirm.

They crossed the road and soon arrived at the main headquarters of the Dragon Army, a central building leading to the exit to the world above.

Entering the front door was not a challenging task. Dragon Army members were constantly returning to the headquarters, yet his A-grade credentials flashed briefly, and the guards displayed the utmost respect anyone could summon. Yan Xiaobao felt grateful.

After showing the badge, he and his friends entered the main building, but something was different this time. Many top-ranking experts were not only monitoring the guards but also observing other Dragon Army members. King Ranking Experts cast glances at Yan Xiaobao and his friends, their eyes seemingly locking onto their targets.

Seeing this, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but curse. He felt his plan was no longer proceeding as smoothly as before. Sha Yun and Wang Julong stood beside him, while Xie Lan and Xu Biao flanked the two girls. Deng Wu guarded the rear.

The six-person group slowly advanced through the mansion. If trouble arose, Lan Feng maintained control and kept his martial power prepared for use. Little Dragon also maintained vigilance, and both Divine Beasts moved forward cautiously.

They didn't encounter any more King Ranking Experts as they proceeded, but neither did they face fewer of them. With Lan Feng scanning the area again with his martial power, he quickly noticed more King Ranking Experts converging behind them.

At least Little Dragon was an Emperor-level Expert, capable of easily handling King-level Experts like Lan Feng. However, what truly worried Yan Xiaobao wasn't the King-level Experts trailing them; what concerned him was the absence of the Emperor-ranked Dragon Clan Experts.

While some Emperor-ranked Experts were likely on missions, a few had surely returned to headquarters. Yet, so far, Yan Xiaobao hadn't seen any of them.

An idea surfaced in his mind, but he hoped against hope that it was wrong. However, as they approached the staircase of hope, they discovered a formidable aura awaiting them.

Lan Feng couldn't keep his expression in check as his eyes turned sharp, and a smile touched his lips. Gazing at the room where the experts awaited them, he said,

"Danger lies ahead!" Upon hearing this, their formation tightened. The two girls were placed safely in the middle while the experts shielded them as they advanced.

At the doorway, Lan Feng didn't hesitate when the door exploded open. As expected, nearly twenty experts were waiting inside the room. Zhong Hui and the Commander stood in the center.

Seeing Zhong Hui alongside their enemies, Lan Feng narrowed his eyes, while Yan Xiaobao trembled inwardly. He realized that this expert was far stronger than the others. All of them were Emperor-ranked, making the situation even more alarming.

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Looking at the many experts, Lan Feng knew he needed to quickly reduce the enemy's numbers. Although Deng Wu and Little Dragon had the ability to instantly defeat several enemies, he was still just an Emperor Ranking Expert at the moment. He could not handle twenty experts of the same rank.

Realizing this, Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao didn't wait even a second. He stomped the ground fiercely, harnessing his explosive power, and shot toward the experts. When they saw the speed of Lan Feng's attacks, their faces tightened visibly in alarm.

Before any of the experts could understand what was happening, golden light flashed across the room, followed immediately by the sickening scent of metallic blood slowly spreading. This shocked the

Emperor Ranking Experts, who activated their Wu Wei and bathed themselves in the familiar golden glow.

Watching this, Lan Feng sneered coldly and stomped the ground again, accelerating like a ray of light toward another expert. In his hands, blades formed entirely from Wu Wei emerged. The blade pierced directly through the protective barrier, and with a gentle swing of his hand, another head came flying off.

Lan Feng had already moved twice, but in these two movements, ten Emperor Ranking Experts had lost their lives, their heads now rolling on the ground. Their bodies collapsed lifeless onto the floor.

With a chilling glint in his eyes, Lan Feng stared at another group of experts. Just as he was about to charge at them, he had to dodge a streak of golden light. He stomped the ground to stabilize himself before retreating to his companions to shield them from a sudden attack aimed at him.

Yan Xiaobao's gaze turned to Zhong Hui, observing the golden energy whip in his hands. It twisted and lashed with lethal precision, killing anything it touched. Even Lan Feng would be harmed if he came into contact with this whip.

Glancing at the girls and Deng Wu, Yan Xiaobao's vigilance heightened. Utilizing Wu Wei, Lan Feng managed to voice everyone's thoughts.

"Deng Wu, you and Little Dragon, aim to reach the Hope Ladder. Escort the girls out to protect them. I will handle this young Zhong Hui and attempt to eliminate more Emperor Experts." With a sigh, Lan Feng's eyes grew resolute, filled with cold fury.

"Once ready, unleash the laws immediately. Let them take risks and venture forward on their own. Let them experience what it's like to fight on the ground. The rest will set off for the Capital. I assure you, I will return someday to retrieve you."

At his words, the room fell silent. Sha Yun was on the verge of protesting, but Deng Wu shook his head and placed his hand on her arm.

Instead, Deng Wu allowed Little Dragon to regain control of his body, and together with Yan Xiaobao, they charged directly through the enemy Emperor Experts.

Though Little Dragon was clearly unable to dominate the experts as Lan Feng could, he still managed to defeat them one by one. While the Emperor Experts he opposed did not die, they were heavily injured. A smile spread across his face as he spotted the stairway ahead—until a shadow suddenly appeared. A Commander, illuminated by faint light, surged sharply from above his line of sight.

Seeing this, Little Dragon gathered Wu Wei around his body, and a golden dragon abruptly emerged. The Golden Dragon instantly coiled protectively around Deng Wu.

The Commander was stunned to find that the coiling dragon bore the mark of the Azure Dragon. Shockingly, the dragon defending Deng Wu suddenly shot out at lightning speed. Its jaws opened, revealing four sharp fangs that locked onto the Commander's arm, eliciting blood-curdling screams that echoed through the room. Yet, the Commander did not yield—he wrenched his arm free from the dragon's jaws. Blood poured from four massive puncture wounds, violently torn open.

Witnessing this, Deng Xiaolong smirked coldly as Little Dragon's beastly instincts took over. With a roaring motion, Little Dragon raised his arm once more, summoning another golden dragon. Now, two dragons coiled around his body, unleashing repeated and rapid attacks on the Commander.

The Commander relied on his Wu Wei to forge two massive hammers—clearly intended for offense. The hammers danced around him, emitting golden radiance. Each time they struck the dragons, the Commander would be forced to take a step back, but in the process, he managed to shatter one or two beautiful golden scales encircling Deng Wu's body.

Deng Wu and Yan Xiaobao weren't the only ones fighting. As Zhong Hui took action, the doorway became crowded with King Ranking Experts attempting to advance. Fortunately, only one person could progress at a time, allowing Xu Biao and Xie Lan to work together, easily winning battle after battle. Despite this, they understood that they couldn't keep recklessly expending their Wu Wei to block the doorway forever. They knew things would only get tougher for them, despite their dogged persistence.

