

The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

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Chapter 407 - Threatening Smog

[1,174 words]

Chapter 407 - Threatening Smog

After destroying the Black Arrow, Han Wu brought Jing Jing up to the dwarven fortress perched atop the lone hill to ask Smog about the Magic Ring. Once inside, they utilized their transformations and slipped past the traps with ease, reaching the vault where Smog resided.

To be cautious, he asked her to wait outside while he entered the vault alone. No sooner had he stepped inside than he spotted a massive pile of gold, topped with numerous treasure chests. He collected all of the wooden, bronze, iron, and silver chests and stored their contents in his inventory.

Detecting the presence of a living being, Smog stirred from his slumber. When he realized that Han Wu was the one running around collecting the chests, he extinguished the flames flickering from his jaws.

“Defier, why are you here?” Smog rumbled.

“Esteemed Smog, I’ve fulfilled my promise and destroyed the Black Arrows. Now it’s your turn. Tell me about the Magic Ring,” Han Wu said.

Smog’s excitement spiked at Han Wu’s report. He soared high above and gazed down at Rivertown nestled at the hill’s base. He sensed that the Black Arrow’s presence was gone and confirmed that Han Wu was telling the truth.

“Defier, it seems that you are reliable. I shall tell you the Magic Ring’s secret. Your Transmutation Golem’s core is actually one of the Magic Rings. Crush it, and you will be able to extract it. But the runes on the golem will lose their power, and you will no longer be able to create more lesser golems,” Smog shared.

Han Wu considered Smog’s words carefully. The Magic Ring was tempting, yet removing it would strip him of the ability to produce more lesser golems. In that case, he would leave it intact for the time being. The Transmutation Golem was vital to Han Wu. It would be instrumental in building a powerful nation in the Middle Realm. He could not afford to dismantle it yet.

Han Wu glanced at Smog and noticed that he was staring down at Rivertown, his gaze charged with anticipation. He already knew of the grudge Smog held against the town, but he could not allow its destruction. Rivertown had become an important source of Faith Points for him.

“Great Smog, Rivertown is now my domain. I hope that the grudge between you and that place will cease today.” Han Wu tried to persuade him.

Smog roared, “Defier, are you giving me orders? Rivertown shot me twice in the past and even managed to make me suffer for years. Now that they no longer have the Black Arrows to protect them, they must face the flames of my wrath.”

Smog was itching for revenge, while Han Wu needed to protect his territory and the source of his Faith Points. With no other choice, he summoned Jing Jing to the vault.

When she entered, Smog immediately sensed the Black Arrow’s presence on her. “Defier, you’ve deceived me! You said you destroyed the Black Arrow.”

He turned on Jing Jing, his voice rumbling through the vault. “Do not come near me. Stay away!”

Han Wu remained calm and explained, “The Black Arrow has indeed been destroyed, but my friend here has absorbed its essence. I really like Rivertown, and I believe my friend would act if it ever got damaged or destroyed. Isn’t that right, Jing Jing?”

She raised her small finger to show off the Black Arrow. “Of course! I have many friends in Rivertown. I’ll protect that place forever!”

The dragon-slaying power radiating from her silenced Smog’s arrogance, forcing him to sink lower, almost retreating beneath the molten gold.

“Fine, I promise that I won’t attack Rivertown again.” Under the combined pressure of Han Wu and Jing Jing, he had no choice but to abandon his grudge.

“Good.” Han Wu nodded and turned to leave with Jing Jing, but a glint of light drew his attention. A gemstone shimmered nearby, its brilliance carrying an almost sacred aura.

Han Wu could tell that it was a rare treasure, but after already offending Smog, asking for it now would only provoke disaster. Using the Black Arrow to threaten him again was out of the question. If he did order Jing Jing to do so, Smog’s fury would be uncontrollable. A rampaging Great Gold Dragon wasn’t an enemy that they wanted to face right now.

He memorized the strange gemstone’s location, planning to return for it later when Smog was gone. Only then did he leave the vault with Jing Jing.

With Akanzor and Bart overseeing Rivertown, Han Wu had nothing to worry about. He took Jing Jing back to the mine, where the slaves fell to their knees in reverence as their god returned.

Han Wu smiled and inspected the mining operations, paying special attention to the exploration of the new mine shafts. The slaves worked with unwavering loyalty, and none dared to idle. The progress exceeded his expectations. They had managed to find new ore veins and were already feeding the extracted ore to the Transmutation Golem. At this pace, it would level up once more within five days.

Han Wu could hardly wait to see what new ability the Transmutation Golem would unlock.

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Meanwhile, Wei En had returned to her territory. It took a long time for her body to recover. Compared to Han Wu's progress, her development lagged far behind.

Now she was tearing her room apart to vent her anger. "You stupid man! Stupid man. You've ruined my plans! You must die."

As she fumed, one of her club members entered and reported, "President Wei, an esteemed guest wishes to see you."

Wei En glared at the girl, irritated that she had chosen this moment to report such a thing. *Why bother me now with this kind of thing? I can't even enjoy smashing things anymore.*

She took two deep breaths to suppress her anger before saying, "Let them in then."

Elina soon stepped into the room. Wei En studied her, recalling everything she knew about her. Elina was a direct descendant of the God King of Light, and she couldn't afford to offend her.

Wei En forced herself to calm down and asked evenly, "Ms. Elina, what brings you here?"

Elina's reply was immediate. "I want you to force Han Wu to join my father's faction."

Wei En blinked in surprise. Her intelligence reports showed that Han Wu had turned Elina down numerous times. Naturally, she had never expected Elina to be so persistent. Even after repeated rejections, she remained unwavering in her intent to recruit him.

"Sorry, Ms. Elina, but I—" Wei En began, but Elina cut her off.

“If you succeed in bringing Han Wu to our side, I’ll see to it that you join as well. With your wits, your future will be secure under the Light faction.”

Wei En hesitated for a moment, then smiled faintly. “Thank you for your confidence. I’ll do my best to convince him.”

Elina was pleased. “I’ll await your good news.”

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Chapter 408 - Third Divine Power: Merge

[1,025 words]

Chapter 408 - Third Divine Power: Merge

Ten days later, Han Wu finally collected a total of ten Divine Essence and decided to ascend his clone into a Demigod in the Middle Realm. After making the necessary preparations, he contacted the Will of the Divine Civilization.

Since the Will of the Middle Realm had deteriorated with the collapse of its civilization, the Will of the Divine Civilization descended without resistance and bestowed its blessing upon Han Wu’s clone.

Empowered by sanction of the Will of the Divine Realm, the clone ascended into a Demigod. His strength rose once more, and every one of his stats reached 1,000 points. He could also unlock his third Divine Power.

His first Divine Power, the Thirty-Six Martial Castes, granted him exceptional versatility, allowing him to overcome numerous difficulties with ease. The second, the True Demon King Transformation, served as a powerful offensive ability.

Han Wu studied the two Exclusive-ranked Divine Powers available for his third option. They were Merge and Replicate. Both offered advantages suited to his current situation, but after weighing his options, he chose to unlock Merge.

[Merge (Exclusive): Can merge objects or living beings. Targets with similar properties will be upgraded after merging. Targets with different properties may produce an unpredictable result. Three times a day.]

While Merge seemed fairly restrictive since it could only be used three times a day, its effects remained exceptionally powerful.

Han Wu wanted to test its limits in the Middle Realm. He lined up the thousands of lesser golems that he had manufactured over several days. The sheer sight of such an army was horrifying.

With just several thousand lesser golems, Han Wu was confident that he could easily topple a kingdom of millions. Yet the lesser golems' individual strength was lacking. Although they could crush ordinary soldiers with ease, they were nothing more than slow, clanking targets against skilled experts with powerful weapons.

Han Wu decided to merge them into a powerful lesser golem. He activated his Divine Power and slowly expanded his range of selection.

Ten, twenty, thirty... When he reached the 340th lesser golem, he felt his Willpower strain to its limit. Even so, merging 340 lesser golems at once would be more than enough. Under his Divine Power, all 340 five-meter-tall lesser golems merged into one colossal golem, rising to a towering thirty meters in height.

The increase in size came with a dramatic boost in overall capability. Previously, a single lesser golem could withstand the might of a Heroic life form, but this merged version could withstand blows from a High Lord.

Its firepower had also increased. Where a regular lesser golem carried only one Magic Cannon, the merged lesser golem possessed eight, capable of firing in continuous succession for extended periods. The barrage from eight Magic Cannons could level an entire mountain into a crater.

Although Han Wu was eager to test his creation's destructive might and delighted with the results of a single Merge, he refrained from merging the rest of the lesser golems. Instead, he turned to the vast collection of God equipment stored in his inventory.

As his faction expanded, he amassed more than 300 pieces of God equipment. Most were 1- or 2-Star, now useless to him. Rather than distributing them among his believers, he intended to experiment and see whether merging them could produce a powerful God weapon.

Han Wu drew out an assortment of lower-ranking God weapons such as swords, short swords, maces, lances, and even whips. The variety was staggering. Activating Merge, he succeeded in selecting them all, and under its powerful effects, the hundreds of weapons began to fuse together.

