

Medical 531

Chapter 531: Still No Advantage_2

Yan Xiaobao turned around and sighed, his entire body drenched in sweat because he had just escaped from the Black Shadow Rhinoceros Bird; however, this time he had successfully managed to injure the beast, even if it was just a small scratch.

"Perhaps I'm just not strong enough," Yan Xiaobao thought. He scanned his surroundings, and seeing that there were no animals nearby, he jumped into a tree, sitting cross-legged on a thick branch and closing his eyes.

As he closed his eyes, he saw Wang Julong, with Deng Wu behind her. He saw the Rong twins, Sha Yun, Ma Gong, Gao Yan, and even Xu Biao. All of them were etched into his mind. As he began cultivating, his resolve remained as firm as ever—only the strong have the right to determine their own future. Yan Xiaobao wished to return to his friends, but at this moment, he was too weak to even protect himself. Returning to his friends? That would only be possible once he became strong. Sitting under the tree, Yan Xiaobao's breathing slowed down, becoming so faint that no one passing beneath the tree would be able to detect him. As Yan Xiaobao ventured deeper into the Divine Origin Border, he gradually realized that beasts capable of scanning the area using Beast Energy rarely scanned the trees above. They typically focused their searches on the ground, with only a few thinking to scan the treetops.

There were many reasons for this. Firstly, it cost them Fog Energy, and secondly, the forest was divided into two main areas: the Leaf Ocean and the forest floor. Although these two regions never overlapped, magical beasts living in the Leaf Ocean never descended to the forest floor, and those on the ground rarely climbed up into the Leaf Ocean.

Yan Xiaobao chose the treetops rather than the floor because of the beasts inhabiting this area. While the treetops contained numerous amazing insects, birds, monkeys, and reptiles, most of them were not territorial. Those inhabiting the area focused solely on guarding their territory and cared little about anything else.

Most of these insect beasts were quite weak. None of them were stronger than a practitioner level, which allowed Yan Xiaobao to protect himself easily. Even if a whole group arrived, they were hardly a threat to the white-haired boy. Fighting them was as simple as swatting ordinary flies in many ways.

It turned out that snakes in this area posed a bit of trouble, but their ranks were relatively low. Most possessed the strength of a Master level cultivator. When Yan Xiaobao allowed his Qi and spiritual

energy to enter his body, their venom could be neutralized, flowing through the Dai Mai Meridian into his muscles, blood vessels, and bones, where it was eliminated entirely.

The most challenging creatures to avoid were the monkey family groups. There were many different types of monkeys and apes. For example, there was the Mellowed Dawn Ape, which typically wouldn't attack unless provoked in some way. Though its usual temperament was mild, it was far from gentle when enraged.

As long as Yan Xiaobao remained vigilant and didn't trespass into the territory of strong opponents or monkey and ape clans, he knew he would be safe.

Observing his current state, Yan Xiaobao sighed deeply, fully aware of his inability to fight—he was indeed weak. He sat down and retrieved a pill from his bag, popping it into his mouth.

'Wait. Stop!' Lan Feng's voice rang out in desperation. 'I understand you want to grow stronger, but you can't rely solely on medicine pills to increase your strength. Your cultivation base will lose its balance and eventually shatter. You need to fight on your own!'

Hearing the concern in Phoenix's voice, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but chuckle. 'I know.' However, with a soft tone, he continued, 'I'm going to stay here until we break through to the Duke level. What I plan to do is take one pill a week and spend the rest of the week fighting magical beasts. This way, I can accumulate more real combat experience. I'll also be able to manage my cultivation base to prevent it from breaking down due to overusing pills while collecting more Demon Cores and materials.'

Upon hearing his response, the bird chirped a few more times but eventually fell silent as Yan Xiaobao placed the pill in his mouth. It dissolved instantly into a liquid that coursed through his meridians. Yan Xiaobao sat down and began activating his Qi Swirl, sending strands rushing through his meridians. As they locked the liquid energy into the Qi Chain, they gradually adopted the same color as the strands. After a while, they matched in size and texture.

Once the newly created Qi Chain finished replicating the original chain, it released the original. The two chains merged and returned to the Qi Swirl within his body.

Ever since Xu Yue last used a pill, he preferred to cultivate using his own strength. Using pills, even just one, could throw one's cultivation base into an unbalanced state—a precarious condition.

An unbalanced cultivation base didn't mean one couldn't use their energy; rather, the energy within them would vary in quality. This, in turn, caused their attacks to have inconsistent properties. Upon entering a serious battle, this could result in their demise.

Although this sounded dire, the likelihood of such an occurrence was quite low, which is why medicinal pills remained highly popular. The stronger the pill, the lower the chance of triggering any adverse effects.

Chapter 532: Still No Advantage_3

Although Yan Xiaobao knew all of this, he also understood that if he relied on a magical pill each week and fought against beasts, he might be able to balance the faint imbalance within himself.

When Yan Xiaobao consumed the pill, he ensured the activation of the blue cloud within his Dantian Cave. His entire body suddenly felt light, as a gentle blue sensation enveloped him. Energy from both heaven and earth surged toward his body, trying to compel him to absorb more than his body's capacity could handle.

Amidst the process of the blue cloud enveloping him, Yan Xiaobao entered deep meditation, while Lan Feng kept a vigilant watch. He focused on cultivating for a long time, aiming to fully integrate the energy derived from the pill.

That day, he meditated for about seven hours until night fell. Yan Xiaobao exhaled deeply, and suddenly, a pearl-white mist emerged from his mouth. This startled both the man and the Phoenix. The mist rose slowly into the air before dissipating, vanishing into nothingness.

As soon as the white mist disappeared into the thin air, the blue cloud around Yan Xiaobao became sturdier than before, with shimmering stars starting to twinkle within it. Looking at the cloud, it no longer resembled a mere mist; it now seemed like a moonless night illuminated by thousands of stars.

Gazing at this breathtakingly beautiful scene, Yan Xiaobao stretched out his hands and felt a soft, tender texture—a sensation he had never experienced before that left him puzzled. When he touched a cloud that now resembled the sky, a deep tremor coursed through it before all the stars flowed into Yan Xiaobao's body. They moved seamlessly, bypassing his clothes with ease before they disappeared into the void, as if those stars had never existed.

"Hmm, Lan Feng," Yan Xiaobao called out, but the Phoenix simply shook its head, equally dumbstruck. His theory was that every door and object within his Dantian came from his previous lives. So far, there remained a patch of red mist, which evidently belonged to a bloodthirsty Magic Beast. Then, there was a green pearl, which most likely belonged to a greedy therapist during his lifetime. Wu Wei's wings—where they originated—still sparked questions; however, the greatest uncertainty was the constant evolution of the blue cloud.

At first, Lan Feng imagined it to belong to one of the priests devoted to cultivation. It was serene and beautiful, enhancing the speed of cultivation. Everything fit perfectly—until today. Lan Feng had never encountered anything like this, and clearly neither had Yan Xiaobao. Yet for now, he felt much better than before. Deep within him, something was growing, though he could not explain what it was.