While Little Dragon and Deng Wu were engaged in their battle against the Commander, and the two King Ranking Experts were doing their utmost to seal the doorway, Yan Xiaobao stood in the center of the room. Lan Feng was confronting Zhong Hui before him. A sly grin appeared on General Frozen's lips as a golden light ball replaced the whip he previously used to attack.

It was unclear whether the golden light in Zhong Hui's hands was meant for offense or defense. Nevertheless, Lan Feng refrained from attacking. He was patiently waiting for the right moment to tip the scales in his favor.

Both Hui Yue and Lan Feng understood the harsh reality: if their friends were to escape, fleeing this battlefield wouldn't be an option. Zhong Hui was far too formidable. However, Yan Xiaobao might be capable of entangling him while simultaneously eliminating many experts with their shockwaves.

That was another reason why Yan Xiaobao hadn't yet started fighting. The weakest people in the room, the ones most likely to fall victim to random attacks or shockwaves, were the two girls—those whom Yan Xiaobao had long decided he would protect.

A resolute expression emerged on Lan Feng's face. Inside Yan Xiaobao's heart, however, a melancholic voice resonated, "I'm sorry, Lan Feng. This could be our end. But if that's the case, then let's go down in a blaze of glory!" Yan Xiaobao's words sparked an uncontrollable laugh from Phoenix.

"I don't intend for us to die just yet," Phoenix said with a chuckle. "In terms of raw power, I may be weaker than this man. However, I am a divine beast. I possess things this man could never dream of."

Without offering further explanation, Lan Feng stomped the ground and charged once more, moving at an immeasurable pace toward the many experts ahead of him. Some were King Ranking Experts who had managed to breach the doorway, while others were Emperor Experts who had survived Little Dragon's onslaught and recovered from their injuries.

Blood splattered on the walls and the floor; heads were severed left and right, as if Phoenix faced no obstacles. His once-white hair turned red, dyed by the blood of his enemies. His stunning white and blue robes were similarly stained crimson. Even his azure eyes seemed shrouded in a red mist, swirling with rage inside him. The fog pulsated, eager to burst outward, desperate to partake in the bloody massacre.

At first, Zhong Hui was caught off guard. Seeing Yan Xiaobao charge recklessly, the General had initially expected Phoenix to make him his direct target. Yet at the last moment, the bird changed course, rushing past him and charging at the myriad experts in the room, slaughtering them ruthlessly and plunging the battle further into despair.

Watching Yan Xiaobao, Zhong Hui, though aware of his greater strength, found his entire body trembling with excitement as he saw the blood-soaked adversary ultimately turn his attention toward him.

While Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng successfully eliminated many experts, Xu Biao and Xie Lan were finally forced out of the doorway. Now, the two stood before Sha Yun and Wang Julong, shielding the girls from King Ranking Experts who had entered through the door. Sweat dripped from their foreheads, their teeth clenched tightly, and their Wu Wei surged from their bodies. They unleashed attack after attack to repel any advancing opponents.

However, their defense wasn't flawless. Xu Biao's chest bore a shallow sword wound; his arms and legs suffered direct punctures. Only Wang Julong's healing kept him upright.

Chapter 523: Accused by Zhong Hui Again

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Xie Lan's condition was far from good. Her hair was disheveled, and a cut ran across her beautiful face, passing through her eyes. Yet, there was no trace of sorrow in her gaze—only the unshakable determination to continue fighting for the cause she had chosen to believe in for her master. Seeing him as a key advantage, Xu Biao and Xie Lan stepped further into the room, inching closer to Little Dragon. On everyone's faces were expressions of displeasure, despair, fury, and sorrow, as they understood that for their team to escape the clutches of the most powerful among them, someone had to stay behind to ensure the experts ceased their pursuit. That someone was Yan Xiaobao.

Yan Xiaobao saw the King-level-ranked experts of the royal tribe appear at the doorway, and once again, Zhong Hui charged at him. His intent was to carve out another smooth path—only to slaughter more Kings. However, just as he attempted to step forward, the air in front of him was abruptly sliced open by a sharp beam of light. This made Yan Xiaobao's hair stand on end, and his entire body halted in its tracks.

"You really think I'd fall for the same trick twice?" Zhong Hui suddenly asked, his face twisting into an odd expression as another golden beam shot toward Yan Xiaobao.

Activating Speed Flow granted Yan Xiaobao only the bare minimum of power. However, this ability had been created by a King-level expert and was considered an advanced King-level skill—one that became more refined with each successive user. Since Lan Feng was a Saint, he could push this ability to its utmost potential, increasing his speed to an astonishing degree. This made him so fast that the only person in the room who could truly keep up with him was Zhong Hui. The others could only catch fleeting blurs as he moved—blurs that often ended with severed heads or pierced hearts.

"I actually had no intention of participating in this fight," Zhong Hui abruptly declared. His voice echoed across the room, so clear it darkened the Commander's face and momentarily lightened the expressions of his allies.

However, both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng were not convinced. They both understood that it was unlikely for Zhong Hui to keep himself from stepping into the fray. As they had suspected, the young General spoke again after a moment,

"Though I didn't plan to join, seeing how strong you are, Yan Xiaobao, I simply couldn't resist the urge to test my power against you!"

Hearing those words, Lan Feng immediately screamed into his friend's mind, "Leave! Now! Please, go as quickly as you can. Leave this to me—just go!"

He could no longer focus entirely on the expert before him. The two experts locked gazes, waves of energy radiating from them. Before Zhong Hui could act, a terrifying howl tore from Yan Xiaobao's throat. The young man's features began to change rapidly.

His legs transformed into the hind legs of a wolf. A long, wolf-like tail extended from his tailbone, and fur started emerging on his skin. Oddly, his arms transformed into claws, and his hair turned to feathers. Red mist swirled around his body. This time, it wasn't Yan Xiaobao controlling his body, but rather Lan Feng. The Phoenix in his Dantian Cave had abused the core of a little demon, fusing with the red mist-like energy, forcing a transformation upon himself.

The pain brought by the transformation was unbearable, and howls of agony erupted from his throat. His body quickly finished its transformation. Unlike Yan Xiaobao's earlier use of the red mist, Lan Feng was fully capable of controlling the energy. His blue eyes were now paired with a sharp beak, his hair had turned to icy-blue feathers, and his arms had become claws. He resembled a hybrid of wolf and Phoenix—a beast unlike any seen before. Zhong Hui's wide-open eyes filled with astonishment, and his grin involuntarily widened.