The process was far from smooth. Unlike the simple merging of the lesser golems, this fusion dragged on for more than three hours before it finally concluded.

Han Wu observed the orb-shaped result, then reached for it. As the sphere flowed up his arm like liquid metal, he read the newly created God equipment's data.

[6-Star God Equipment: Everchange – Forged by merging hundreds of God weapons. It can assume any form used in its creation, and the holder can freely set its attribute.]

Han Wu focused, and Everchange turned into a sabre. Concentrating further, he watched the blade glow bright red as waves of heat rippled from its edge. With another thought, the crimson hue faded to blue, emitting waves of frost instead.

While it wasn't as powerful as a genuine 6-Star God weapon, its versatility compensated for that. The ability to change form and attributes made it superior to most 5-Star God equipment.

Satisfied, Han Wu admired his work before glancing at the pile of remaining God equipment scattered around him. He still had one Merge left for the day and intended to use it. The leftover pieces of God equipment were all defensive, and he planned to turn them into something powerful.

Under the effects of Merge, the hundreds of pieces of God equipment fused together. Instead of forming the armor that Han Wu had hoped for, the process produced a massive shield that could not alter its shape. The shield stood three meters tall and two meters wide, large enough to completely conceal Han Wu.

The resulting 6-Star God shield was called Iron Wall and had no special effects; its sole feature was unmatched durability. Physical, magical, and elemental attacks alike were all nullified upon contact.

After a rough calculation, Han Wu determined that Iron Wall could withstand a Sage life form's assault for several minutes. Its defensive strength alone made it sufficient for him to use throughout the entire Middle Realm.

Han Wu was pleased with the day's outcome, having obtained three powerful items through Merge. He was about to rest when a slave entered with a report. The skeleton scouts had sighted a group of powerful humans slowly approaching the mine, and their movements suggested that they weren't just passing through.

Han Wu frowned. The mine's reputation and strength should have been known across the land. What kind of fool would send an elite team to provoke him now?

Determined to find out, he set off to confront the intruders himself.

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[1,161 words]

Chapter 409 - Seducing Han Wu

Han Wu brought along the new God weapon and shield and left the cave, heading toward the area where the skeleton scouts had spotted the intruders.

As he approached, he saw them exactly where the scouts had reported and recognized them at once. The one leading the group was Wei En, the third-year valedictorian and president of the Saintess Club.

Behind her stood thirteen exceedingly beautiful students who served as her elites. Their deference toward Wei En left little doubt in Han Wu's mind that they were members of the Saintess Club, or at least closely tied to it.

Han Wu suppressed his presence as best as he could to eavesdrop on them.

"President Wei, we can't forgive Han Wu no matter what," one of the girls said. "He has disrupted your plans too many times."

"President Wei, leave him to me once we capture him," another chimed in with a sly grin. "I will train him as my dog with my seduction powers."

"Even though we are only here as clones in the Middle Realm, our souls remain the same," a third added. "Once we seduce Han Wu here, his true self in the Divine Civilization will inherit the memories, and he will be our slave forever."

"The Saintess Club will reign at the top of Imperial College. That's our destiny."

The girls spoke with absolute confidence, convinced that they would seduce Han Wu.

Wei En only smiled at their certainty. She had handpicked them as her elites because she was confident that they could handle Han Wu. She trusted not only their abilities but also her own.

"Everyone, let me say something first." Her voice cut through their chatter, and the girls fell silent. "Han Wu is the man that Elina wants. Even if we managed to seduce him, we cannot turn him into an honorless slave. He'd be worthless that way."

She continued, "Our goal is simple. We'll plant a small seed of consciousness in his mind so he believes that the Saintess Club is his benefactor. Then he'll treat us with genuine respect. I'll still need his help once I join the Light faction."

"We understand, President Wei. We will make sure he understands too."

“Yes,” another added. “There are thirteen of us. We are confident that we can defeat him even if his true body descends here.”

Han Wu heard every word. The girls Wei En had brought this time were far from ordinary opponents. He would need to stay alert and avoid falling for their trap.

He began to retreat, but a sudden sense of danger flared behind him. Without turning, he immediately darted sideways to widen the gap between him and whatever was closing in.

Only then did he turn and see Wei En, wreathed in purple lines, standing with her arm raised as if ready to knock him out in one swing.

“Junior Han, eavesdropping on your seniors isn’t a good habit.” Wei En advanced in measured steps while the thirteen girls closed in around him in an instant.

“Is that Junior Han? He’s adorable. I could just eat him up.”

“Hey, handsome. Just nod once, and I will take you with me. President Wei won’t object.”

Han Wu frowned at their teasing. He knew better than to underestimate them; each clone was already a Demigod, and their positions hinted at a very specific formation.

He remained silent, and their voices only grew louder.

“Junior Han, do you want a baby? Just nod, and we can get to it right now.”

“Junior Han, you’ve never felt a woman’s touch, have you? I can teach you.”

“Come now, Little Han. Don’t be shy. Come to me.”

Their voices layered one over another, echoing through his mind like a bewitching chant. At the same time, the world around him warped and twisted with every word they uttered.

Han Wu was on the verge of breaking when a surge of coolness burst from within his mind. His Willpower stat, with 1,000 points invested, had saved him. The voices stopped instantly, and his visions cleared. To his surprise, he realized that the girls had trapped him in a dome.

Their faces were stern, their flirtatious airs gone. Only then did Han Wu understand that he had been caught in an illusion. Thankfully, he had broken free in time.

Unaware of his recovery, the girls assumed he was still ensnared and poured even more Divine Power into the dome in an attempt to make him surrender to his desires and forget his mission.

Han Wu decided to play along and lunged toward one of the girls. Even though the dome was protecting her, she still flinched, disgusted by his apparent behavior.

In that instant, Han Wu transformed Everchange into a dagger radiating the power of a 5-Star God weapon and thrust at the dome. The barrier shattered on impact. Before the girl could react, he drove the blade into her abdomen.

Meanwhile, he had already switched the dagger's attribute to Explosion. The moment he stabbed her abdomen, it detonated. Her clone vanished in a burst of light, and the dome the thirteen girls had woven shattered with it.

Shock rippled through the remaining girls. Han Wu's brutality left them speechless.

He wiped the blood from his face and looked around with feigned confusion. "Huh? Where's the senior who was just standing here? Why did she disappear?"

The other girls wavered, unsettled by Han Wu's reckless display. Dying here wouldn't kill them in real life; they would only lose a clone and probably be locked out of the game. Nonetheless, each clone carried a fragment of its user's soul. If the clone perished, the user's soul would suffer a powerful backlash. None of them wanted to face that pain. Fear took hold, and they instinctively drew back, eager to keep their distance from him.

Wei En shouted, "The enemy is in front of you! What are you waiting for? Set up the formation!"

Her voice snapped them out of their panic. Remembering their purpose, they swiftly rushed into formation just like they practiced. Yet the dome didn't function properly this time because one member had died.

Wei En had to step into the vacant position, taking the place of the fallen girl and completing the formation's requirements. The Skill activated instantly. A cloud of pink gas rose around Han Wu and seeped into his mouth without much resistance.

His thoughts blurred again. Then the familiar cooling sensation burst forth. For the second time that day, his Willpower stat saved him, breaking the seduction's hold.

Han Wu abandoned any thought of mercy. He unleashed his full power and equipped his 5-Star God Abyss set, 6-Star God Iron Wall, 6-Star God Ju Que, and 6-Star God Everchange. Gripping his powerful God equipment, he activated True Demon King Transformation. His indomitable aura surged across 1,000 meters and swept away every trace of pink gas inside the dome.

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[1,255 words]

Chapter 410 - Killing His Seniors

“Impossible! How are you that strong?” Wei En was stunned. Han Wu’s power was at least ten times greater than what he had ever shown before.

One of the girls possessed a Skill that allowed her to inspect her foes. She checked Han Wu’s stats and exclaimed, “All of his stats have exceeded 1,000 points!”

“What? 1,000 points?!” Wei En’s eyes widened in disbelief. Even after ascending into a Demigod here, her own stats had only reached about 500 at best. How could Han Wu’s reach double that?

Numerically, 1,000 was twice as much as 500, but the power gap was far wider. A person with 1,000 points in their stats wasn’t merely twice as strong. The difference was exponential.

Wei En had to take a few seconds to process the information before realization struck. “You! I see now! You ascended into a perfect Demigod!”

Becoming a perfect Demigod required ten Divine Essence, but each new unit demanded exponentially more energy than the last. In reality, gathering ten meant collecting twenty. When converted to Faith Points, twenty Divine Essence amounted to 20 quadrillion Faith Points. The figure was astronomical!

Wei En was at a loss as she couldn’t understand how Han Wu had managed to gather so many believers and accumulate such an immense number of Faith points.

Naturally, Han Wu had his own methods. The mine’s slaves and Rivertown’s residents numbered at most a few hundred thousand, yet their devotion to him was absolute.

Nearly all of them were classified as Devotees, and about one in ten possessed faith so pure that they were Zealots. Their belief generated Faith Points hundreds or even tens of thousands of times greater than those produced by ordinary Believers. That purity of faith allowed Han Wu to gather immense Faith Points in a short time and convert them into Divine Essence.