Instead, he decided to leave the leaves of Haii behind and return to the forest, where he could search for beasts. Although it was no longer early morning, Yan Xiaobao didn't care. The beasts were awakened now, and he needed to train.

Yan Xiaobao descended from a tree branch 100 meters to the ground without making any noise. He quickly surveyed the surroundings and scanned his spiritual energy, sensing the presence of numerous beasts within his range.

Among the many lower-ranked beasts, Yan Xiaobao's attention was captured by a lynx-like beast he had never encountered before. A beast slightly stronger than himself, with determination gleaming in its eyes. Yan Xiaobao darted toward it like a shadow, silent as the night, agile like a cat. The sound he emitted was so faint that even a beast stronger than the lynx would struggle to notice the presence of a human.

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Chapter 533: The Most Dangerous Opponent

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Yan Xiaobao felt that his senses were sharper than usual. There was a small hum emanating from within his body, a sound that only Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng could hear. This hum was new, yet it was very gentle. So gentle that Yan Xiaobao's every move seemed to be gentle as well.

When he felt the internal hum, his movement speed swiftly increased. Even though he had already moved somewhat before while focusing on being quiet, after the hum started, it was as if his body could no longer make any noise.

Closer and closer, Yan Xiaobao could see Li. It was a young male with strength comparable to an expert at Duke University. Its eyes were red, its fur golden, and its fangs and claws were as sharp as could be. Battling this beast required Yan Xiaobao's complete focus. Although he had previously fought against Duke Level beasts, this Li before him was undoubtedly the most dangerous opponent he could face alone.

When earlier that day a beast had been successfully captured, Li stood in the shadows, relaxed. The remains of that beast were still beside Li, with blood still adorning its mouth.

Seeing this, a smile appeared on Yan Xiaobao's face as he stepped forward, shooting towards Li. A cloud of dust arose, finally accompanied by the sound of snapping branches. The previously relaxed Li finally opened its eyes, warily watching Yan Xiaobao, who was charging forward with a dagger in hand.

Its agility and speed were surprising, as it immediately stood on its legs and let out a swift shriek, with its terrifying claws slashing through the air where Yan Xiaobao had been moments earlier.

Fortunately, Yan Xiaobao was as swift as a cat, managing to use Velocity Flow to help evade. The claws flickered in the air, releasing waves of energy that sent a chill down Yan Xiaobao's spine. Even if he defended himself with spiritual energy, it was unlikely he could protect himself from the sharp claws ahead.

The man and Li stood facing each other, eyes locked, and since Hui Yue was certain the claws were too sharp, he decided it was impossible to fight in close combat. He tapped his hand, storing the black blood in his storage stone, and then blue and yellow flames appeared above his hand. The lynx swiftly retreated, as if it could sense the danger contained within the blue and yellow flames. Both flames emitted intense energy, energy that promised to consume the lives of anyone it touched until only ashes remained.

Seeing how the lynx retreated, Yan Xiaobao immediately understood that the beast before him was more than just a beast. It was not a creature living purely by instinct; instead, it was a beast with intelligence equal to that of humans, with its cat-like knowledge.

Seeing this, Yan Xiaobao became more vigilant, as he held two flames, one in each hand. Then he tossed them into the air, and they began swirling behind his body. Smaller fireballs started to form and rotate around Yan Xiaobao's body. As time passed, more fireballs were created, and Li retreated further. Watching Yan Xiaobao, Li mocked him before turning to leave, however, Yan Xiaobao refused to let it go so easily, hurling fireballs more powerful than usual at Li. It moved as fast as light, rapidly forming a ring of flames around them to prevent Li's escape. It trapped both man and beast inside, with no escape until one or the other was killed.

Seeing that the lynx no longer tried to escape, instead choosing to fight. It turned around, its eyes gleaming in the flames, its fur standing on end, its mouth opening with a cold sneer. The lynx deemed long-distance combat unwise, as Yan Xiaobao's fireballs were best suited for ranged combat. Li decided on close combat, but whenever it charged forward, Yan Xiaobao would dodge to the side or back. Yan Xiaobao exerted every effort not to get too close, understanding that Li's claws must not touch him.

Each time the large Li charged forward, Yan Xiaobao felt a chill, with cold sweat on his forehead. The lynx was intelligent, much larger than Yan Xiaobao himself, and its attack speed was so rapid that Yan Xiaobao had to use Velocity Flow to hold it back, avoiding the sharp claws that triggered waves of energy.

Neither the beast nor Yan Xiaobao held an advantage. The lynx was incredibly swift when dodging the Fire Orbs. The spinning orbs caused the fire circle's intensity to surge. Nearby trees began to ignite, yet the flames did not touch the lynx's fur so long as the claws did not make contact.

Seeing they had nowhere to go, both human and beast were merely wasting their energy, Yan Xiaobao retreated all the way to the fiery ring surrounding them. As he did so, he retracted the two flames currently resting behind him, a savage smile appearing on his face.

Yan Xiaobao had long decided to fight alone, without relying on Lan Feng or the nine mysterious powers within his body. He panted heavily before pulling out the dagger again from the storage stone.

Initially, his plan was to use his flames, including the Blue Flame and the merged Earth and Metal Flame, to his advantage from a distance. Unfortunately, although these flames should have been able to contend with the beast, they offered no help due to the beast's incredible speed. Now watching, Yan Xiaobao realized how fortunate he was to have preemptively trapped the beast within the flame circle.

Chapter 534: The Most Dangerous Opponent_2

The young man held a black dagger in his hand and swiftly charged toward his opponent. This action surprised the massive beast before him, yet also delighted it. Just as Yan Xiaobao was about to reach the

beast, he abruptly changed direction, darted to its side, and dived under its claws, lunging forward with immense force capable of killing it instantly.

Though the attack carried great force, Yan Xiaobao knew the risk was equally high. While the beast was still able to move, it had exposed its entire flank to Yan Xiaobao. Without waiting for a better opportunity, he stabbed the dagger into its tough hide. The blade pierced through and sank into its flesh.

The wound wasn't deep enough to be fatal, yet it was still a wound. As blood surged out of its side, the beast's pained screams resounded like sharp cries. Using its mist-like energy to stem the bleeding, the beast now appeared more agonized than ever, hatred and fury gleaming in its eyes.

Despite the beast's intelligence being comparable to that of humans, it was still ruled by its primal instincts. Although it hadn't entirely succumbed to its animalistic nature, it was evident that the urge to kill Hui Yue had awakened within it—a fact Yan Xiaobao promptly noticed.

Yan Xiaobao fled again as he kicked a small stone off the forest floor, launching it at the beast like a barrage. He continued to apply pressure, forcing it to advance or endure the bombardment. Already injured and unwilling to suffer additional harm, the beast dodged every rock. Yan Xiaobao's retreating assault made it impossible for the beast to move forward, as its sole focus was on avoiding the stones landing on its body.

Suddenly, the cracking sound of exploding stones rang out. Gazing at the beast, Yan Xiaobao immediately saw a stark difference compared to before. Previously, the beast's body was adorned with stunning golden fur, silver streaks running beneath its spine. However, now, a black mist shrouded its form, and it no longer avoided the stones. When the stones came into contact with the shield surrounding the beast, each one was shattered into fragments. Yan Xiaobao felt astonished by the defensive power the beast now possessed. But he noticed one thing: the beast had grown slower. Clearly, using this energy to protect itself diminished its ability to move quickly. Encased in this shield, the beast no longer relied on speed, as it could withstand the majority of attacks.