"How marvelous!" he exclaimed loudly. A small golden light ball leaped from his hand into the air, exploding instantly into thousands of golden rays of light. These beams of light killed anyone they touched.

By now, Sha Yun and Wang Julong had managed to ascend the stairs. Following behind them was Deng Wu, who had successfully captured a King-level expert to use as a shield. Yet, as Xie Lan noticed the golden light filling the space, she realized she wouldn't be able to find another King-level expert to shield both herself and Xu Biao. Seeing the look of horror on his face, she immediately threw herself in front of him. The golden light pierced her heart, and as she collapsed to the ground, a satisfied smile adorned her lips, though her eyes were lifeless. Even as her soul evaporated into the thin air, her lips still bore the faint trace of a smile.

Xu Biao's eyes widened, brimming with disbelief, as he gripped her arm. Yet, before he could fully comprehend the depth of his loss, Yan Xiaobao's furious roar filled the air once more. Just as another golden light ball appeared in Zhong Hui's hand, Yan Xiaobao's voice echoed in Xu Biao's mind.

"Run! Get far away from here! Leave, and make sure her sacrifice wasn't in vain—live for her!"

Upon hearing the voice in his heart, Xu Biao's disbelieving eyes instantly sharpened with conviction. He nodded, swiftly tucking her body into a crevice of rock. Then, he joined Sha Yun, Wang Julong, and Deng Wu as they ascended the stairs of hope.

None of the King-level experts in the room attempted to advance further; instead, they sought to flee from Yan Xiaobao, who again allowed golden light to gather in the room. The golden light was not something that could be easily stopped.

Seeing how effortlessly the golden light was obstructed, Zhong Hui let out a whistle and brandished a martial power sword. The sword was about a meter and a half in length and thirty centimeters wide. It was a massive blade, yet Lan Feng showed no signs of despair. He merely met the strike head-on. His claws intercepted the blow, producing a thunderous boom that sent ripples of energy coursing through the room, causing the entire castle to tremble.

Chapter 524: Accused by Zhong Hui Again_2

After the transaction, the blow was heavy, but Lan Feng was using all his strength; he could muster a seemingly happy Zhong Hui, who was playing around in the midst of the battle.

Just as Lan Feng's patience was about to run out, and he prepared to unleash all his martial power to attack, the entire room suddenly froze. A chilling sphere enveloped them, as though they were trapped in a world all their own, centered around Zhong Hui.

Delicate snow began to fall within this sphere, and no one could move even an inch. Even Lan Feng, entirely immobilized within this realm, kept a vigilant gaze fixed on the Frozen General, who was approaching him slowly.

With a playful smile still lingering on his face, Zhong Hui raised a hand and clenched it tightly. As soon as he did, the entire building trembled again, and the trembling hope of the staircase collapsing became a reality. Seeing the fear in Yan Xiaobao's eyes, Zhong Hui wondered about the safety of his friend, yet inexplicably his smile grew even broader.

"Listen, Yan Xiaobao, I know you can hear the mysterious shape of the beast that resides within me. Today, I will let you leave, but I will not allow you to escape with your friends. Find another way, but do it alone. Anyone who befriends me will face death."

Having said this, Zhong Hui turned his gaze to the many King-level experts who had unwittingly overheard their conversation. With one hand grabbing the other, those experts exploded one by one, as if crushed by a giant hand. Blood sprayed everywhere, even thicker than the trail left by Lan Feng's previous battles.

Seeing Zhong Hui retract the powerful realm, Yan Xiaobao didn't wait to see if his opinion would change. He dashed toward the place he knew would provide entrance to the next system of tunnels.

Deng Wu ensured Little Dragon maintained control as they rushed up the staircase, everyone saw the light of the sun once again—a vast, endless sky stretched out before them.

Even though they all had longed for the sky's brilliance, despite Xu Biao's wish to see its beauty, none of the group members felt particularly excited or happy at that moment.

Xie Lan leaped in front of Xu Biao at the final moment to save his life. Everyone had been left in the dark cave with Yan Xiaobao; they didn't know how to escape, but they didn't truly feel that their friend would perish.

From the weight of each step as they ascended the staircase, they felt as though they had left something of great importance behind. Only Wang Julong seemed determined in her resolve. Biting down hard, she infused strength into her steps, rushing forward faster than Deng Wu himself.

"Don't slow down!" she shouted to her friends behind her. "Yue said he would meet us in the Capital. He gave us an urgent mission under the law. How can we fulfill it if we keep dragging our feet?" Her raging temper carried her voice. Despite her pain over leaving Yan Xiaobao behind, she knew they truly had no other choice.

Hearing her words, everyone nodded, except for Xu Biao, whose eyes remained red with grief. He was sad deep in his soul, but he understood that now wasn't the time for sorrow or pity. The world was unforgiving, allowing only the strong to thrive. Xie Lan's death affirmed that her opponent had been stronger—this was simply the cruel reality of the world. Even today, Xie Lan had killed countless cultivators and sacrificed herself. Nothing in this world could prevent such tragedy.

The climb felt eternal; half a day passed before the group finally reached the top. The four of them stood there, staring up at the beautiful blue sky overhead. It was midday; the bright summer sky opened wide above them, revealing only a colossal castle nearby.

The sight made their hearts race, the reflected blue sky mirrored in their eyes. Xu Biao felt like the world was something else entirely. Though joyful about their homecoming, his emotions turned distant, dazed by this stark contrast. No longer boxed under a ceiling, the oppressive sensation of captivity vanished.

Though they had lost Xie Lan and left Yan Xiaobao behind, the fresh air around them was irresistible. They couldn't help but savor every breath of it while gazing at the castle.

"This should be the Central Castle," Deng Wu said, sensing something uneasy stirring within him, an instinct he had honed from his bond with Little Dragon.

"I think we need to leave," Deng Wu murmured quietly. Everyone nodded in agreement and began scanning for pathways to take.

There were multiple roads along the way. Without overthinking, the group hastily picked one and started trekking down the mountain from the Central Palace area.

The road led them to a small forest. Quickly leaving the beaten path, they searched for a place to fulfill the task Yan Xiaobao had implored them to undertake. The sooner they succeeded, the quicker they could return to the Capital, where they had promised to await Yan Xiaobao.

Within the mountains, they came across a forest seemingly devoid of life. No matter how far they walked, no signs of vitality appeared. The only creatures they encountered were magical beasts, ones Xu Biao had never seen before. Although wondrous, the young man lacked the energy or enthusiasm to explore the marvels of this upper world. His heart lay heavy with grief over losing Xie Lan.