His full power as a perfect Demigod caught Wei En and her followers completely off guard.

“President Wei, his Willpower exceeds 1,000 points!” the girl cried. “The Seduction Array won’t affect him. We need to retreat!”

Wei En couldn’t bear the humiliation she suffered this time. She had always been a proud woman who saw men as her slaves and playthings. They were tools to be used and discarded once they had served their purpose. Yet Han Wu had already defeated her several times in the game, and each loss gnawed at her. Her pride refused to accept defeat.

“You can all leave first. I’ll defeat him today, no matter what!” Wei En declared.

The purple markings across her skin deepened as her envy flared. Jealousy knew no limits, and Wei En fed on it, drawing power from the emotions that consumed her. In this state, all of her stats rose slowly, her movements quickened, and each strike landed with greater force.

Han Wu maintained his transformation, gripping Ju Que within his Swordwind Arms, while his Dragon Claws wielded Everchange. His 5-Star God Abyss set protected his entire body, and the 6-Star God Iron Wall floated in the air and intercepted Wei En’s attacks.

Wei En’s relentless blows crashed against Iron Wall, yet not even a tiny dent appeared on its surface. The girls shuddered at the sight of its impenetrable defense. With such powerful God equipment, Han Wu was essentially invincible right now. More importantly, he still wielded two devastating God weapons. How could Wei En win?

Han Wu tracked Wei En’s movements as she streaked across the battlefield, but her speed kept rising until even his eyes struggled to follow her. Hitting her now would be nearly impossible.

Utilizing his rich battle experience, he devised a new approach. Instead of aiming directly for her, he would unleash a wide-area attack. This was a proven strategy against faster opponents.

Han Wu recalled an old saying, *When resources are scarce, one must strike with precision, but when resources abound, overwhelming force prevails.*

With every stat at 1,000, he could afford to go all out. Even in his True Demon King Transformation state, he could maintain full power for the entire five minutes.

Han Wu poured vast amounts of energy into his two God weapons. Ju Que blazed with unstoppable power as it expanded into a 100-meter-long giant sword capable of obliterating anything in its path.

Wei En darted away with startling speed and shouted, “Don’t even think about hitting me.”

Han Wu only chuckled. He channeled many Divine Points into Everchange and drove it into the ground. Numerous whips burst out from the earth like sprouting vines and spread across the battlefield.

Wei En stumbled for a split second, and one whip coiled around her legs, halting her momentum. Han Wu seized the opening and swung Ju Que with incredible speed. The earth trembled under the blow, and a huge ravine split open where Wei En had been standing.

Unexpectedly, Wei En had already fallen back to her club members' side. For a heartbeat, the girls assumed that she had escaped the strike and were ready to cheer, only to realize the truth. One of Wei En's legs was missing, and blood was pouring from the wound. She had failed to completely avoid the devastating blow.

"President Wei, let's run for now," one of the girls urged. "We can come back stronger and defeat him."

Another tried to shame Han Wu. "How dare you bully girls and the weak? What kind of man—"

Han Wu swung Ju Que and cleaved her in two. Before her clone disappeared, he summoned Void Jaw and devoured it. Even a Demigod's clone was a nourishing meal for a perfect Demigod like him.

The others froze in horror. Then panic set in. They no longer waited for Wei En's orders and scattered in every direction. They abandoned their bonds, their mission, and even their club president in their desperate scramble for survival. They feared Han Wu would attack them if they moved slowly. None wanted to die devoured by that hideous jaw.

Wei En stood stunned as realization sank in: she had been abandoned.

Han Wu wouldn't let them escape so easily. He controlled Everchange and shaped it into a whip with numerous tendrils to capture them.

Of the eleven girls left, he managed to capture ten because the last one escaped the whip's reach. The captured girls shed their esteemed image as members of the Saintess Club and begged for their lives.

"Junior Han, I am your senior! We should be helping each other instead. Let me down!"

"Junior Han, please—spare me! I will give you anything."

A few still tried to sound defiant.

“Han Wu, you’d better think twice before offending me! This is just a game. Even if you kill my clone, my true body will remain intact. I am a third-year student, and I will get you even if you are a first-year valedictorian once we return to the college!”

Han Wu ignored the pleas and threats and killed them outright. He repeated the process, using Void Jaw to devour their clones before they disappeared. The clones dissolved into nutrients, which Han Wu absorbed as energy.

Wei En stood alone amid the carnage, watching as all ten of her followers fell. The purple veins crawling across her face deepened, and a twisted smile bloomed on her lips. “Good. Those who betray me deserve death!”

Han Wu leveled his gaze at her. “It’s your turn to die now, Senior Wei!”

He tightened his grip on Ju Que and struck downward, unleashing a devastating wind blade.

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[994 words]

Chapter 411 - Warning

The ground shook again with Han Wu’s attack, carving another ravine into the earth. However, Wei En had vanished.

Han Wu scanned his surroundings, trying to sense her presence, yet he detected nothing. It was as if she had disappeared into thin air. He focused every ounce of his power into Detect but still failed to discover her whereabouts.

That could only mean that Wei En had managed to flee, and she had traveled so far that even he couldn’t tell which direction she had gone. Tracking her was impossible; he had to let her go.

He reverted to his human form, and fatigue washed over him. Thankfully, all of his stats exceeded 1,000 points, so the exhaustion wasn’t as severe as before. At the very least, he didn’t lose consciousness this time.

Void Jaw had digested the twelve Demigod clones, along with Wei En’s left leg. He extracted the Divine Essence out and counted a total of thirty-two units.

It was a vast amount of Divine Essence, enough to nurture a perfect Demigod from the ground up. He decided to divide it evenly between Qin Shuang and Jing Jing to

strengthen his faction. Both had already collected some on their own, and with his share added, he was confident they could ascend into perfect Demigods, enhancing their stats and unlocking their third Divine Power.

As for Sun Qingnian, he had already entangled himself with several high-ranking women from the other races and factions. With his cunning and charm, he somehow managed to collect enough Divine Essence from his lovers to ascend into a perfect Demigod here. Han Wu had no reason to worry about him.

During his battle with Wei En, Han Wu realized just how precarious his situation was. Almost everyone knew his faction's current composition and strength, along with their exact location. Anyone could launch an ambush at any time. If the skeleton scouts hadn't spotted Wei En and her group early, they would have suffered serious losses at the mines. What if they failed to detect the enemies next time?

Han Wu returned to his room to plan his next move. He would send a warning to intimidate his potential enemies. His goal was to spread fear so deeply that every student would avoid him the moment they heard his name.

His best target was obvious: Wei En, who had tried to ambush him. After reviewing the information from the auction, he discovered that she had founded a kingdom tailored for women. He would make her pay for the ambush by striking at her kingdom.

He discussed his plan with Qin Shuang, Jing Jing, and Sun Qingnian. All three agreed; Han Wu had to assert his strength. Otherwise, others would keep probing his limits. Wei En had already brought thirteen girls to the mine to seduce Han Wu. What if she returned tomorrow with the other factions' elite forces? Han Wu needed to attack her first to deter any future aggression.

That night, he rallied his army, mounted the massive merged lesser golem, and led the march to Wei En's kingdom.

Naturally, such a large force did not go unnoticed. The various factions' scouts spotted the movement and rushed to report it. Their leaders were stunned to learn that Han Wu commanded not only a multitude of lesser golems but also one giant lesser golem. They all wondered who his target could be.

The answer came soon enough. When Han Wu stopped before Wei En's kingdom, every faction received the same report from their scouts with disbelief. Han Wu's mine faction and Wei En's kingdom were newly formed, but the difference in their strength was undeniable.

Han Wu commanded only a few thousand lesser golems, while Wei En's kingdom had hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Everyone assumed that Han Wu was digging his own grave, but the latter thought otherwise.

He ordered his army to stop ten kilometers from Wei En's kingdom. The other factions' scouts believed he was bluffing to intimidate Wei En. If not, he would have attacked the kingdom directly instead of stopping short. To them, his hesitation was obvious.

Their assumptions vanished the moment Han Wu issued his orders to his lesser golems. "Prepare the Magic Cannons!"

At once, the lesser golems heeded his command and channeled energy into their Magic Cannons to amplify their destructive power. Ten minutes later, Han Wu issued the next command, and over 700 Magic Cannons unleashed their barrage against Wei En's kingdom in unison.

Their barrage easily shattered the city wall. Alarmed, the kingdom's guards scrambled to gather their forces outside the city to find the attackers. Yet no trace of the enemy could be found, and no one knew who or what had attacked them.

Han Wu showed no intention of stopping. Ten minutes later, he gave the order for another volley. The bombardment killed both the guards rushing out of the city and the citizens trying to escape.

Watching the civilians die, Han Wu felt a tinge of guilt. Unfortunately, this was war, and no one would end it simply because innocents had fallen.

After two rounds from the Magic Cannons, the heavy city gates of Wei En's kingdom lay in ruins. The scouts hiding in the dark stared in disbelief. Their factions had purchased lesser golems from Han Wu, yet none of them knew that those golems could use Magic Cannons.