Roaring loudly, the beast lunged at the young man wielding the dagger. It opened its mouth wide, ready to clamp down on him, its claws fully exposed to Yan Xiaobao's unprotected parts.

Seeing the fangs and claws rushing toward him, Yan Xiaobao knew he couldn't avoid both. Gripping his dagger tightly, he infused it with spiritual energy and quickly evaded the claws. However, as he narrowly

escaped them, the beast's teeth sank deep into his shoulder. A sickening crunch was heard as his shoulder blade shattered under the sheer pressure of its powerful jaws.

Blood pooled in his mouth, his eyes turned red, but Yan Xiaobao suppressed the red fog within him. Instead, he lifted his still-functioning arm, brandished the dagger coated in black blood, and with all his might, stabbed it into the beast's forehead, between its eyes.

The dagger moved slowly at first; he could feel it cutting through layers of crystal before penetrating soft fur and flesh. Once it broke through the crystal layers, the beast's protective barrier, the dagger slipped effortlessly into the skull.

The magical beast's ferocious red eyes dimmed gradually as all light faded from them, its soul lost within the Hell World.

Staring at the beast, Yan Xiaobao staggered toward a fallen tree. Gravely injured, he had no intention of dismantling the flame ring around his current position. The fire kept the beast trapped inside, but it also prevented other creatures from entering, which was crucial for Hui Yue, given his utterly crushed right shoulder.

Examining the wound, Yan Xiaobao hissed in pain. After waiting a few minutes, he consumed a pill. He hoped the green pearl within his body could assist in the healing. However, seeing that it wouldn't, he sighed heavily and resorted to taking the strongest healing pill he possessed.

After swallowing the pill, something peculiar occurred. Normally, the energy should flow into his Dantian, merge with his Qi, traverse the Dai Mei Meridian, and reach the injured part of his body. However, once the energy entered his Dantian Cave, it didn't fuse with the Qi Spiral. Instead, it was entirely absorbed into the green pearl within the cave. Seeing this, Yan Xiaobao was thoroughly shocked, his eyes widening as anger surged within him.

Grievously injured, Yan Xiaobao required the aid of a therapist or medicinal pills. Yet his internal therapist refused to heal him, and whenever he used pills, the green pearl consumed the energy meant for his recovery.

This had never happened before. Hui Yue assumed it was due to him using stronger pills for the first time. Typically, he relied on weaker pills but consumed them in larger quantities. As expected, the green

pearl showed no interest in those pills. After consuming them, Yan Xiaobao crossed his legs and began channeling his Qi. He controlled it enough for it to flow through his body and reach his shoulder, where it slowly started to repair the shattered bones and tissues.

Sitting there, Yan Xiaobao waited for days. During that period, he ultimately consumed twenty-nine low-grade medicinal pills to heal his shoulder. Though healed now, the bones remained too fragile to allow Yan Xiaobao to partake in combat.

Days passed within the shrinking flame ring, its increased height discouraging beasts from even attempting to jump inside to investigate.

Yan Xiaobao subsisted on meat provided by Tianmao. He had long since extracted the magical core from the beast's skull.

Ten more days went by, and Yan Xiaobao consumed another batch of ten pills. To heal his arm, he spent several days cultivating and engaging in physical exercises to regain his ability to fight.

Standing upright, Yan Xiaobao lifted his chin and shoulders. When he waved his hand, the flames dissipated, and a satisfied smile appeared on his face. Yan Xiaobao anticipated many beasts lying in wait for the flames to vanish. Yet, with the flames gone, only a few creatures were visible. Upon spotting Yan Xiaobao, each beast turned away and fled as fast as possible.

Having narrowly survived an intense battle, Yan Xiaobao nonetheless closed his eyes and scanned the area. He searched for other beasts of a similar caliber with whom he could engage in combat.

Yan Xiaobao fought battle after battle, his ability to kill beasts significantly improving over time. Initially, he sustained injuries in every fight, relying on the green pearl for assistance at times and inferior pills for the rest, which he quickly ran out of.

His once-perfect skin was now marred with scars and wounds—each more gruesome than the last. Days were filled with battles against various beasts, and soon enough, he successfully fought off half of the King-level monsters he encountered.

The remaining half was dealt with through the combined efforts of Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao. Through their wilderness journey, the beasts gradually grew stronger; however, Yan Xiaobao's personal strength was far too inadequate to contend with the advanced Senior Experts now appearing. In the end, Yan Xiaobao relinquished control of his body to Lan Feng.

With the change in control, the number of fights dwindled. This was something Yan Xiaobao preferred, as both he and Phoenix wished to avoid using the meticulously cultivated Wu Wei.

While Yan Xiaobao spent time in the Dantian Cave, he used his time to cultivate. Upon entering the Divine Domain, he finally realized the extent of his weakness. Previously, he had convinced himself he wouldn't perish because Lan Feng stood by his side. However, after encountering Zhong Hui, both Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao were shaken awake. They understood that Lan Feng had resided in this world for over four thousand years—a staggeringly long time in which everything had changed while seemingly remaining the same.

Both realized they were far from matching the strength of true experts. Neither Yan Xiaobao nor Lan Feng allowed any moment to go to waste, focusing their waking hours on either engaging beasts in battle or cultivating inner energy in preparation.

Lan Feng's control of his body greatly benefited Yan Xiaobao. During Lan Feng's journey through the wilderness to the City of Ten Thousand Bridges, he advanced to the ninth rank of Master level.

The closer Yan Xiaobao came to the city, the more the landscape transformed. He passed through numerous villages, resembling the very first one he entered, with roads constructed through the wilderness, leading them to the main city.

Journeying deeper into the Divine Domain's core, he encountered more humanoid beasts—creatures resembling humans yet retaining animalistic traits. Seeing these beasts, Yan Xiaobao was reminded of the form Lan Feng's soul had taken: a human-shaped entity covered in celestial blue feathers.

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Chapter 535: Beast Power

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Another matter that changes one's journey into the core wilderness is the beast-like power surrounding them.

Beasts taking human form clearly don't use the mist energy utilized by beasts; instead, they wield Qi, spiritual energy, and martial power. This discovery was a tremendous shock to Yan Xiaobao, as it marked the first time he fought human King-level experts.

Lan Feng refused to comment on when or how a mystical beast managed to shape a human form. He even refused to explain how energy transitions from mist energy to forms usable by humans. The only suggestion he offered was for Yan Xiaobao to ask his caretaker during their meeting. It was evident that the Phoenix was still angrily questioning their sole option for assistance.

Though furious, Lan Feng maintained control over his body and continued moving toward the city's inner regions as directed. He realized this was their only path forward, though fraught with danger and uncertainty—there was simply no other choice.

"You are already a Saint," Yan Xiaobao asked curiously. 'Why are you so afraid of her? Might she be God?' This question elicited a snort from Lan Feng, though he didn't respond immediately. Instead, he spent some time pondering.