The magical creatures in their surroundings were mostly at Master level, yet the cultivators protected themselves as they traversed the forest. Eventually, they reached a large clearing covered in grass and flowers. A small river cut through it, slowly eroding its banks and expanding over time.

On this carpet of grasses and blooms, Wang Julong and Sha Yun retrieved their Memory Stones, placing one after another of the regulations down. Everyone else still slumbered deeply in silence.

The laws weren't something the girls could activate through physical strength alone. Instead, they watched over them recurrently, focusing tirelessly day and night. Minute after minute went by, yet the resolve of these two girls shone as they ensured that Yan Xiaobao's entrusted mission persisted relentlessly.

While the two girls busily kept watch and tended to the laws, Xu Biao paid them no attention. Instead, he found a place in the clearing where he laid Xie Lan gently, planting a final kiss on her forehead. Then, wielding Wu Wei, he dug a deep grave.

Xu Biao spoke continuously to Xie Lan, as though she could still hear his voice. He told her about how they'd first met as children and shared memories of the mischief they'd created.

He reminisced about how they grew up together, always by each other's side, attending school while relying on one another's strength.

His stories unfolded further as his trembling voice revealed how they joined the mercenary company and fought their way to the rank of Guild Master side by side. Through every mission, Xie Lan remained at his side, never complaining as she aided him.

Finally, Xu Biao apologized to the silent Xie Lan, regretful that he hadn't listened to her enough. Now, though he stood above the world, without her presence, the vast skies seemed utterly meaningless.

Resolve flickered in his tearful eyes as he slapped himself forcefully.

"I know you'd scold me still if you were here," he said through his sobs. "But I will live out the life you left me. I will never forget that it belongs to you. Even if you've stayed behind in the Hell World, one day I will come for you. Perhaps we can reincarnate together."

With that, Xu Biao gently placed Xie Lan into her grave. Covering her with earth felt like burying his own heart. Using his strength, he located a large stone and carved a meaningful sculpture onto it with Wu Wei. Etched upon the stone were the words: "Never Forgotten, Forever Loved."

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Chapter 525 Burying Xie Lan

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After burying Xie Lan, Xu Biao stayed by the grave for countless days and nights, keeping vigil to ensure that no one could harm her final memory.

While Xu Biao was busy keeping vigil, Sha Yun, Deng Wu, and Wang Julong were upholding the magical laws. One by one, the laws awakened, and when they realized they were no longer trapped in a confined space, their gazes were filled with shock and wonder as they looked upon the beautiful flowers, grasses, and trees.

Each of these laws was informed of the events that had transpired and granted permission to begin their new lives. They were allowed to visit places they had never seen before and travel across the world, their powers altering the lives of every creature and plant.

One by one, the laws began to appear in the world. Their eyes shone with excitement and gratitude, and each law set their own unique goals for their lives.

Finally, the last law awoke and began its journey into the distance. Four days passed in this manner. During these four days, Xu Biao did not move an inch, but now that no law remained, the former Guild Master stood up, his eyes filled with determination.

"Should we head to the capital to wait for Yan Xiaobao?" Xu Biao asked. The three people in front of him nodded in unison. Seeing this, Xu Biao nodded as well, casting one last glance at the grave before bowing deeply to the carved stone one last time. As they left the forest and began descending the mountain, Xu Biao turned around and followed, accompanied by three young doves trailing behind.

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While these companions were following Yan Xiaobao's suggestion and helping the laws regain their freedom, the young white-haired man was charging through the Dragon Army Headquarters.

Panic was everywhere. Throughout the caves, no high-ranking guards could be seen, and many mercenaries were taking advantage of the situation. They were stealing and destroying everything in the city. Experts from various prominent families had no choice but to intervene, as everyone was shocked and wondering where the Commander and the Dragon Army were.

Amidst this chaos, Yan Xiaobao moved swiftly through the Dragon Army Headquarters. He saw lower-ranking specialists running from one side of the building to the other, searching for experts or anyone who might know where the experts had gone.

Yan Xiaobao ignored them completely, rushing forward to the place he recognized. He headed to the entrance leading to other tunnels. His objective was to reach the tunnel to the Divine Domain—toward Lan Feng's homeland.

Upon arriving at the tunnel, no one dared to stop Yan Xiaobao when he displayed his Class A emblem. Without looking back, Yan Xiaobao dashed into the tunnel system's entrance, which led to the tunnels beneath the Divine Domain—toward the tunnel leading to Lan Feng's father.

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The tunnel system Yan Xiaobao entered resembled the Dragon Tunnels in many ways but was not entirely identical. The Vermilion Bird Tunnel did not have legions like the Dragon Army but was governed by a royal line overseeing the entire tunnel system. Every cavern within the system was considered a fiefdom, tended to by Dukes.

The Royal Bird Kingdom was the official name of the tunnel system, and the Royal Guards all wore crimson cloaks. They could be seen in every cavern of the kingdom.

The Vermilion Bird Royal Kingdom was stunningly beautiful and meticulously maintained. One of its caverns was entirely oceanic, dotted with small islands—a sea that travelers navigated by ship.

There were caverns where the sun never rose, and others where the moon never shone. Some caverns were filled with lush forests, where residents would hunt and sell game from the wild.

Other caverns were dedicated entirely to agriculture, while others thrived as bustling cities generating wealth from merchants.

Although mercenaries were indeed present in some of these caverns, they were rarely seen. Those who had once lived in the tunnels hunted demonic beasts.

Yan Xiaobao traversed one cavern after another, accompanied by Lan Feng and two Divine Beasts, who remained inconspicuous throughout their journey. In each tunnel they passed, they hunted, and eventually, they arrived at the system's final cavern.

"Follow my lead," Lan Feng sighed and said. The two of them had traveled together for a year, driven by the sole desire to cross the tunnels as swiftly as possible. Yan Xiaobao's heart began to beat irregularly upon hearing Lan Feng's words—he was thrilled because it meant they could finally see the endless sky once more and return to the capital, where his friends were waiting.

Following Lan Feng's command, Yan Xiaobao stood before a wall, closed his eyes, and placed his hands on its surface. A force of suction emerged, pulling Yan Xiaobao inward. He suddenly found himself in a completely empty tunnel—a tunnel similar to the one they had used when first entering the tunnels. He rushed ahead eagerly toward the distant light at the tunnel's end.

Yan Xiaobao inhaled the fresh air. He stood amidst mountains brimming with ancient trees. No creatures were nearby, and he trembled on weakened legs, barely able to comprehend that he had finally escaped the Underworld.