They hurried to write their reports and sent them back through their respective channels. Han Wu knew what was happening but didn't interfere. In fact, he wanted word to spread and let the world know that he wasn't someone to be easily trampled.

Once the gates were down, Han Wu ordered his lesser golems to march into the city. Along the way, they passed fleeing citizens. Since they posed no threat, Han Wu spared them and pressed forward.

Wei En only appeared when Han Wu approached the grand palace at the kingdom's heart.

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[1,079 words]

Chapter 412 - Massacre

Wei En still hadn't recovered from their earlier battle. Her face was pale, and her vital signs were weak. She looked as if a single gust could topple her.

Han Wu stood atop the giant lesser golem, gazing down on her. "Senior Wei, we meet again."

Wei En's voice came out low and cold. "You want to destroy my kingdom and then kill me? Have you thought about the consequences? Once we leave this game, I'll make sure you pay for this humiliation several times over."

Han Wu answered seriously, "And if I let you go now, would you spare me once the game ends? Senior Wei, stop deluding yourself. You've tried to kill me more times than I can count. Do you really think I'd let you go?"

Wei En frowned, unable to stomach a lecture from a junior. She resorted to the same old tactic of shaming him. "What kind of man are you who only knows how to bully a girl like me?"

Han Wu didn't flinch. "If I'm a useless man, then what does that make you, since I've defeated you so many times?"

Wei En's anger flared. "I won't forgive you! Once we return to Imperial College, I'll find many ways to punish you. I'll make sure you suffer for your insolence today—"

Han Wu scoffed. "Shut up."

He transformed Everchange into a huge hammer and smashed her to pieces. He then quickly summoned Void Jaw, which devoured her clone and converted it into energy.

Finally, Wei En's presence vanished, and her kingdom fell with her. Many club members had fled amid the chaos, and none of them returned to check on Wei En's fate or drag her dying clone away. Not that they could have. After all, Void Jaw had devoured it before it could even fade away.

When the last of the students escaped, only the native humans remained. Almost 70% of them were women; the rest were what Han Wu mockingly called simps. Despite their kingdom's ruin, the women showed no fear. Instead, they confronted Han Wu with demands for compensation.

First, they insisted he compensated them for destroying their kingdom. He was to surrender his lesser golem army and provide them with 8 million gold coins per month for their expenses from that day forward.

Based on average living costs in the Middle Realm, a family of three could go to bed with full stomachs on just one gold coin a month. Wei En's kingdom had fewer than 6 million people before the invasion, and some had already fled.

In total, he estimated that Wei En's kingdom had 5 million people left. If he truly paid 8 million gold coins each month, every person would receive roughly 1.6 coins, which was more than for a family of three to live comfortably for a month.

After that, their demands only grew more absurd. The longer they spoke, the more Han Wu's anger mounted. He couldn't fathom how they dared to make such lopsided demands. For a moment, he almost wondered whether he was the one who had lost the war.

In the end, he rejected them, and they turned to deceit and emotional manipulation, resorting to softer tactics like crying, shouting, and even threatening suicide to stir his sympathy.

Han Wu was neither a simp nor a saint. When their theatrics turned into threats, he decided to massacre them. His lesser golems unleashed another barrage from their Magic Cannons, and the entire kingdom was reduced to ashes.

Using Detect, he found that fewer than 10% had survived beneath the rubble. He exhaled in relief. In his view, women who loudly preached independence yet constantly demanded various resources from men were better off dead.

...

News that Han Wu had destroyed Wei En's kingdom spread across the Middle Realm the next day. A kingdom that once commanded hundreds of thousands of soldiers had fallen to Han Wu's lesser golem army instead.

The factions quickly grasped how strong those golems were, especially the ones equipped with Magic Cannons. Many attempted to contact Han Wu, hoping to purchase the golems and strengthen their own forces, but he ignored every offer. He had long decided not to sell any golems with Magic Cannons until his Transmutation Golem unlocked another ability.

With the great threat of Wei En eliminated, he could finally turn his attention to the treasures hidden throughout the Middle Realm. Without the protection of the Will of the Civilization, the Middle Realm was destined to collapse, and every treasure unique to this civilization had become a one-of-a-kind relic that would never exist again. Anything he found here was priceless, and he intended to search for as many as he could.

Through his network of merchant contacts, he managed to gather bits of information, one of which caught his interest. Rumor had it that a peculiar race known as Flame Demons inhabited a certain mountain range.

Born from fire itself, they could control it at will and were notorious for their greed. They preyed on travelers and seized every treasure they could find. Their leader was the Flame Demon King, and it possessed the Fire Ring, one of the fabled Magic Rings.

The Magic Rings were the Middle Realm's strongest treasures, and each one would grow alongside their wielder. Even though Han Wu probably had little practical use for the Fire Ring, he still wanted to obtain it.

Han Wu planned to search for it alone, but Qin Shuang somehow learned of his intentions and insisted on joining him. He tried to dissuade her but failed. Her stats now matched his, and she had unlocked three Divine Powers, so she could easily protect herself. Even the Flame Demons posed no real threat to her. Ultimately, Han Wu agreed to let her accompany him.

Following the route described by the merchant, they soon found the entrance to a cave. A wave of blistering heat struck them the moment they arrived.

The hot wind alone was enough to kill an ordinary person, but both of them were Demigods now and could withstand it. They pushed through the scorching air and stepped inside. After exploring for a while, they discovered a peculiar stone wall concealing a hidden corridor.

Han Wu used Detect and found a vast sea of fire at the corridor's end. Within it, several fiery life forms swam with ease and delight. Han Wu was certain that they were the Flame Demons.

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Chapter 413 - Cooling Down the Fire

[1,066 words]

Chapter 413 - Cooling Down the Fire

Even though Han Wu and Qin Shuang were perfect Demigods right now, neither specialized in the fire attribute, so they couldn't withstand fire-based attacks without harm.

Left with no other option, Han Wu transformed into the Fire Dragon Cannon to avoid the scorching flames' excessive damage. After transforming, the blistering heat around him

eased. Moments ago, it had felt like standing inside a furnace; now it was no more than a gentle spring breeze. The intense heat could no longer harm him.

In this form, he could also absorb energy at a faster rate. Still, the Thirty-Six Martial Castes wasn't an omnipotent Skill. After all, it was heavily restricted here. He could only transform for 100 minutes per day. Once that time expired, he would revert to his original form, so he had to move quickly with the exploration.

Beside him, Qin Shuang activated her Lightning Armor and transformed into a Thunder Sparrow. The combined power of the armor and transformation barely protected her from the cave's overwhelming heat.

Once their preparations were complete, they entered the special corridor. After traveling for a long stretch, they finally reached the exit and faced a huge pool of molten lava. Within it, numerous Flame Demons were dancing and swimming around. Born from the very flames and heat, they were immune to the cave's extreme temperature.

The humans' arrival immediately drew the Flame Demons' attention. Their unfamiliar appearance marked them as outsiders, and the Flame Demons attacked them without hesitation.

Han Wu wasn't the kind to back down. He unleashed a blast through his Fire Dragon Cannon form that tore a hole through a Flame Demon's body.

The Flame Demon's body consisted entirely of fire, so all it needed to do was to absorb the surrounding heat and Fire Energy from the lava to heal itself. Such an injury was nothing to it, but being struck and left with a hole before its brethren was humiliating. Enraged, it summoned a huge fireball and hurled it at Han Wu.

Han Wu aimed his cannon's mouth at the fireball, absorbed it, and discharged a larger one back. The Fire Dragon Cannon's fireball inflicted not only fire damage but also physical damage.

The fireball struck the Flame Demon's head and shattered its skull. Then, a crystal-like object tumbled free, and the Flame Demon's body stopped regenerating.

Han Wu instantly recognized the crystal as the creature's core, the equivalent of a human's heart. If it shattered, the Flame Demon would die.

He quickly explained the situation to Qin Shuang. She nodded, summoned bolts of lightning, and struck the Flame Demons' skulls. Each bolt carried enough force to crush rocks. The Flame Demons that had been closing in collapsed one after another as their cores fell from their skulls.

With their weak spot confirmed, Han Wu summoned Everchange and Iron Wall and attacked with renewed ferocity. Everchange transformed into several ice-elemental

arrows that he fired at the Flame Demons' skulls, while Iron Wall shielded them from incoming attacks.

It was a simple and effective method. Flame Demons fell in droves, while the duo remained unharmed. After killing hundreds of them, Han Wu used Detect and sensed more than 100,000 still lurking in the lava. At their current pace, they could fight for ten days and nights straight and still not find the Flame Demon King and the Magic Ring.

Determined to end it swiftly, he called Qin Shuang to the edge of the lava pool. The scorching wind rose from below, searing their skin. Even though they were far more resistant to heat right now, the blistering air still burned them.

Han Wu stood at the edge of the lava with Everchange, set its attribute to ice, and thrust it into the molten lava.

A series of sharp explosions erupted as the 6-Star God weapon clashed with the lava, heat and cold colliding in violent bursts. The vast pool of lava dwarfed Everchange's chill.