"Though I am a Saint, I am not the ninth-ranked Saint. However, she is. I also suspect this Zhong Hui to be of nine stars. In terms of power, both surpass me. Although it pains me to admit it, I cannot even manage the smallest resistance against them."

Lan Feng's voice sounded both dejected and enraged as he focused on a group of travelers blocking the path ahead of him.

Lan Feng frowned slightly, sensing something amiss. He halted before reaching them. Both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng remained on high alert, as the surrounding atmosphere near the group triggered a visceral sense of foreboding for man and bird alike. They paused to observe the group, only to find that the group was watching a solitary individual without any companions.

The group consisted of seven men. Some wore finely tailored clothes made of costly materials, while others donned simple attire woven from durable yet inexpensive fabric. Their weapons, too, varied

widely in quality and material. Their eyes narrowed, their unshaven faces showing none of a traveler's weariness.

Gazing at these men, Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao immediately understood—they were not lost or resting travelers but bandits; bandits who preyed on any group of travelers crossing their path.

Realizing this, both Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao sighed deeply. They had encountered multiple groups of bandits before. Most would either retreat upon sensing the aura of a Saint-ranking expert or perish in swift and painless exchanges.

The group before them appeared formidable, featuring three King-level experts and an Emperor, while the others ranked as Dukes. As for why experts of such caliber had fallen to become thieves and raiders, Yan Xiaobao didn't know. He pondered this briefly before realizing he had little interest in the answer.

Lan Feng acted as he had countless times before when facing adversaries. He released his aura, yet this group—with their Emperor and three Kings—failed to recognize the aura of a Saint. What they felt was overwhelming pressure, though their party included three King-level experts and an Emperor. Having never encountered someone as strong as the experts within their own ranks, they immediately began hurling insults at Lan Feng.

The King-ranked experts followed suit, their expressions souring, as the four leaders of the group fixed cold and indifferent gazes upon Lan Feng. They decided this was their best chance—a full-scale attack. They believed their numerical advantage would prevail, and having never met a true Holy Name Expert, their hubris blinded their judgment.

But their arrogance proved fatally flawed. They had neither encountered nor understood the power of a Saint. As the four men raised their weapons and charged at Lan Feng, a radiant golden light suddenly flared. A moment later, the sharp scent of blood filled the air. Muffled gurgling followed as the heads of the four experts were severed cleanly, blood gushing forth from their necks.

Lan Feng, reluctant to draw fully on his martial power, nonetheless refused failure. Thus, he used the bare minimum force necessary to obliterate the entire group of bandits.

The remaining Duke-ranked bandits, witnessing the ease with which their far stronger comrades were slain, dared not linger. They fled at full speed, legs carrying them as fast as possible.

Lan Feng didn't pursue them. They bore no connection to him and were now too terrified to attempt revenge. Among thieves, there was no honor—only survival.

Shaking his head, Lan Feng suppressed his aura once more and continued toward the core of the forest. Yan Xiaobao spent days cultivating, steadily accumulating astonishing amounts of Qi and spiritual energy. His body felt stronger, his Qi vortex and spiritual energy sea continuously expanding. Soon, his spiritual energy sea neared saturation, signaling his body was almost ready for another breakthrough—an advancement Yan Xiaobao had long awaited.

It was now midnight. Though they had traveled day and night in an effort to reach the Divine Domain's capital faster, humans and beasts alike remained silent about their progress. That night, they halted their journey. Under the shade of a sprawling tree, Yan Xiaobao seated himself cross-legged, diving deep into his Dantian Cave to focus on cultivation while keeping a watchful eye on Lan Feng.

Chapter 536: Beast Power_2

Lan Feng, who typically hated being assigned tasks, did not complain at all. His eyes were sharp and alert, constantly scanning the surroundings using martial power to detect any hidden beasts. Although Yan Xiaobao opposed using Wu Wei unless absolutely necessary, he understood that at this moment, he couldn't afford any interruptions. He furrowed his brows and took a deep breath.

Yan Xiaobao inhaled deeply, fully immersing himself in the essence of the heavens and earth. Slowly, he released the blue cloud, letting it envelop him. At the same time, he utilized the stone he had purchased from the Azure Dragon's tunnel.

These two tools amplified the amount of energy his body could absorb. As he drew in so much energy, Yan Xiaobao had to constantly rotate it within his body. He needed to continue refining it without letting the Qi and Qi vortex merge, until it became a pure, lustrous pearl-white. Managing this much energy and ensuring only fully refined energy was brought into the Qi vortex demanded immense focus and control.

Pushing his cultivation techniques to their limits, Yan Xiaobao concentrated as much as he could. He soon managed to improve the threads after the Qi lines. Once the Qi vortex was filled and could no longer take in more Qi threads, Yan Xiaobao withdrew the blue cloud and placed the stone on the ground. The residual unrefined Qi stayed within his meridians. He then entered a deep, trance-like state again and refined the Qi further; they were distilled into silver droplets of spiritual energy.

One by one, the droplets entered the spiritual energy sea. However, Yan Xiaobao sensed something was amiss. Things weren't progressing as he had anticipated.

Grinding his teeth, the young man refused to believe he couldn't break through to the Duke Level. Stubbornly, he continued refining Qi thread after Qi thread. After some time, when nothing changed, and he had perfected every strand of Qi, he enveloped himself in the blue cloud once again, holding the stone in his hand. Though he had yet to break through, he resolved to do so before continuing his journey. His determination, evident in his eyes, burned bright as he slipped into another trance.

The entire day was consumed by alternating between absorbing the essence of the heavens and earth to refine Qi and then converting it further into spiritual energy. Throughout this grueling process, Lan Feng ensured no disturbances arose. His entire body was taut with vigilance, every muscle poised, his martial power rippling through their shared environment, ready to be unleashed at the slightest sign of trouble.

While Lan Feng was entirely focused on the external world, Yan Xiaobao's attention was wholly devoted to his inner world. As he felt the essence of the heavens flowing through his veins and meridians, his eyes remained tightly shut. He sensed the essence cycling continuously within the meridians until it was fully refined, eventually blending into the Qi swirl. From there, it was drawn into the central dantian, where Qi threads were refined one by one into tiny droplets of silver spiritual energy.

Typically, the spiritual energy sea would begin to rise along its shoreline and, at some point, become so full that it overflowed the sea's borders. The chaotic overflow would, in turn, carve out a larger spiritual energy sea in the central dantian, increasing its depth and breadth.

This was the usual progression for a breakthrough. However, no matter how much Yan Xiaobao refined, the sea showed no signs of rising as it had in the past. It did not breach its shoreline in an attempt to advance to the next level. The only visible change was faint ripples on the surface, created by every silver droplet as it descended into the spiritual energy sea below.

Xu Yue, exasperated, ceased refining more energy as he understood that the current situation couldn't be resolved by forcefully producing greater amounts of spiritual energy. He had hit a bottleneck, one that required more than just raw energy to surpass. It was clear Yan Xiaobao was nearing the upper half of the mountain on his path. Reaching the Duke Level seemed to necessitate a certain level of insight or enlightenment, something Yan Xiaobao had yet to encounter.