At last, after spending three years beneath the surface—two years with his friends and one year alone—it had left him deeply solitary. Now, he dared not interact with anyone or linger in one place for long. He knew his friends were waiting in the capital of the Sun Kingdom, but Yan Xiaobao was no longer within the Sun Kingdom's borders; he was instead in the Divine Domain—the continent's most mysterious region.

Yan Xiaobao stood surrounded by towering trees, so tall that their tops were impossible to see. Vines hung down in soft cascades. The air was humid, with countless plants thriving on the forest floor. As he looked around, he saw nothing but plants—no magical beasts, which had long since vanished. Wandering through the area, he felt the freshness in the air, cleansed after heavy rains.

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After some time, Yan Xiaobao remained on the open space, observing the people around him. He nodded firmly and began moving eastward, staying within the mountain range. He was searching for a place that would allow him to cross over—away from the dangerous areas within the Divine Domain and into the safe and familiar region known as the Sun Kingdom.

The scenery surrounding Yan Xiaobao was filled with breathtaking forests—untouched and pristine. The forest was teeming with plants of all shapes and sizes. It was a long time before Yan Xiaobao encountered the first magical beast as he wandered through the forest.

The beast he encountered was not a high-ranked one. Instead, it was an Iron Blood Bat that resided in treetops, high above the young white-haired man, who found it impossible to reach.

As Yan Xiaobao ventured deeper into the forest, he began to realize that the scarcity of magical beasts wasn't because they weren't present—it was due to the vastness of the forest, which made the beasts few and far between. Some of them lived in small packs, while others roamed alone. A few high-ranked beasts required Yan Xiaobao to tread carefully, whereas others were weaker. Yan Xiaobao could defeat these and enjoy a meal made from their meat.

One day, as he continued traversing the forest on a different path, Yan Xiaobao was astonished to discover that no matter how far he walked, he couldn't seem to cross the mountain range. It was almost as if he were trapped in the valley—a gorge that stretched endlessly toward the Central Palace, preventing anyone from entering or leaving unless they possessed the ability to fly.

The gorge where Yan Xiaobao was currently stranded seemed to stretch on forever. The forest filled the gorge and extended into its deepest recesses. On the ground, Yan Xiaobao began to feel that the only

way to escape this perilous region was by passing through the Central Palace—the same palace his friend had originally fled.

The journey through the tunnel system had been smooth and direct. All the caves and pathways had seemingly been carved for humans to traverse. However, in this forest, progressing forward was no longer a simple task. He had to push through every bush and find faint animal trails to use for travel, resting no longer than a few hours at a time.

As he ventured deeper into the forest, Yan Xiaobao encountered more magical beasts along the way. Each beast possessed distinct levels of strength, as though the forest itself had no defined inner or outer regions. Every beast species seemed to claim its own territory.

Some beasts were engaged in battles for new territories, and the sounds of combat occasionally echoed through the forest. Yet none of the beasts seemed willing to confront Yan Xiaobao, for the white-haired youth was no longer suppressing his Holy-level aura.

It was only under circumstances when the young man needed to hunt or sharpen his skills that he would suppress his aura.

Initially, Yan Xiaobao's journey through the forest was hurried. He was determined to cross the forest quickly. However, as one day turned into another, he was no longer in a rush. Eventually, he began to spend hours each day cultivating. The deeper he ventured into the forest, the stronger his connection to nature grew. His bond with the earth became ever more intimate.

Yan Xiaobao also spent time cultivating his elemental affinity with fire and metal. Although he barely utilized Metal Element, he still wished to refine every affinity he possessed and eventually merge the three elements together.

As the journey stretched across greater distances, the elemental affinity within his body accumulated more and more. With his travel pace slowing, his strength continued to rise steadily.

After three months of travel, Yan Xiaobao reached the eighth star of the Master level. Over the past year and three months of traveling alone, his cultivation speed had accelerated significantly. At last, the young man arrived at a massive valley within the forest—a clearing with a small village situated by a stream Yan Xiaobao had been following.

Yan Xiaobao stood within the forest, gazing down at the valley below, suddenly uncertain whether to avoid the village altogether. Yet, before he could finish contemplating, a voice shattered the silence—a child's voice.

"Mama, Mama! A strange beast has appeared!" A little girl's voice echoed throughout the valley, and in an instant, the tranquil village bustled with activity.

The adults rushed out from their homes, gazing at the creatures, and Xu Yue was immediately taken aback.

The adults were all half-human, half-animal. Each one appeared to represent a certain level of transformation—a mix of Beastman traits and human characteristics, with some leaning more toward beastly features and others displaying more humanlike traits.

When they saw Yan Xiaobao, they gathered together, watching him warily. Yan Xiaobao also observed them intently, focusing on their appearances.

One woman bore a striking resemblance to Lan Feng. Apart from her entire body being covered in thin feathers, she appeared almost human. Her Phoenix-like feathers were sky blue, while this woman's feathers were more brownish and natural in color.

The wolf Yan Xiaobao saw resembled his own form when red fog took over, except this beast was gray. It stood on its hind legs, its hands eerily human-like, yet tipped with sharp claws instead of nails. Its wolf-like face sported a nose and piercing eyes.

The other beasts displayed various tails and patches of fur resembling different animals. The children seemed to exhibit more beastly qualities than human ones, leaving Yan Xiaobao shocked as he looked upon them.

Just as they were alarmed upon seeing Yan Xiaobao, the white-haired man grew equally cautious upon spotting the Beastmen. He immediately allowed Lan Feng to release his repressed aura—a radiant, instant burst that shook every beast within the valley.

"My heavens, we deeply apologize for mistaking you," one of the beasts cried as others joined in. "My heavens, please forgive us."

They all seemed shocked to sense his aura, yet Yan Xiaobao frowned when he heard them refer to him as 'milord'.

"Milord, please come to our humble village and rest during your travels," said the feathered woman. Yan Xiaobao quietly nodded, suppressing Lan Feng's aura once again as he stepped forward.

Upon entering the forest, Yan Xiaobao initially used Lan Feng's aura as a means to intimidate other beasts. However, once he inadvertently wandered into another holy rank beast's territory, his aura became a provocation to the beasts, challenging them to defend their domain. If Lan Feng hadn't been subdued and if they hadn't escaped at full speed, Yan Xiaobao might not have lived to tell the tale.

Faced with such circumstances, it was evident he no longer wished to endanger himself by challenging additional Saints.

Throughout his journey crossing the forest, Yan Xiaobao encountered death several times, but the moment he reached the village, he was met with an extraordinary reception. This left him utterly astounded. Everyone addressed him as 'lord'; they were all terrified by his presence, yet paradoxically thrilled whenever he was out of sight.