Naturally, the power of any God equipment depended on its wielder's strength. Han Wu poured Divine Points into Everchange. Empowered, Everchange released a torrent of frost into the lava. The molten rock around it hardened into black volcanic stone as they solidified. Residual heat shimmered across the surface, but that no longer mattered.

Overjoyed to have found a way to deal with the lava, Han Wu kept pouring more Divine Points into Everchange to increase the frozen area. He pushed on until he exhausted his entire reserve of Divine Points, yet he managed to solidify only a small section of the lava pool.

The sudden drop in temperature forced several Flame Demons to leap from the lava. They attacked the two intruders, but Qin Shuang killed them with bolts of lightning.

Drained of power and unable to achieve the result he wanted, Han Wu had to rely on Qin Shuang. The latter followed his orders and channeled her Divine Points into Everchange. A surge of freezing energy burst outward and cooled an even greater portion of the lava pool. By the time her Divine Points were exhausted, half the lava pool had solidified into black volcanic stone.

At that moment, Han Wu realized their efforts would soon be wasted. The heat from the remaining lava was slowly reclaiming the cooled sections, threatening to return the pool to its original state. He didn't want to give up and turned his gaze to crystals scattered among the slain Flame Demons.

If I turn these crystals into Divine Points, I can freeze the lava pool for good, he thought.

To test his theory, he grabbed several crystals and absorbed their energy. Although they contained dense Fire Energy, he managed to convert it into pure energy within his body. He then channeled it into Everchange and continued freezing the lava pool. More Flame Demons leapt from the cooling lava, only to become easy target practice for them.

Their relentless slaughter soon angered the Flame Demon King. It burst from the solidified lava pool, bringing with it a wave of blazing wrath. Unlike the other Flame Demons, the king boasted a pair of wings, and each powerful beat sent waves of scorching wind over the two.

Han Wu and Qin Shuang grew serious. They finally succeeded in luring out the Flame Demon King. Now all that remained was to defeat it and obtain the information about the Magic Ring.

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Chapter 414 - Defeating the Flame Demons

[1,276 words]

Chapter 414 - Defeating the Flame Demons

Han Wu unleashed his remaining strength the moment the Flame Demon King emerged, transforming into his own Demon King form. With his current strength, he was able to restore his former 100-meter-tall height and the majesty he once commanded.

The Life Cells of his Demon King form activated their Infinite Energy trait and flooded Han Wu with energy that he channeled into Everchange. He converted all of it into the ice attribute, and the weapon's energy from Everchange spread outward, engulfing the surrounding space. Frost crept across the lava pool as huge sections of molten rock hardened into jagged volcanic stone.

Furious, the Flame Demon King beat its wings and summoned searing flames in its hands before shaping them into a fiery whip that cracked toward Han Wu.

Han Wu's Iron Wall materialized in time, completely nullifying both the physical strike and the fire's heat.

At the same time, Qin Shuang lent her strength. She summoned a huge sphere of lightning and plasma so dense that it struck the Flame Demon King and destroyed one of its wings.

The Flame Demon King lashed back. Its strike came too fast for Qin Shuang to dodge. Even though her Lightning Armor turned her body into pure lightning, making her immune to physical damage, the whip carried intense Fire Energy that tore through her defense.

The blow left Qin Shuang heavily injured, and Han Wu's anger erupted. He resolved to pour everything into his next attacks, transforming once more. This time he used Black Dragon King Transformation, and darkness swallowed the surroundings.

Within that darkness, Han Wu's body grew dense scales, and the pressure unique to Great Dragons surged from him. His scales were incredibly resistant to physical and magical damage, rendering the lava pool's heat useless. With a single flap of his wings, he plunged into the lava pool to face the Flame Demon King head-on.

The demon, a life form of pure fire immune to physical damage, still found itself cursing the strength of Han Wu's Black Dragon King Transformation.

Han Wu summoned numerous Void Jaws to devour the lava surrounding his foe. Once they digested it, he converted its energy into pure Dark Energy and used it to release corrosive breath attacks that dissolved everything in their path.

The Flame Demon King's body couldn't withstand the relentless corrosion, and its core was exposed. Han Wu spotted it at once and struck with renewed intensity.

The Flame Demon King possessed a trace of intelligence and realized that it would die if the battle continued. It surrendered and begged for mercy, but Han Wu was afraid that the demon was just feigning and kept beating it until he had chewed off half of its core.

When their battle finally ended, the Flame Demon King cowered before Han Wu. After all, his Black Dragon King Transformation radiated a dread even greater than that of a true Great Dragon.

Han Wu wielded not only the Skills of the Great Dragons but also powers they lacked, such as the Void Jaw. His strength was overwhelming, and the Flame Demon King feared that even surrender wouldn't save its life.

In reality, it had overestimated Han Wu. Although the Black Dragon King Transformation was powerful, it remained bound by the Middle Realm's laws, limiting its duration to only five minutes.

Had the Flame Demon King endured for even half a minute longer, it could have turned the situation around and killed them instead. However, its fear of death made it surrender, and that hesitation sealed its defeat.

Han Wu ordered the Flame Demon King to follow him away from the lava pool, which served as a recovery spring for the demon. As long as it remained within it, its regeneration and combat power reached their peak. Han Wu wanted it far from that source of power to ensure it couldn't renege on its submission and attack them later.

Terrified of dying, the Flame Demon King obeyed every command and silently followed Han Wu out of the lava pool. Deprived of the lava's energy, it shrank several times and lost nearly all its strength. In this weakened state, it couldn't even defeat Qin Shuang, much less the more powerful Han Wu.

Han Wu started to lay out his terms. He would spare the Flame Demon King if it surrendered the Fire Ring.

The moment Han Wu mentioned the Fire Ring, the Flame Demon King shook its head. No threat, not even death itself, could make it hand over that treasure.

Han Wu's fury boiled over, and he almost killed the Flame Demon King before Qin Shuang intervened. She used a special method and discovered the reason for its defiance: the Fire Ring was the source of the lava pool. As long as it was there, the lava pool would endlessly regenerate itself and gradually expand. The Flame Demons were born from that lava, and while it existed, they would continue to live.

The Flame Demon King feared death, but it also cared deeply for its kind. Even if it perished, it would never let Han Wu slaughter the rest of its subjects.

Unfortunately the Fire Ring was so precious that Han Wu was more than willing to exterminate the entire race to obtain it.

Before he acted on that thought, Qin Shuang stopped him. The lava pool was huge, and they had only managed to freeze a small portion of it today. There could be a far larger expanse hidden beneath the surface, possibly teeming with more Flame Demons. Using brute strength to take the Fire Ring was a waste of both time and energy.

Han Wu accepted her reasoning and chose a different approach. Instead of eradicating them, he would take them in as his units. He promised that if the Flame Demon King swore allegiance and led its followers to worship him, he would find or create a better home for them.

The Flame Demon King requested a Soul Oath. Han Wu had no intention of breaking his promise, so he swore from the depths of his soul to not kill the Flame Demons and to find them a new habitat.

When the Soul Oath took effect, the Flame Demon King returned to the lava pool and retrieved the Fire Ring.

Han Wu took it and froze as he sensed the incredible power inside. The Fire Ring brimmed with fire-type laws woven into its core. He could clearly sense that if he refined it, he could infuse his divine realm with a fire-type law. Once that happened, every unit within it would receive the blessing of fire.

Qin Shuang shared his joy. They rested until Qin Shuang's injuries had fully healed, and then they set out again.

After obtaining the Fire Ring and taking in the Flame Demons, Han Wu had gained much from this trip. He returned to the mine with the good news, ready to expand his influence once more.

He had just entered the mine when the scent of blood and flesh reached him. A bad feeling tightened his chest, so he delved deeper into the mine. As he feared, the place was littered with his subjects' corpses.

He used Detect and found one sole survivor who had hidden beneath a mountain of corpses and survived the massacre.

Han Wu's heart tightened with dread. "What happened here? Tell me quickly."

The survivor choked out, "Goblins... There were so many goblins! They came, defeated Lady Jing and Lord Sun, and took the Transmutation Golem..."

Han Wu clenched his teeth. He knew who had sent the goblins.

"Huang Shengjun, I will kill you!" he snarled.

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Chapter 415 - Junior Sun, You are Deplorable!

[1,132 words]

Chapter 415 - Junior Sun, You are Deplorable!

Back in the Sunset Forest, Huang Shengjun wore his crown and watched Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian bound in silver chains.

“You two, why do you suffer so much just for Han Wu? What did he promise you to win your undying loyalty? Name your price and I will double it,” he offered.

Even bound, Jing Jing radiated the presence of the queen of skeletons through her bones. “I place my faith in my god until the earth cracks and the heavens fall.”

On the other hand, Sun Qingnian smiled bitterly. “Senior Huang, there’s no need to drag me in your fight with Han Wu, right? I’m just a Support. You two can duke it out for all I care. I’ll just sit on the sidelines.”

Huang Shengjun scoffed. “One of you holds a faith in him so pure even the heavens cannot shake it. The other is a silver-tongued bastard with a heart of gold. Han Wu is truly blessed to have you two supporting him. Unfortunately for you both, today isn’t your day.”