"Hey, Lan Feng, what do you think it is? What is it that I'm supposed to understand?" Yan Xiaobao asked bitterly, his frustration evident. He had enough energy to break through, yet lacked the necessary insight.

"I can't tell you," Lan Feng replied earnestly. "If I tell you, you might achieve enlightenment—but it wouldn't be yours. It would be mine. Your path of cultivation isn't meant to unfold that way."

Even before Lan Feng finished speaking, Yan Xiaobao already knew the truth behind the answer. Though he planned to accept it, he felt a deep sense of frustration at his inability to break through at this moment.

Yan Xiaobao let out a long sigh, calming himself, and closed his eyes for a moment. When he reopened them, they gleamed with determination.

"Even though I haven't broken through yet, I haven't been idle. My strength has increased significantly, and though I'm not a Duke, I'm not weak either."

Thinking this way, he felt some satisfaction and once again settled into cultivation. Guided by the road Lan Feng had paved before him, he traveled through forest after forest, encountering numerous bandits—some fled upon sensing Lan Feng's aura, while others, emboldened by their numbers, believed they could overwhelm him, only to meet their ends instead.

Over the course of weeks of long travels, Yan Xiaobao spent half his time refining more energy and the other half introspecting over what he was missing—what was preventing him from ascending to the next level.

Becoming a Duke would at least double his Qi's power. Reaching such strength would mean he could contend with any ordinary King-level beast or expert. However, facing a seasoned expert would be an entirely different matter.

Looking back on his cultivation journey, Yan Xiaobao recalled how it all started at his hometown. How he had trained his inner energy from infancy. He thought about the obsession he had with perfecting his Qigong techniques, molding them into the finest quality. At the time, he had known it was an unconventional and roundabout path to cultivation, but the results were undeniable, though time-consuming. Even back then, Yan Xiaobao had resolved to focus on quality over convenience, and he still

stood by that decision today. Though reaching his current stage had taken a significant amount of time, his resolve had always remained unshaken in carving out his own path.

Reflecting on the patience and toil his path had demanded, he realized he had become too greedy, too reliant on shortcuts to achieve his goals. He understood now that his path of cultivation required hard work, and what he needed wasn't a simple answer handed to him by Lan Feng. No, he needed to fully immerse himself in his cultivation and listen to what it was telling him.

The moment he had this realization, a golden light began to appear in his mind's eye, streaming across his body. These golden streaks swirled through him before converging in the central dantian. They began carving out larger shorelines, chiseling a deeper and more expansive spiritual energy sea, reshaping it entirely.

As the golden streaks danced through him, Yan Xiaobao felt his soul grow lighter, suffused with a pleasant warmth akin to the heat of a summer's day. As the golden streaks faded, merging with the five elemental flames hovering above the energy sea, those flames surged skyward. Their potency had now far surpassed their previous state, having absorbed golden energy that had doubled their size. Yan Xiaobao began to notice how his affinity with the elements had grown significantly. His eyes widened with the realization that it had been this introspection—this reflection on his cultivation journey—that he was missing. He had been rushing recently, anxious to grow in strength, forgetting the path he had resolved to follow all those years ago.

With the golden streaks dissipating into the elemental flames, Yan Xiaobao experienced an overwhelming surge of joy and excitement. Immediately, Lan Feng sought out a quiet place for the white-haired youth to process what had just happened within his body. Though his strength had soared, Lan Feng was on guard, ready to handle any unexpected developments.

Sitting motionless, Yan Xiaobao evaluated his body. He realized it hadn't grown significantly stronger than before. While his body had become slightly more resilient, his focus on internal energy—Qi, spiritual energy, and martial power—meant he had neglected his physical strength.

Though his inner energy had far exceeded his expectations and granted him the ability to wield both martial arts and spiritual arts simultaneously, he understood the importance of cultivating his physical body as well.

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Chapter 537: An Astonishing Four Months

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After reaching this conclusion, Yan Xiaobao had Lan Feng travel all day, while the two of them settled down at night and spent time training their bodies. At first, it was a painful and exhausting process for his body, but over time, as the training became routine, Yan Xiaobao's physique slowly began transforming. His muscles grew much stronger than before. Lean muscle became easily noticeable, and his healthy body had improved significantly compared to months prior.

Crossing the Divine Domain took an astonishing four months, their speed far slower than even traveling within sacred dungeons. This was mainly due to Yan Xiaobao training his body every night. Although the journey took longer and required more time before he could reunite with his friends, his burning desire to bolster his strength swelled within him. He knew that it was crucial to enhance his power while he had the chance. If Wan Qiao refused to assist them, then he would need to be as strong as possible when facing the Forest King.

One reason Yan Xiaobao committed himself fully to body training was the aforementioned goal, but another was that he felt some changes within himself. The stronger his body became, the better it was able to process inner energy and release more of it at a time. Furthermore, the increase in brute strength also significantly boosted the power of Martial Arts and spiritual arts.

Recognizing this, Yan Xiaobao started to regret not training his body more earlier on. However, thanks to his current inner-strength training, his body had started adapting better than before.

While Yan Xiaobao was completely immersed in training both internal and external energies, Lan Feng focused on their travels. Finally, one day, as they stared at a large stone-built castle, they stopped.

Surrounding the city stood tall walls, and the environment reminded Yan Xiaobao of medieval castle towns he'd read about in the past. This kind of architecture was completely different from the buildings of the Sun Kingdom.

In recent days, humanoid beasts had appeared frequently on the road, all heading toward the city. As they approached, guards clad in red armor patrolled the road, and the constant bandit attacks had long ceased. Thus, Lan Feng had no need to reveal his aura to intimidate those around them.

After observing many beasts, Yan Xiaobao was surprised that no one perceived him as human but rather as a beast. Although his appearance slightly differed from most people, his body showed no signs of being beast-like.

"That's because you don't have a human aura," Lan Feng remarked quietly, "Even though I'm maintaining a hidden aura, because we share one body, don't forgo the human aura."

Upon entering the city, Yan Xiaobao suddenly wondered what the currency was. He had Gold Coins, Elf Coins, and even beast cores with him, but he was certain the latter wasn't the currency of choice.

Scanning his surroundings, he noticed the city bustling with creatures. They were all hybrids of humans and beasts, with many full beasts mingling in the area.

In the sky, One-Horned Eagles patrolled above the city, while on the ground, beastmen moved about—some selling wares, others purchasing goods. It resembled a human city. Yan Xiaobao began wandering through various streets, searching for a market where he could hear people shouting out the prices of their items. That seemed to be the only way for Yan Xiaobao to find the answers he sought.

As he moved through the city, Yan Xiaobao quickly located a market where he heard multiple merchants shouting the prices of their goods. To Yan Xiaobao's satisfaction, the currency used was copper, silver, gold, and Spiritual Coins; and he still had plenty in his possession.

Grasping his money storage Memory Stone, he examined its contents and saw a large pile of coins inside. Even though Yan Xiaobao had funds, he didn't plan to spend them soon. His only goal was to find the castle and locate Wan Qiao to seek her assistance in leaving the Divine Domain.