Using Qi to hone his hearing, he uncovered plenty of gossip from the villagers. However, the rumors only compounded the confusion for the already perplexed young man.

"We have a Forest King visiting us; why has such an important figure appeared?" asked a raccoon fellow to the rat beside him. The rat simply shrugged, though the whiskers on his face twitched incessantly. His nose quivered, and his head darted side to side. "Keep quiet!" he hissed. "What if his master hears us? Who are we to question his actions?"

Upon hearing talk of the Forest King, Yan Xiaobao frowned and questioned Lan Feng. Although the Phoenix was just as uncertain as the humans, they all began deliberating on the best way to gather more information.

In this valley, Yan Xiaobao saw the sky for the first time this year. The expansive azure heavens felt refreshing, stirring his longing for the friends waiting for him in the Capital. At the same time, he was thrilled, knowing he was in Chenyuan — perhaps the only place where he could obtain information about the great sin and the Dark Era.

Yan Xiaobao had a house near the entrance, and outside the door stood a multitude of distinct magical beasts. They were all staring at the door, waiting for Yan Xiaobao to step out so they could see him again.

The moment the young man stepped outside, he was met with ten pairs of large, black eyes. Every gaze was filled with adoration. The small creatures were so endearing that Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but smile and pat them on their heads. This delighted all the beast children, making them smile and play excitedly.

As he walked past them, the carefree warmth vanished from Yan Xiaobao's face, replaced by an aura of authority. Turning to a passing beast-man, he asked, "Where is the village chief?"

The beast was startled by the question, stammered for a moment on the spot, and finally pointed to a slightly larger house than the others.

Looking around the village and its layout, Yan Xiaobao was reminded of his old home. As he headed toward the elder's house, he couldn't help but think of his mother, father, and younger brother, back in the outskirts of the Magic Forest.

Driving away the melancholic thoughts in his mind, Yan Xiaobao steadily approached the house, determined to learn more about this Forest King.

When he entered the chief's residence, Yan Xiaobao was stunned to see so many demons working diligently to prepare a banquet. One after another, they bustled about, whether setting tables, gathering food, or ensuring in every possible way that the feast would be flawless.

Chapter 528 The Forest King's Message

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Everyone was busy, and no one noticed the white-haired young man leaning against the cold wall in the shadow of a village house. He observed everyone with a smile on his face.

Although Yan Xiaobao was eager to gather information about the Forest King, he had no intention of interrupting them as they busily prepared a celebration for him. It had been a long time since his last interaction with anyone else, and the kindness he encountered here was enough to touch his heart.

Even though the bustling villagers didn't immediately notice Yan Xiaobao, it didn't take long before he caught their attention. As he prepared to stop and step aside, they all bowed deeply to the young man; fear and reverence mingled in their eyes.

Seeing the fear, the white-haired young man couldn't help but let out a sigh. After he was discovered, he straightened himself and moved toward the village chief who had greeted him earlier. He pointed toward the chief's house, and as he led the way, the chief immediately understood; his hand trembled slightly, and his throat suddenly felt dry.

Knowing he had scared the chief, Xu Yue quickly decided to clear up any misunderstandings. He wasted no time entering the house, where he brought a few wooden chairs into the living room.

Sitting down, Yan Xiaobao gestured for the chief to do the same. As he complied, the two were now seated face to face.

"Master, please have mercy," the chief said immediately in a trembling voice, "Whatever we have done to offend you, Master, I beg your wrath upon this humble servant!"

Hearing his words, Yan Xiaobao wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry, and he quickly placed a calm hand on the chief's trembling shoulder.

"Don't worry, I'm not upset," he said swiftly. As the chief raised his head in surprise, the trembling in the men subsided somewhat. When they met Yan Xiaobao's sincere gaze, their eyes widened in disbelief, as though encountering an otherworldly truth.

"You're not upset?" the soft voice asked again. Yan Xiaobao nodded with a gentle smile on his face.

"I believe there's been a significant misunderstanding," Yan Xiaobao sighed and said, "I'm not one of these lords you speak of. I'm new to this entire region," he continued, "I was born in the Sun Kingdom, where I grew up and lived until recently. Something happened which brought me here to the Divine Domain, but I'm unfamiliar with this realm."

"You're not the Forest King?" The chief was now thoroughly shocked. His eyes couldn't possibly grow wider; disbelief etched itself upon his face.

"That's correct," Yan Xiaobao confirmed politely, "But perhaps you can tell me more about them?" He posed the question as the stunned and bewildered chief nodded hesitantly.

Although Yan Xiaobao wasn't the Forest King as they had initially assumed, he was still a Holy Name Expert. A Saint Level beast capable of maintaining a complete human form meant he was exceedingly powerful. The chief harbored no hope of angering this man.

"The Divine Domain is divided into sixty-four counties, each controlled by a Forest King. The entire Divine Domain is a vast jungle, with occasional clearings, gorges, and valleys scattered throughout. The lord of this Qianfang Valley is Lord Yan Zhiquan. He is a Black Breath Razor, one of the strongest beasts in our forest. It's said he even defeated a Divine Beast once, I've heard of it!"

Once the topic began, it seemed impossible to stop the chief from talking. When he mentioned the lord of this county, his eyes brimmed with pride. The elderly man, breathing fast, continued explaining the place Yan Xiaobao had found himself in.

"The Forest Kings are the mightiest Holy Beasts within the Divine Domain. Anyone confident enough may challenge these lords, yet it's rare for a Forest King to lose such duels. Most of these lords have sat upon their thrones for a very long time."

"Although the regions are divided by counties, there is one individual whom even the lords must respect. In the deepest parts of the jungle lies a region controlled by a woman revered by everyone. She's known as the strongest. She is a Single-Horned Jasmine Hawk, devouring countless beings, both men and beasts, over the years. Her name is Wan Qiao."

At the mention of this name, Yan Xiaobao felt the soul of Lan Feng undergo a pronounced shift; his emotions transformed into a mix of panic and fear. These unexpected feelings left Yan Xiaobao affected, causing the young man's face to darken visibly in front of the chief.

"Explain it to me later," Yan Xiaobao told Lan Feng, before muttering to himself with a faint smile upon his lips.

"I've been traveling along this valley, what you call Qianfang Valley, for quite some time now. How might I escape Chenyuan and return to the Sun Kingdom, back to my own home?"

Upon hearing his query, the man fell silent for a time, finally responding: "It's difficult to enter the Divine Domain," he began, "But while entering is hard, leaving is even harder. Only the Forest Kings are permitted to leave the borders of the Divine Domain, and only if Lady Wan Qiao is in a good mood. Normally, anyone who enters the Divine Domain spends their lifetime here."