He rose and accepted a short sword from Caesar, the former goblin king. The sword looked odd, with a wide guard and a stunted blade, but it was renowned throughout the land as the Nail Sword. According to legend, a famous half-man hero once wielded it alongside a Magic Ring. If one were to rank it as a God weapon, it would stand as a 7-Star God weapon at minimum.

Huang Shengjun brandished it, approached Jing Jing, and pressed the blade to her neck. “Renounce your faith in Han Wu, or I will kill you.”

Jing Jing glared at him but said nothing. She had no intention of obeying. Her attitude made it clear that his threat meant nothing to her, which only infuriated him. He drove the sword into her neck, but no blood spilled.

Jing Jing was a skeleton; her true body consisted of crystalline bones without flesh or blood. Also, the Nail Sword was designed for stabbing rather than cutting, and its narrow blade lacked the force to cut through her bones.

Frustrated, Huang Shengjun turned his attention to Sun Qingnian instead. Unlike Jing Jing, Sun Qingnian had flesh and blood, so he would not escape injury so easily.

As Huang Shengjun placed the Nail Sword to his throat, Sun Qingnian asked bitterly, “Senior Huang, are you really going to kill me? I’m just a Support.”

“You are close to Han Wu, and your growth must be tied to him,” Huang Shengjun said coldly. “I’d rather kill you now and sleep well tonight. You may leave the game now.”

He was about to behead Sun Qingnian when the latter shouted, “Wait, Senior Huang! Let me speak! Just hear me out!”

Curiosity flickered in Huang Shengjun’s eyes. “Speak.”

“My girlfriend is Shi Shan, the head instructor for the third-year sixth class,” Sun Qingnian said, as if delivering his final words.

Huang Shengjun froze, his mind blank for a moment to process it before confusion gave way to disbelief.

“Hold on! Shi Shan, the Blazing War God? She’s your girlfriend?!” Huang Shengjun’s voice trembled with disbelief. It was preposterous. Who could imagine the mighty and famous Blazing War God Shi Shan in a relationship with a first-year student? It defied reason!

“Wait, you’ve got to be joking. She’s old enough to be your mother. Why would she ever go out with you?” Huang Shengjun demanded, his tone laced with suspicion.

Sun Qingnian coughed lightly. “You see, when it comes to love... there’s no logic to it. Everyone has their own taste. Some like energetic and cute junior sisters; some go for the sultry senior ones. Me? I prefer a sweet old baby like her. What’s it to you?”

Huang Shengjun studied him carefully, searching for any sign of deceit. Sun Qingnian’s expression never wavered. No matter how closely Huang Shengjun read his emotions, gestures, or microexpressions, everything pointed to one conclusion: he was telling the truth. That also meant that Sun Qingnian’s girlfriend was indeed Shi Shan, a true God twice his age and ten times more powerful than Huang Shengjun.

Huang Shengjun swallowed hard. After a long pause, he lowered the sword from Sun Qingnian’s neck. “If you’re already in a relationship with Shi Shan, why are you still hanging around with Han Wu? You could just find one of her students and live in luxury.”

He still hadn't given up on driving a wedge between Sun Qingnian and Han Wu.

Sun Qingnian shook his head. “My darling has already prepared plenty of resources to help me ascend into a God. The only reason I'm in this game right now is to play. And as for Han Wu, he’s my best friend. Playing with him is just more enjoyable.”

Listening to him, Huang Shengjun realized that Sun Qingnian definitely possessed resources that eclipsed his own. Two years of effort had still left him inferior in that regard, and the realization burned through him with frustration.

“You deplorable scum!” he spat.

Sun Qingnian remained calm. “People have called me that before. You won’t be the first, or the last.”

Huang Shengjun looked at Sun Qingnian’s loathsome face and almost cleaved him in half. Even if he didn’t kill him, he wanted to castrate that bastard out of spite. Then, he

recalled that Sun Qingnian was only present through a clone. The real Sun Qingnian would remain untouched, and striking now would only offend Shi Shan. That was a risk he couldn't afford. Ultimately, he could only swallow his fury and stand down.

"Senior Huang, it seems that you can't kill me," Sun Qingnian said with a mocking smile. "Might as well let me go. Don't worry, I won't rat you out, and I definitely won't ask my darling to avenge me."

Sun Qingnian's slick tone only fanned Huang Shengjun's anger. "Shut up!"

"Fine." Sun Qingnian knew when to stop and fell silent for the time being.

Huang Shengjun looked at the two captives and sighed. He couldn't kill them, and using them as bargaining chips wasn't an option for now. Still, the operation hadn't been a loss. Along with capturing the two, he had seized Han Wu's Transmutation Golem and all the lesser golems. It was a satisfying haul.

"I wonder what kind of face Han Wu will make when he sees his mine stripped bare," Huang Shengjun muttered. Nothing pleased him more than Han Wu's misery.

"I should test the Transmutation Golem's power. The gnomes have been pestering me for ages to return it, offering any price just to get it back. Why should I hand it over? I'll take it with me instead. What a bunch of idiots," he mumbled and walked toward the golem's resting place.

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[1,092 words]

Chapter 416 - Recruiting Smog

Han Wu and Qin Shuang didn't rush toward Sunset Forest, where Huang Shengjun was. Han Wu knew that Huang Shengjun's goblin army must be powerful to have crushed the mine's soldiers so easily. Charging in without a plan would be suicide. The two of them alone stood no chance; they needed reinforcements.

Han Wu knew many of the factions in Middle Realm, but only three had the power to aid him. The first was the Flame Demons, the second was Rivertown and its citizens, and the third was the gold Great Dragon that lived alone in the dwarven fortress.

Unfortunately, the Flame Demons' strength came from their fiery terrain. Without lava and fire, their combat strength would plummet. Even the Flame Demon King would be affected, so Han Wu ruled them out.

He then considered summoning some powerful helpers from Rivertown, such as Bart and Akanzor. Both were elite human warriors who served him with absolute loyalty, yet his most promising choice for an ally would be Smog.

However, there was a problem. Smog would have readily agreed to help him seek revenge if Han Wu and Jing Jing hadn't forced his hand the last time with the Black Arrow. Because of that grudge, Han Wu could no longer be sure of Smog's goodwill.

Nevertheless, Han Wu made his decision and led Qin Shuang to the vault where Smog resided.

As soon as Smog sensed his presence, he roared, "Defier, why are you in my domain? Get out!"

Smog's rage still burned from their last encounter, but Han Wu desperately needed his help and had no choice but to try. Composing himself, he stepped forward with a practiced smile. "O Great Smog, I come bearing a gift."

The word *gift*

softened Smog's fury, if only slightly. "Defier, what are you offering me? Is it the little girl behind you? She looks quite appetizing."

Qin Shuang tensed, ready to fight if the dragon made a move toward her.

Han Wu shook his head. "No, no. She's a friend. You can't eat her."

"Then what is it? Gold? Treasures? Powerful God equipment?" Smog rattled off possibilities.

Han Wu had tried to guess Smog's favorite, and his first assumption proved right as Smog named gold first. Now that Han Wu knew this, he declared, "I came to offer you gold."

Smog's eyes lit up at the word. Even though his vault already overflowed with gold, his greed was insatiable.

"Where is it? Give it to me," Smog demanded, his voice trembling with anticipation.

Han Wu forced a smile and pointed to the melted gold on the ground.

"Defier, are you trying to offer me my own gold?" Smog snapped, fury flaring in his eyes. Golden fire pooled in his jaws, ready to incinerate Han Wu on the spot.

“Wait, Great Smog! Please, hear me out.” Han Wu waved his arm to stop Smog. “I’m not offering ordinary gold. I’ve come to present you with the finest kind. I will turn your gold into Radiant Ingots!”

At that, Smog snuffed out the flames in his jaws. As a dragon obsessed with gold, he knew exactly what Radiant Ingots were: the purest, most valuable form of gold. Their worth far surpassed ordinary gold, hundreds of times over, and they were prized materials in high-level crafting. If Han Wu could transform all the gold in the vault into Radiant Ingots, Smog would consider forgiving Han Wu’s threat.

“If you deceive me again, I’ll kill you, even if you are the Defier!” Smog warned.

Without the Black Arrow here, Smog reigned as the strongest life form in the Middle Realm and was more than capable of tearing Han Wu apart.

Han Wu sighed. With Merge, transmuting regular gold into Radiant Ingots wasn’t difficult, though his power had limits. He activated Merge and selected the piles of gold on the ground. At his current level, he could only refine a third of it at a time.

Before long, the selected gold started shrinking. Under Smog’s watchful gaze, the Radiant Ingot took shape before his eyes. It measured only a cubic meter, yet its worth far exceeded that of a house made entirely of gold.

Smog snatched up the Radiant Ingot and licked it like a dog with a bone, eyes gleaming with greed. Lost in delight, he kept running his tongue over the glowing metal clutched in his claws before turning to Han Wu. “Defier, please turn all the gold into Radiant Ingots.”