As their destination drew closer, both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng were filled with anxiety and hesitation. Both knew the relationship between Lan Feng and Wan Qiao wasn't ideal, but they had come this far. It had been four thousand years since their last encounter, and now they were asking an old acquaintance for help.

While traversing the city, numerous One-Horned Eagles patrolled both the skies and the ground. The ones on the ground took humanoid form, their skin covered in golden feathers and their mouths bearing beaks.

Looking at the humanoid beasts around them, Yan Xiaobao was astonished. Each person looked different from the next, yet all were part-human and part-beast. The further he walked, the more diverse the humanoid beasts he encountered. But even though every beast was half-human, half-beast, Yan Xiaobao's presence didn't draw any curious stares; instead, he was shown significant respect. Everyone he passed either nodded or bowed to him; the path ahead of him was cleared, and nobody dared to step in his way.

"They must think you're a highly-ranked Magic Beast," Lan Feng remarked with a grin, taking control of the body back from Yan Xiaobao. He told him that the Phoenix wouldn't dare meet its old caretaker unless Yan Xiaobao announced their arrival.

The town they were in was as large as Liluo City, and traversing it took some time. This gave Yan Xiaobao an opportunity to reconcile his thoughts and comprehend the real danger of seeking help from the lady. If there had been any other option, he would have taken it, but the entire Divine Origin seemed to be a fortress that could only be breached by high-ranking individuals.

Chapter 538: An Astonishing Four Months_2

Thinking this way, Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng quickly arrived at the main castle in the city center. Their breaths were shallow, their entire bodies vigilant, ready to retreat if they were not treated kindly.

When Yan Xiaobao reached the castle, he wished he had more time to walk, but no matter how much he wished for it, it would not happen. Resigning himself, he moved toward the castle gate.

Just as Yan Xiaobao was about to walk past, he was stopped by two Snake-men who appeared far stronger than Sha Yun. Their race reminded him of her, and he swore that one day he would take her and her sisters to the Divine Domain; a place where they truly felt at home, rather than abandoned.

He quickly shook his head, dismissing the nostalgic memories of Sha Yun and others from the depths of his mind. As he gazed at the two beasts before him, his eyes grew sharp.

Both of them appeared tense, as if they were confronting someone far beyond their strength, but their loyalty was unwavering; neither seemed to regret their decision to block the path of this young man with white hair.

"No entry for strangers," one of the guards said after swallowing nervously. His voice quivered slightly. Seeing how fearful they were of stopping him, Yan Xiaobao understood that Lan Feng had been correct when he said other beasts regarded him as a Saint.

Almost laughing, Yan Xiaobao paused in his tracks, feeling there was no need to harm anyone from Wan Qiao, not even injure one unnecessarily—it would be too easy for a woman to turn against him.

Staring at the guards, Yan Xiaobao thought for a moment before opening his mouth. "I'll wait here, but one of you go and inform Wan Qiao that Lan Feng has arrived. Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao."

After speaking, Yan Xiaobao stood there and waited for one of them to take action. As he did so, his heart wrestled with unease, worrying about what might unfold. Still, he had already informed the guards and could not turn back now. Whether his racing heart was due to Lan Feng's fear or Yan Xiaobao's anticipation, neither men nor beasts could guess.

Seeing the young man just standing there without showing signs of trouble for the two guards, they both exhaled a sigh of relief. Then, exchanging glances, one of them immediately rushed into the castle, heading toward the room where the mistress of the Divine Domain was reading various reports.

The guard ran into the castle, slowing down when he saw an enormous iron door. He stopped before the door, catching his breath briefly, then knocked gently, prompting a voice to call him in.

The guard stepped through the doorway and looked at the woman before him. She was an astonishing beauty, her hair cascading in streams of golden locks—so golden they seemed forged from sunlight itself. Her beautiful curls framed her face and accentuated her golden-brown eyes.

Looking at the stunning woman before him, the guard felt his heart racing, his gaze unable to leave her. It was as though she held everyone captive with a mere glance.

"Miradi, there's an expert outside hoping to speak with you," he said, panting heavily while still captivated by her beauty. "He introduced himself as Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao."

The woman, who had been entirely focused on her paperwork, suddenly froze in her actions, and the room was filled with an icy aura. The temperature plummeted sharply.

"What did you just say?" the woman asked, her voice low and deliberate, each word chilling the spine of the trembling guard still inside the room. The guard, his voice hoarse, repeated what he had said before: "An expert is waiting outside to meet you; he identifies himself as Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao."

Upon hearing the repeated words, Wan Qiao fell silent for a moment. Her eyes shut, her head resting in her hands. There seemed to be an internal struggle within her, but after a while, she lifted her head and sighed deeply.

"Invite him in. Lead him to my private room—this marks our first reunion in years," she said, then stood and walked toward her private chambers. That room was the one place within the castle where she knew there were neither spies nor Memory Stones monitoring her every move.

Upon realizing that they were acquaintances, the guard was astonished as he dashed back to the entrance where the young man was still waiting. As he approached, the previously respectful guard now displayed even greater reverence, bowing to the young man and signaling for him to follow. Yan Xiaobao simply shrugged.

Though he appeared carefree on the outside, both Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao were carefully observing everything, constantly on guard for possible traps or ambushes. They both knew there was only a 50 percent chance of success.

Unfortunately, with such a high chance of success, there was an equally significant risk of failure—something neither humans nor birds wished to consider at present. Following the guard, they entered the beautiful stone castle. Having studied history extensively in his old life, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but admire the structure of the castle, comparing it to medieval castles of the old world.

Thinking about his old world, it was impossible for him not to feel a slight pang of nostalgia. He couldn't help but wonder how his parents were doing, and what had become of Li Fen. Contemplating this, he knew many years had passed. His parents must be old by now, and Li Fen would have grown up into an adult—hopefully with a family of her own.

As he thought about Li Fen, Yan Xiaobao realized there was no emotion left but a yearning to wish her the best in life. Years had passed, and Yan Xiaobao was no longer the person who had once lived in the old world. Here, he had learned the art of cultivation. He had made new friends. He had been transformed. Through his myriad experiences, he had changed. Having skirted death on multiple

occasions, he had endured it all because Lan Feng had shared his body with him. Together, they had survived. Lan Feng, a proud and eccentric bird, truly was now his closest friend. Their bond was the relationship that had changed him most significantly.

As he reminisced about his old world and how he had changed, he arrived at a wooden door. The door bore exquisite carvings of vermillion birds, an absolute masterpiece created by a master craftsman.

"I will take my leave," the guard said, bowing to Yan Xiaobao, feeling the sweat covering his palms. His heart started beating faster than before. The young man considered his next move briefly. Now or never, he thought, and knocked firmly on the door, the sound echoing throughout the hallway.

"Enter!" a deep yet captivating voice called out. Yan Xiaobao opened the door, curiosity stirring within him about who this Wan Qiao might be. Entering the room, Yan Xiaobao saw the woman, and as he gazed at her, his jaw dropped, his eyes widened.