Pausing briefly, the man reflected before continuing, "I suppose if Wan Qiao allowed it, you might leave and receive her assistance—even if you're not the Forest King. But who holds any connection with a transcendent being like Lady Wan Qiao?"

After hearing these words, Yan Xiaobao responded swiftly to the chief before returning to the house lent to him. Once there, children came to see him again; however, this time Yan Xiaobao had no time to play with them. He quickly passed them by and entered the house. Sitting cross-legged, he allowed his consciousness to slowly descend into the Dantian Cave, where a shocked and terrified Lan Feng was seated.

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"I assume you know this Wan Qiao?" Yan Xiaobao asked. Although posed as a question, it was more a statement, and Lan Feng nodded.

"I never thought that old witch was still alive," he muttered under his breath. His face was devoid of color, his feathers disheveled, as though they had been ruffled but refused to lie flat again.

'Who is she?' Yan Xiaobao asked after waiting for a moment. He was curious as to what kind of woman could bring down the usually loud and arrogant Phoenix to such a petrified state.

'Who is she? Who is she? You want to know who she is? She's a monster. Other than my father and a few other gods, I've never known anyone stronger than her. To say she's invincible is an understatement. She finishes her tasks crudely.' A sharp voice escaped Lan Feng, his eyes brimming with fear.

"I understand, but who is she?" Yan Xiaobao pursued further, eager to know what caused such a reaction deep in Lan Feng's heart. In truth, Yan Xiaobao had never seen the woman who would strike so much fear. This was the first time Lan Feng had displayed terror.

"She's my caretaker!" Lan Feng nearly screamed in despair. "When I was little, my father had no time to take care of me, so he found a strong woman he knew could easily handle a chick. Turns out, she was completely unsuitable for looking after children."

Upon hearing this, Yan Xiaobao was stunned to see the shocked reaction of such a majestic bird who had been deeply traumatized by the woman.

Although Lan Feng was haunted by the trauma, Yan Xiaobao couldn't fathom the memories currently haunting the bird; instead, he found the whole situation quite amusing.

After some time spent pondering, Yan Xiaobao understood that although it might have been traumatic for the bird, without a doubt, the peculiar bond between Lan Feng and this Wan Qiao might be exactly what they needed now.

Reaching his conclusion about what to do, a slight smile formed on Yan Xiaobao's face. Though Lan Feng was still dwelling in his unpleasant memories, he quickly realized Yan Xiaobao and the white-haired youth's plan.

"No, no, no, no, no!" Lan Feng insisted repeatedly, but Yan Xiaobao merely chuckled in reply. He had decided they would venture to the inner regions of the Divine Jungle where they could meet Wan Qiao. Hopefully, with her help, they could figure out a way to escape this forest.

"Blame yourself," Yan Xiaobao shrugged and said, 'If you were stronger, if you could fly, then we could have left long ago. But even with my martial power wings and the martial power you've refined, we most likely can't exit the mountains. The distance is simply too far.'

"It's not that I don't acknowledge my connection with her," Lan Feng began frantically, "but she won't be keen on seeing me again. Our past is quite unpleasant. I'm sure she won't help us!" Lan Feng continued, but Yan Xiaobao largely ignored him.

"She's our only hope. If she truly won't help you, then we'll have no choice but to challenge one of the Forest Kings."

"Let's start with a Lord," Lan Feng suggested, fully confident in his ability to take down other Saint Level beasts, but Yan Xiaobao simply shook his head. "Imagine if we win—then we'd have to come back to this place again and again," Yan Xiaobao pointed out. "If anyone challenges us, we'll have to fight them; victory or death."

Frowning deeply, Lan Feng found he had no other choice but to accept Yan Xiaobao's decision. As he dwelled on his apprehension about reuniting with his caretaker, he sighed profoundly. Wan Qiao, the one woman Lan Feng truly feared in this world.

Agreeing to venture into the forest's inner regions, Yan Xiaobao sat down to cultivate until he heard someone knock at the door. Rising and opening it, he found all the village children standing outside dressed in their best clothes. Their small faces smiled warmly towards the human.

"Come with us!" one of the older children said. Yan Xiaobao laughed and followed the children towards the chief's house—a house large enough to contain the entire village. At a long table, they waited for Yan Xiaobao to sit at the seat of honor.

Spitted roasted pig and a variety of fruits and berries were laid out on the table, accompanied by cooked stews, vegetables, and roasted meat. Though these creatures were magical beasts, their lives bore astonishing resemblance to human lives, and Yan Xiaobao felt the same atmosphere as his hometown.

Letting go of worries about the future, Yan Xiaobao decided to spend the evening with the villagers, who had gone to great lengths to make him feel welcome. He was deeply moved by their hospitality.

After celebrating with the villagers the entire evening, Yan Xiaobao prepared to leave as the sun began piercing the sky. Bowing respectfully to the villagers for the last time, Yan Xiaobao turned and began moving towards the forest once more. This time, he wasn't searching for a way out of the mountains;

instead, he headed deeper into the forest—towards the territory ruled by the One-Horned Jasmine Eagle.

While Lan Feng remained hesitant about encountering his old caretaker again, he also understood it was their only viable option for leaving this place. Accepting this, he cautioned Yan Xiaobao that meeting her was the only path forward, though Wan Qiao was unlikely to offer them help. However, she probably wouldn't kill him outright, as she harbored lingering feelings for Lan Feng's father.

Though the sun broke through the dark sky within the valley holding the village, it hadn't warmed the forest yet. As Yan Xiaobao entered, he noticed the chill, as no heat had reached here. Dew still sparkled on the grass and small plants ahead of him.

Noting the coolness within the forest, Yan Xiaobao began moving at top speed, making sure to remain utterly silent as he advanced. His aura was retracted, detectable by only the rare magical beasts capable of sensing it. Fortunately, those that could were distant enough that his velocity made it easy to outpace them.

As he moved through the forest, Yan Xiaobao was grateful to have Lan Feng by his side—two sets of eyes and two souls were better equipped for detection than one. Moreover, without Lan Feng's guidance and strength, Yan Xiaobao might have long succumbed to their enemies.

After battling a Lava Collared Chimera that ambushed him, leaving him with a deep wound across his chest, Hui Hui sighed and decided to retreat from the path he had been following.

"You've finally given up?" Lan Feng asked, his tone tinged with mockery, as he had long told Yan Xiaobao he needed to grow stronger. He needed to improve through real combat, not just sprint forward, advance, and then almost lose every encounter he faced. Having relied on Lan Feng's aura to fend off enemies for quite some time, Yan Xiaobao's pride had suffered immensely.