Han Wu could tell that Smog no longer harbored any anger toward him, so he merged the remaining gold. He used up all three of his daily Merge chances, transmuting the gold into three cubes. The three Radiant Ingots looked small, but their value far surpassed that of the gold they had once been.

As the last of the gold merged, the other treasures that had been buried beneath it were laid bare. Han Wu spotted an array of powerful pieces of equipment scattered across the floor.

This was the fortress of the dwarves, a race famed for their mastery in forging. Naturally, the equipment stored in this vault would represent their greatest creations.

Han Wu could sense that the strongest among them rivaled 8-Star God equipment, yet he didn’t take any. Though his feud with Smog had ended, that didn’t grant him the right to claim the dragon’s treasure.

Smog greedily licked the Radiant Ingots, and with each swipe of his tongue, the golden scales along his body gleamed brighter. He was absorbing the Radiant Ingots' essence to improve his strength.

Han Wu stared in astonishment at the tiny Radiant Ingots clutched in Smog's claws. Compared to his massive body, they looked no larger than sugar cubes. At that rate, Smog would consume them within days.

Han Wu decided to use that hunger to his advantage. "Great Smog, I need your help right now. If you agree, I'll create more Radiant Ingots for you."

At the promise of more ingots, Smog's eyes gleamed with interest. "Defier, give me enough Radiant Ingots, and I will do anything you ask!"

Relief and excitement welled in Han Wu. At last, he understood what drove Smog. With enough Radiant Ingots, he could not only request the dragon's aid but also trade for other treasures.

If I gather enough Radiant Ingots, he thought, could I trade for that strange diamond too? And what about the equipment crafted by the fallen dwarf forgemasters? Their techniques are lost to time, but I might rediscover them through their work, he thought.

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[1,222 words]

Chapter 417 - Skeleton Legion

Deep within the Sunset Forest, Huang Shengjun was commanding his millions of goblins to scour the land for ore veins to feed the Transmutation Golem.

It was already close to an upgrade, and with the gathered ores, Huang Shengjun finally completed the process. The Transmutation Golem unlocked a new function: it could now equip the lesser golems with Light Blades for melee combat.

Eager to test the Light Blade, Huang Shengjun manufactured a new lesser golem. The results astonished him. The weapon was made from pure Light Energy that allowed it to effortlessly phase past physical defenses and cut through nearly any solid material with ease.

With the Light Blades, the lesser golems' combat power had increased at least fivefold. Combined with their Magic Cannons, their overall strength was on par with a Lord life form.

As long as he could provide the Transmutation Golem with enough ore, it could manufacture 100 lesser golems a day without any issues. Given enough time, Huang Shengjun's power would grow without limit.

Huang Shengjun was so excited that he almost quit the game on the spot, eager to bring the Transmutation Golem with him. This prize alone was enough to make leaving worthwhile, but his ambition stretched further. He wanted to find a Magic Ring as well. They were the Middle Realm's crown jewels, and he refused to leave until he found one.

He was already forming a plan. Once he had 10,000 lesser golems, he would attack the other factions, crush them with brute force, and seize every treasure they possessed.

He knew that the Will of the Middle Realm had already vanished, leaving every faction on the edge of collapse. None could stop his lesser golems from trampling their kingdoms into dust. If by chance someone tried, he could simply order his tens of millions of goblins to finish the job.

Huang Shengjun's pulse quickened as he pictured himself ruling the Middle Realm's entire southern region. "I will claim the Magic Rings and the lost treasures. No one can stop me!"

Just then, his most trusted subject, the former goblin king, entered with a report.

"My lord," Caesar said, bowing low. "Four humans have entered the Sunset Forest and killed many goblins."

"Four humans?" Huang Shengjun frowned in confusion. He used his own Divine Powers and projected his consciousness into a goblin near the site of the attack. Through its eyes, he saw Han Wu, Qin Shuang, Akanzor, and Bart killing the goblins on the frontline.

They were formidable, but far too few. The four of them stood against Huang Shengjun's tens of millions of goblins. Even if the goblins offered no resistance, the humans would need years to wipe them all out.

Besides, Huang Shengjun's Divine Power had enhanced his goblins' fertility numerous times over. With so many of them breeding, hundreds of thousands were born each day. Then, through the power of Quality in Numbers, those newborns matured at an astonishing pace and quickly became battle-ready warriors. The four were killing too slowly, while the goblins replaced their losses with ease.

Huang Shengjun scoffed and issued his order. "Let them try to break through our defenses. Send more goblins to block their path and make sure to set traps for anything that can fly. Don't let them take a single step into our territory."

"Yes, my lord!" Caesar answered and hurried off to carry out his orders.

On the other side, Han Wu and his companions fought like madmen, cutting down goblins by the thousands. More than 10,000 had already fallen, yet each time they cleared a wave, another popped out to block their advance. Of the four, only Han Wu still fought at full strength; the others were already exhausted.

“Han Wu, there’s no meaning in killing them like this,” Qin Shuang said between breaths. “We need to storm their base and strike directly.”

Han Wu shook his head. “Huang Shengjun isn’t that careless. I’m certain he’s stationed powerful goblins inside, waiting to ambush us. If we rush in now, we will walk straight into his trap.”

Qin Shuang whispered, “But we have Smog’s help. The goblins can’t stop him.”

Han Wu smiled faintly. “The goblins can’t, but the Transmutation Golem might.”

Qin Shuang froze as she recalled that Huang Shengjun had stolen the Transmutation Golem. “Then what should we do? Keep slaughtering the cannon fodder? It’s a waste of time.”

“Have you forgotten the kind of warfare I excel at?” Han Wu asked.

“You mean the self-detonating locusts? No, wait. You’re talking about the skeleton legion!” She still remembered how unstoppable the skeletons became once their numbers grew. Much of Han Wu’s past success had come from commanding them.

Han Wu nodded. “We need to kill as many goblins as we can. The more we kill, the stronger our chances of victory.”

Qin Shuang returned the nod and hurled herself into the fight, lightning crackling from her palm.

Akanzor and Bart didn’t fully understand what the two meant, but they knew one thing: they had to keep killing goblins. Side by side, the two men cut down every goblin in their path, even keeping count to see who would claim the higher kill total.

The battle raged past midnight. Akanzor and Bart were already so tired that they couldn’t move a single muscle, yet Han Wu and Qin Shuang were still fighting relentlessly.

Corpses littered the ground in mounds, and Han Wu estimated more than 100,000 goblin corpses. It was time for him to act. He transformed into a skeleton and used his Skills to raise the dead.

One after another, tiny skeletons clawed their way out of their former flesh. Within moments, there were thousands of them.

Han Wu used Merge and fused them into ten Skeleton Knights that could summon more skeletons themselves. With their help, the remaining corpses transformed in a flash. Once the 100,000 corpses were reanimated, the skeletal army charged forward as one.

The skeletons didn't fear death. They hurled themselves into the goblin ranks. The goblins fought savagely, smashing bones with their weapons, but each fallen skeleton soon got reanimated and returned to battle. On the other hand, the goblins had only one life; once slain, they rose again as part of the undead army.

Akanzor and Bart could only stare in disbelief. The sheer horror of the sight left them wondering if they could ever survive such an army. That terror hardened their faith in Han Wu.

Qin Shuang didn't stay idle. She transformed into a Thunder Sparrow, soared into the air, and rained lightning on the goblins below. Her strikes quickened Han Wu's summoning, and within three hours, the goblin frontlines collapsed. Over 500,000 skeletons stormed into the Sunset Forest.

Han Wu used Merge once more, combining 167,700 skeletons into a tiny skeleton. It looked fragile and unassuming, but anyone who dared to underestimate it would pay a heavy price.

This was the skeleton race's infamous Osteomancer, and its current strength had reached the rank of a Lord life form. With a mere gesture, countless bone fragments congregated around it to form its body. In the next instant, a twenty-five-meter-tall giant rose to its full height, and the earth quaked beneath its steps.

The Sunset Forest now faced a calamity unlike anything it had ever known.

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[1,336 words]

Chapter 418 - Powerful Smog

Huang Shengjun woke to a deafening commotion. Although darkness cloaked the camp, he rushed to the window of his wooden hut and saw a massive bone giant tearing through the encampment. At the same time, he sensed numerous strands of faith snapping between him and his goblins. They were dying fast!

"Damn it," he muttered, frustration burning through his shock. "To think you could still use your skeleton legion tactic even though you are a clone. Han Wu, is your core race the locusts or the skeletons?"

He knew he had to stop the skeletons immediately. If not, their numbers would swell again, and his side would suffer devastating losses.

Huang Shengjun commanded his lesser golems to move out and fire their Magic Cannons at the bone giant. Meanwhile, he ordered the surviving goblins to destroy their fallen comrades' corpses to prevent them from being turned into skeletons, then fall back.

The skeletons soon ran short of corpses to claim, and their expansion rate slowed down. One by one, they fell under the bombardment of the lesser golems' Magic Cannons.

Han Wu understood the situation all too well. Those lesser golems had once belonged to him, and now one of his strongest weapons was turned against him. The irony was unbearable!