Looking at the woman before him, this was not the first time he had seen her. At ten years old, he had sold a pill to a woman who had paid him a handsome sum for it. This woman had been the most beautiful person Yan Xiaobao had ever encountered. She had etched herself into his memory so profoundly that now, as she stood before him, he recognized her instantly.

Seeing the shock on Yan Xiaobao's face, the beautiful woman smiled. A gentle smile spread across her lips.

Like an eagle striking, Yan Xiaobao was unable to stop her as a flat hand landed suddenly on his cheek. The slap sent him flying against the wall, leaving his head spinning. His vision blurred, and blood began streaming from the impact. Blood also filled his mouth. If her intent had been truly malicious, that single slap might have killed him.

Yan Xiaobao struggled to stand, waiting for his vision to clear, his gaze questioning as he stared at the woman before him. The last time he'd seen her, she'd been incredibly kind to him. Now, however, she seemed utterly hostile. Could it be she hadn't recognized him this time? Yan Xiaobao was completely at a loss.

Just as Yan Xiaobao's eyes began to return to normal, he saw another slap coming his way. He instantly leapt backward, raising his hands in defense.

"Wait! Hold on!" he shouted. "Let's talk this over!"

"The time for talk has long passed," the woman growled, delivering another slap that sent him flying across the room, crashing into yet another wall.

As his head smacked into the stone wall once more, Yan Xiaobao groaned in pain. This time, there was no blood, but the pain was still severe, and everything around him spun, making it impossible to see clearly.

Just as Yan Xiaobao was about to curse his rotten luck, he suddenly felt a warm, comforting energy spreading from his Dantian Cave. A green pearl orbited within, releasing its stored energy gradually outward. It flowed into his meridians, then spread throughout his body, reaching his head. Right in front of Wan Qiao, the blood dripping from the wounds on his head, as well as the internal injuries inflicted from being hurled against the stone walls, healed rapidly, leaving only traces of blood on his snow-white hair.

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Chapter 539: Because He Is Still Alive

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As the green pearl healed his body, the dizziness and disorientation slowly faded away. He finally managed to stand up, wondering whether he should attempt to escape or simply let that woman vent her suppressed anger, then see what happened afterwards. Clearly, she had no intention of killing him, for he was still alive. However, the healing process he had undergone so far was anything but comfortable.

"Hmph," the woman noticed his healing wounds and was genuinely surprised. To mend an injury required the use of spiritual energy and infusing it with one's elemental affinity. Yet, this healing process hadn't used spiritual energy at all. Any utilization of energy would cause fluctuations, but no such fluctuations appeared during the healing, suggesting that this man's body concealed some hidden secrets.

"You boy, what is your name?" she asked, letting herself drop into a comfortable chair in the room, her eyes fixed on Yan Xiaobao.

"I'm Yan Xiaobao," he replied honestly, looking at the woman. Although he had been mistreated, he dared not show any disrespect. This woman was truly strong — so strong that she could likely kill him with just a thought. She was probably even more powerful than Zhong Hui, whom he had encountered in the Dragon Core.

"Yan Xiaobao. Tell me, how did you end up sharing your body with this disgusting little bird inside you?" Wang Qiao asked as she gestured to the chair in front of her. Yan Xiaobao quickly sat down at her signal.

"I come from another plane," he began. "Unlike this plane, which lacks martial arts training or internal energy. I'm from a plane we call Earth." Yan Xiaobao started narrating his origins, and Wang Qiao listened intently, clearly intrigued by his words.

"In that world, knowledge is what matters. The more you know, the better you perform in society. Killing is strongly opposed, and physical strength gets you nowhere."

"I lived in that world for twenty-four years," Yan Xiaobao recounted, his story captivating Wang Qiao immensely. Her eyes widened with astonishment. Though immensely powerful herself, she had never been to another world before. After all, she was not God.

"When I was twenty-four years old, I came across a shop selling ancient Chinese antiques. One of the items was a beautiful hairpin adorned with a blue phoenix."

"This hairpin unexpectedly contained the soul of Lan Feng. After he successfully killed me and struck my heart, the two of us were forcibly reincarnated into this world, which appears to be his homeland."

Upon hearing this brief explanation of his backstory, Wang Qiao raised an eyebrow, noting that the young man's tone contained neither bitterness nor regret. It was as if he was entirely at peace with his past and content to live in the present created by the phoenix within him.

"Tell me, how did you end up here?" she asked again. "Your strength is far from sufficient to enter the Divine Domain through natural means."

Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao nodded slightly, a hint of regret flashing across his expression at having entered the Divine Domain. If he had more time, he certainly would've attempted to enter the Siban Empire or Moon Province instead. Compared to Chenyuan, those places were far easier to traverse. Chenyuan was infamous for being a land one couldn't leave upon entry.

"Certain events unfolded in Liluo City. Some of my friends were exiled, and on the other hand, I needed a place to hide for a while. Considering we all needed training, we entered the Holy Dungeon. Various things happened — one might say things related to Zhong Hui transpired to be precise — and we ended up having to split up. When I passed through the Vermilion Bird Tunnel and ultimately entered the Divine Domain, my friends had already returned to the surface," he explained.

Upon hearing that the young man and Lan Feng had encountered Zhong Hui, the woman froze in surprise. Unlike Lan Feng, she was aware of everything occurring across the plane; after all, she was one of the top forces in this plane.

"I see, so the chaos within the Dragon Army was caused by you and Lan Feng? I see that annoying little bird is still full of mischief." Wang Qiao's lips curled into a growing smile, as though finding it amusing despite her brows furrowing deeply.

"You said Zhong Hui appeared, yet you're still alive and not a part of his Frozen Brigade. That's... remarkable."

"The Frozen Brigade?" Yan Xiaobao asked curiously. He recalled the domain Zhong Hui unleashed — an ability that froze the world and immobilized humanity on a global scale. It was the most horrifying power he had ever experienced, and every time he thought of the young Zhong Hui, fear gripped his heart.

"I don't know what he wants from me," Yan Xiaobao sighed honestly. "He helped me escape the Dragon Core but refused to let me travel with my friends, stating that he would kill anyone I befriended within the Holy Dungeon."

At this, she couldn't help but arch a brow. The Frozen General was not known for helping others, especially if it involved doing something significant. And dismantling the Dragon Army was indeed significant.

Yan Xiaobao barely had enough power to be considered a prodigy among the younger generation. His training speed was astonishing, and his actual combat experience far outstripped that of his peers. However, considering the numerous individuals who had assisted him and his utilization of the purest Qi, he wasn't ranked highly enough to be viewed as one of the top figures of the younger generation. The fact that the Frozen General took an interest in him indicated that the general was aware of some of the secrets the young man was hiding.

Chapter 540: Because He Is Still Alive - Part 2

Knowing that General Frozen was interested in this young man, Wan Qiao suddenly found herself intrigued. Previously, this youth was merely Lan Feng's vessel, but now, she began to take notice of this man.

"Stay here for a while," she said firmly. It was evident that arguments were unwelcome. "I'll help you train. Your physical condition is certainly weak. Any one of my guards—even those ranked lower than you—could send you sprawling in actual combat. That's something we need to address. Secondly, you need to accelerate your cultivation. As an expert, roses don't bloom on laziness; you must work hard!"