Reflecting on this, Yan Xiaobao gritted his teeth, realizing the bird was right. Though Yan Xiaobao had spent considerable time cultivating, his training base was deep, but his combat capabilities truly lagged behind.

When it came to grueling battles—or those where Hui Yue knew he was at even a slight disadvantage—he had relied on his red fog or Lan Feng's power, neither of which were truly his own strength. Realizing

this, the young man's gaze stiffened with resolve. With a flick of his hand, a black dagger appeared. As his sharp gaze focused, he unknowingly began spinning the blade, thoroughly attuned to his surroundings. Eventually, he caught movement out of the corner of his eye and slowly turned to see a strange small creature resembling a pig in front of him.

Though small in stature, the pig had a ferocity exceeding any beast Yan Xiaobao had encountered. Completely surpassing others in speed, it displayed astonishing agility.

Its mouth bristled with razor-sharp teeth, and its twin tusks gleamed with a vicious sharpness unlike any seen even among larger magical creatures.

From that instant, as the pig locked onto Yan Xiaobao and the white-haired youth, he activated the Velocity Flow, knowing full well he would need every ounce of speed to contend with the creature.

Luckily, he was situated in a zone where all beasts were roughly equal to him. There he and the pig—man and beast—stared down one another; neither claimed an advantage before the first strike.

Understanding this, Yan Xiaobao wasn't the type to wait passively for an attack. With Velocity Flow pushed to its absolute limit, he hurtled forward, a blur to the naked eye. In his hand, the dagger no longer spun; it gripped steadfastly.

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Chapter 530 Still No Advantage

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At the start, the boar was evidently surprised by the speed displayed by the human. However, it quickly composed itself and used its own speed to dodge to the side. It narrowly escaped at the last moment, leaving less than a second afterimage of its air in the wake of the dagger's sharp edge cutting through.

Seeing this, both man and beast were now entirely focused on one another. In an instant, all that could be seen were two black blurs, one relentlessly chasing while the other desperately fled.

Even after the first exchange of blows, he still had no advantage. While Yan Xiaobao focused intently on the fight, Lan Feng was busy analyzing the situation. Despite his usual habit of teasing the white-haired boy, he didn't want Xiao Bao to get hurt. Observing the boar, Lan Feng quickly deduced that this beast was of Duke rank—very possibly at its peak level.

Yan Xiaobao didn't have the luxury to care about his opponent's exact rank; his only concern was defeating the beast in front of him. His eyes darkened increasingly with each passing minute, but there was no trace of the red fog. If he absolutely had no other choice, Yan Xiaobao resolved he would only use it as a last resort.

Just barely avoiding the charging tusks, Yan Xiaobao countered with his dagger, but his attack was easily deflected by the boar's miniature tusks. The two continued trading strikes, but neither could gain the upper hand. Although both managed to scratch and superficially wound each other, none of their injuries were severe enough to truly alter the course of the battle. This was no longer a contest of brute strength, but one of endurance and Inner Energy.

Yan Xiaobao had spent his entire childhood cultivating the purest essence of Qi, and using such a high-quality Qi meant that activating his abilities required less effort. This allowed him to sustain his abilities for longer periods and granted him greater stamina.

The boar screeched in rage as it realized that this endurance-driven battle was being won by the human. The beast gathered all its remaining fog energy, and a black mist began to form around it, eventually condensing onto its tusks. Its now-blackened tusks shot forward with unprecedented speed as the boar unleashed its full strength in this final attack.

The sudden acceleration caught Yan Xiaobao off guard, but his body instinctively reacted, allowing him to narrowly avoid the attack. However, his shoulder was struck and immediately slashed open. A torrent of blood gushed out.

Realizing its final attack had failed, the boar knew it was doomed. Exhausted from using all its energy, it could no longer mount any form of resistance. Yan Xiaobao, gripping his dagger tightly, thrust the tip into the forehead of the now-spent beast with a heavy arm. He then quickly retrieved some pills from his pouch and shoved them into his mouth. Moments later, a chilling, stinging sensation spread through his body, halting the flow of blood and slowly beginning to heal his wounds.

Although the medicinal pills could heal his wounds, they weren't nearly as effective as using proper medicinal medicine, and they came at a much steeper cost. Unfortunately, Yan Xiaobao had no other

choice but to use them quickly to stop the bleeding. He then hoisted the miniature boar onto his shoulder and briskly resumed fleeing deeper into the forest to leave the battlefield as fast as he could.

After traveling for several hours, Yan Xiaobao finally stopped. He had been carrying the boar the entire time. Scanning his surroundings, Yan Xiaobao observed that there were no beasts nearby. He made a small fire and roasted the miniature boar there. Allowing himself a full half-hour to feast, he stood up again after finishing. Extinguishing the fire, he sprinted forward to see if he could find other beasts to battle, beasts that could help him grow stronger.

As he moved deeper into the forest, he encountered one beast after another. Some were fairly weak, while others possessed strength comparable to the boar he had faced earlier. Not all of the strong beasts could be dealt with so easily, and the number of scars on his body continued to grow. The green pearls he used ignored all his wounds, forcing the young man to rely heavily on his pills.

Although fighting battle after battle drained a tremendous amount of energy, Yan Xiaobao began to quickly notice changes within himself and his combat style. His reactions became faster, his body started dodging on its own, and the attacks he launched were devoid of any mercy.

Yan Xiaobao finally came to understand the old adage: when one is kind to others, they are cruel to themselves. There was a time when he fought a young wolf—one barely older than a pup. Xu Yue had once shown mercy to such creatures, believing it unnecessary to kill them outright, especially when hunger was not a pressing issue and the wolf hadn't initially tried to attack him.

Unfortunately, later on, the wolf had returned with its pack. The ensuing fight was brutal. Though he expended all his strength, he was forced to flee after managing to kill only three, sustaining multiple injuries in the process. To date, it had been the most perilous moment he'd faced in this vast forest.

As he ventured deeper into the forest, the beasts grew increasingly stronger. With their strength, many also became more cunning. The smarter the beasts became, the more Yan Xiaobao had to adapt his tactics. Eventually, he reached a point where he could no longer press forward, as his path was blocked by a King Beast from earlier.

Although these beasts lacked martial power, they had their own fog energy. As the beasts grew older, their energy would evolve and grow stronger. This fog energy was at least as potent as the martial power wielded by humans. No matter what Yan Xiaobao did, he couldn't contend with such a beast. Realizing he couldn't win, he chose to retreat.