Hearing her words, Yan Xiaobao was utterly baffled by her sudden change of attitude. However, upon hearing her offer to assist him in training, he found it too good to refuse.

"I came here for the first time hoping for your help to leave the Divine Domain," Yan Xiaobao began, but before she could deny him, he quickly added, "Your offer is far better than what I originally wanted. But my friends are worried about whether I'm still alive. Help me send a letter to them, and I'll gladly stay here to train under your guidance."

"Humph," the woman snorted at him, but after pondering for a moment, she nodded. If she truly wished to teach him, it would be best not to focus on nor worry about him returning to his friends in another nation.

"Write them a letter tonight. Tomorrow, I'll send it out. You better prepare yourself to start training with me tomorrow. If you ask Lan Feng, I believe he'll tell you exactly what it's like." A cruel smile appeared on her face, sending a shiver down Yan Xiaobao's spine. It was clear that this training would be hellish, but despite that, Yan Xiaobao felt thrilled. He yearned to become stronger, something achievable only through rigorous training.

As he thought he would have some respite, Wan Qiao suddenly stood up. Leaning closer to the young man, her brows furrowed.

"Boy, why do you smell like a magical beast?" Her voice was dangerously low and sharp enough to feel like it could pierce anything. "This is definitely not Lan Feng's scent. Boy, are you trying to deceive me? Are you truly not a magical beast in disguise?"

Hearing her accusations, Yan Xiaobao froze for a moment. Lan Feng had warned him not to deceive Wan Qiao; instead, he should value his life above his secrets.

"I don't know how to explain it," Yan Xiaobao sighed deeply, "No matter how I explain it, it'll sound absurd."

"Try me," she said, her interest piqued by his cryptic response.

"My inner self contains various energy sources. One of them is the beast core of some unknown creature. I've been relying on this energy for a long time, and it's growing stronger and stronger. Unfortunately, I can't control it, so recently, I've avoided using this power."

"You have multiple energy sources within you?" she asked, completely shocked, with disbelief written all over her face. The confusion she displayed was enough to elicit a strange sense of satisfaction in Lan Feng, who silently enjoyed seeing her astonished.

"It's hard to explain. It feels as though every energy inside me has its own space," Yan Xiaobao admitted, unable to elucidate his inner chaos. This only led him to become more perplexed about himself.

Seeing the confusion on his face, Wan Qiao placed a hand on his shoulder and closed her eyes. A golden light belonging to her surged from his veins and penetrated his meridians, forcing its way toward his Lower Dantian, where it radiated brightly. This allowed her to thoroughly examine his body.

For Yan Xiaobao, being filled with such foreign energy was anything but comfortable. It felt as though his body was being invaded, with the energy forcefully threading through constricted meridians and entering his Dantian.

Despite the discomfort, Yan Xiaobao gritted his teeth and permitted the woman to investigate the contents of his inner self. After a grueling ten-minute examination, she withdrew her energy, and Yan

Xiaobao fell to the floor, feeling lighter. His head spun as he attempted to verify that his internal energy and physical condition were still intact.

"How fascinating," Wan Qiao remarked with a smile curling on her lips. She finally understood why Zhong Hui found this young man intriguing.

"Tomorrow, I need you to demonstrate the power of your beast core. We'll have some additional classes—you and me, alone—where we'll tame your beast. During my examination, I saw a core belonging to a creature I've never encountered before. Truly remarkable."

Yan Xiaobao nodded, his excitement apparent. The opportunity to learn how to control his inner energy was something he had long desired. Now, having arrived at the Divine Domain's palace, he harbored no regrets. When a servant guided Yan Xiaobao to his designated room, he realized it would likely become his base for the foreseeable future.

Upon entering the room, Yan Xiaobao's first action was to survey his surroundings. The space was austere, almost resembling a prison cell, with only a stone bed, a stone chair, and a stone table. The overall ambiance felt stark, but Yan Xiaobao knew it held everything he needed. Though there were no storage units in the room itself, a belt laden with storage stones provided an adequate solution.

On the stone table, Yan Xiaobao discovered paper and a pen. Without hesitation, he sat down and began crafting a letter to his friends. While he wasn't certain of the current whereabouts of Sha Yun, Deng Wu, and Wang Julong, he decided to address his note to the Rong twins, knowing they were members of the main branch of the Royal Academy. He guessed the trio would seek them out upon arrival.

Dear Rong Ming and Rong Xing,

I write this letter assuming you both are still participating in the primary division of the Royal Academy. How many years has it been since we last met? I hope you are both doing well in the Capital.

I imagine you've recently encountered Deng Wu, Wang Julong, and Sha Yun. I ask you to inform the three of them that I am safe. However, I've now stumbled upon something—something that will keep me occupied for an indefinite period.

I trust our friends have shared stories of our travels. When I return, I promise to recount the rest.

Your friend,

Yan Xiaobao.

As he reviewed the letter, Yan Xiaobao recognized it lacked significant details but conveyed the critical news: he was alive. This, after all, was the main purpose of writing the letter.

Rolling up the scroll, he secured it with a thin thread and infused it with a touch of spiritual energy before sealing it.

Setting the letter aside on the table, Yan Xiaobao moved toward the stone bed and began cultivating. He knew that the next day's training, considered hellish by Lan Feng, loomed ahead. He couldn't wait to experience just how grueling it truly would be.

While Yan Xiaobao remained in the room, no one came to disturb him—not even a servant bringing food or water. Clearly, he was meant to fend for himself. Fortunately, he had prepared for this situation by storing ample supplies of food and drink during his journey. Preserving dried meat, fruits, and nuts had proven essential.

Although Yan Xiaobao brought plenty of provisions with him, he rarely felt hungry. Currently, Yan Xiaobao was an intermediate cultivator at Duke University. Inner energy flowed through his body, strengthening every cell and organ. His physique constantly absorbed the essence of the heavens and the earth, naturally sustaining itself.

At this stage, regular eating wasn't necessary for him—only once a week sufficed. Keeping this in mind, Yan Xiaobao couldn't genuinely blame Wan Qiao for not providing meals.

The night passed peacefully, with human and Phoenix alike cultivating their inner energy. While refining their energies, their speed was far slower than usual.

Lan Feng still felt traumatized by the thought of undergoing training again, while Yan Xiaobao eagerly anticipated the harsh regimen, knowing it would make him stronger. Strong enough to stand tall without always relying on Lan Feng—a prospect he greatly looked forward to.

With expectations for training overshadowing Yan Xiaobao's thoughts, he found himself unable to refine the multitude of essences into Qi or spiritualize his spiritual energy into divine energy. All he could do was imagine the training that awaited him.

Knock *Knock*

At the first light of dawn, a servant knocked on the door. Yan Xiaobao immediately rose and opened the door, his eyes glimmering with excitement.

The journey to the training grounds was long and winding. They passed through countless hallways, magnificent gardens, and exquisite terraces. Humans and beasts roamed freely, while lakes teemed with various fish and birds fluttered about. The entire palace was breathtakingly beautiful, rich with exotic charm, leaving Yan Xiaobao spellbound.

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