Thankfully, he knew their fatal weakness. It lay in their maker, the Transmutation Golem. Destroying it would render every lesser golem useless.

Han Wu was certain that Huang Shengjun didn't know this. He pressed his skeletons to endure the Magic Cannons' barrage. At the same time, he sent Akanzor and Bart to infiltrate the camp to rescue Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian. He was convinced that Huang Shengjun hadn't killed them.

Then he took to the air with Qin Shuang and headed straight for the camp's heart. He would draw Huang Shengjun's attention so the two humans could save his friends.

When they finally came face to face, Han Wu and Huang Shengjun didn't raise their weapons. Instead, the air between them was unexpectedly calm, and they greeted each other like old friends.

"Senior Huang, we will meet again."

"Junior Han, your Transmutation Golem is very useful. I like it," Huang Shengjun said with a shameless grin.

"Oh? Thank you for the praise. The Transmutation Golem is my treasure. I'm rather heartbroken that you stole it from me." Han Wu's tone turned dangerously cold.

Huang Shengjun sneered. "Heartbroken? Then come and take it, if you can."

"Don't mind if I do. I won't allow you to steal it again."

At this point, they were like water and fire. If Han Wu succeeded in taking it back, there was no chance he would hand it over again.

Huang Shengjun said nothing, but Caesar, standing at his side, was visibly seething. He couldn't tolerate Han Wu's insolent tone toward Huang Shengjun.

To Caesar, Huang Shengjun was his god. Any slight against him was a personal insult. He drew the blade from his waist, and flames burst to life along its edge. The air around them grew several degrees hotter as well.

Caesar was not only Huang Shengjun's loyal subject but also a High Lord life form that could match Han Wu, even when he used his True Demon King Transformation.

"Those who dare disrespect my god will die!" Caesar roared, summoning a blazing meteor to attack Han Wu.

Han Wu's eyes lit with excitement when he saw the former goblin king use a fire-attribute Skill. The Fire Ring on his finger gleamed a vivid red, glowing with greed. The meteor was a gift!

He lifted his hand, and the Fire Ring absorbed every trace of flame from the descending meteor, converting it into energy. Deprived of its fire, the meteor crumbled midair and caused no harm at all.

Both Huang Shengjun and Caesar froze in shock. Huang Shengjun knew the extent of Caesar's power. Even if Caesar wasn't the strongest life form in the Middle Realm, he was still among its few true elites.

How did Han Wu destroy the meteor so easily? Even I can't do that. Han Wu's Fire Ring immediately caught Huang Shengjun's eye. After absorbing the meteor's flame, the ruby burned a vivid crimson that was impossible to miss.

Huang Shengjun focused his senses and immediately sensed something extraordinary about the ring. He then exclaimed, "Wait! Could that be a Magic Ring? It must be!"

Excitement coursed through him. The Magic Rings were the very reason he had come to the Middle Realm. He would trade anything for even one.

Fixing his greedy gaze on the Fire Ring, he said, "Junior Han, give me that Magic Ring, and I'll withdraw from this game at once. I'll hand you everything I own right now. With my resources, you could rule the entire Middle Realm. What do you say?"

Han Wu chuckled. "No."

"Han Wu, don't be cocky," Huang Shengjun snapped. "I command tens of millions of goblins and the Transmutation Golem itself. What can you possibly do against that?"

Despite his bravado, Huang Shengjun remained cautious. He feared that Han Wu would quit the game and take the Magic Ring with him, leaving Huang Shengjun empty-handed.

Han Wu had no such plan. The Fire Ring was priceless, but he knew that another Magic Ring was hidden within the Transmutation Golem's core. He had no intention of giving that up either.

"Good question. I will show you my true strength then," Han Wu declared.

He pulled a short flute from his pocket. It was the Dragon Flute, a gift from Smog. All he had to do was to blow it, and Smog would appear beside him no matter where he was.

When the final note faded, the space behind Han Wu split apart, and Smog burst through the rift with a roar.

Though only a few days had passed, Huang Shengjun could tell that Smog was at least 20% stronger since their last encounter. The improvement came from Han Wu's Radiant Ingots, which proved to be the dragon's ideal source of nourishment.

After growing stronger, Smog had been thinking about how to repay Han Wu. He decided to handle the threat himself. The instant he appeared, he released his draconic pressure.

It wasn't an attack, but it served as a powerful deterrent. When the roaring gold dragon emerged, panic swept through the goblins. Most collapsed in terror, and the few that remained conscious were so stunned by Smog's presence that they convulsed and wet themselves.

Huang Shengjun realized his predicament the moment Smog appeared. He couldn't defeat them with Caesar alone and had no choice but to summon the Transmutation Golem.

The fifty-meter-tall golem appeared before Smog and Han Wu. Huang Shengjun leapt into the cockpit and activated both the Light Blade and Magic Cannon.

"Han Wu, even with the gold dragon by your side, you'll never defeat me! The Transmutation Golem is invincible!" Huang Shengjun boasted.

Smog scoffed at his arrogance. "Invincible? Are you sure about that?"

With a powerful beat of his wings, he lunged forward and drove his claws into the Transmutation Golem. Its reinforced shell shredded like paper under their force.

Huang Shengjun swung the Light Blade and fired the Magic Cannon at Smog in desperation, but both attacks merely bounced harmlessly off Smog's scales. He could

only watch as Smog ripped the Transmutation Golem's core and tossed it toward Han Wu as if discarding a piece of junk.

"There's the core you wanted," Smog said, his tone brimming with pride.

Han Wu froze as the core rolled to his feet. He hadn't expected Smog to deal with the Transmutation Golem so easily. It had happened too fast!

"Wait, that's not what I meant. Who told you to tear it apart? I still needed the Transmutation Golem!" he cried.

No sooner had he spoken than the coreless golem exploded. Every lesser golem froze mid-movement before collapsing into useless heaps of metal.

Huang Shengjun dragged himself out of the Transmutation Golem's wreckage, staring in disbelief. He was finished!

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[1,174 words]

Chapter 419 - Forced Withdrawal

Without the Transmutation Golem and the lesser golem army, Huang Shengjun stood no chance of winning with just his goblins, especially when the gold Great Dragon, the strongest life form in the Middle Realm, fought alongside Han Wu.

Despair consumed him until Caesar stepped forward and unleashed a torrent of flame so fierce it scorched his own body. He was burning himself alive to stop Smog.

"God, please escape now! I will buy you time!" Caesar shouted as the flames around him surged higher, devouring everything nearby.

Huang Shengjun knew that Caesar couldn't summon fire of that magnitude unless he was consuming his own life force. He didn't know what to feel. He had recruited these goblins only to plunder treasures, yet Caesar and the others had worshiped him as their god.

To honor Caesar's sacrifice, Huang Shengjun turned and fled as fast as he could. He had to escape Smog's detection range at any cost.

Han Wu had no intention of letting him go. The flames Caesar unleashed at the cost of his own life force were powerful enough to make even Han Wu cautious, but he still

possessed the Fire Ring. As one of the Middle Realm's greatest treasures, it could suppress any fire-type Skill.

He thrust his hand into the raging inferno, and the Fire Ring absorbed every trace of Caesar's flames. When the flames vanished, only Caesar's withered body remained. He stared at Han Wu in disbelief and resentment before collapsing lifelessly.

Smog soared upward, captured Huang Shengjun in seconds, and hurled him down before Han Wu's feet. A moment ago, Huang Shengjun had believed himself invincible. Now, he lay defeated.

"Senior Huang, it seems that I've won again today," Han Wu remarked.

Huang Shengjun's entire body trembled with rage. He had lost too many loyal units, and hatred burned so fiercely in him that he wanted nothing more than to kill Han Wu.

Han Wu exhaled softly. "I won't provoke you any further, Senior Huang. Farewell."

With a single swing of Ju Que, he severed Huang Shengjun's neck. Even as his clone's head fell, Huang Shengjun's eyes were still filled with anger and unwillingness to accept defeat.

Both the current and former goblin kings were dead. Leaderless and surrounded by skeletons, the remaining goblins faced inevitable extinction.

Meanwhile, Akanzor and Bart completed their mission, successfully rescuing Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian.

Han Wu had not only triumphed over a powerful enemy but had also obtained a giant skeleton army. Once the last of the goblins were turned into skeletons, the undead plague would sweep across the Middle Realm.

Han Wu could hardly wait to take control of the Middle Realm's entire southern region. Just then, a string of notifications echoed in his mind.

"Student Han Wu, the system has detected that your current strength has far exceeded the tolerance of the Middle Realm. The system will forcibly terminate your session and initiate withdrawal."

"Student Han Wu, you have ten minutes to consolidate your items and exit the game."

The two notifications astonished Han Wu. He had just acquired his strongest piece of equipment, and now they wanted to throw him out? It was too sudden!

He was on the verge of taking full control of the entire southern region when the system asked him to stop. He couldn't accept it, so he protested, "Wait! I reject that. I want to continue the game."

"The graduating seniors of Imperial College prepared this game as a special event to thank their juniors. Student Han Wu, you have already obtained substantial rewards. Please do not push further."

"As compensation, Imperial College will permit you to bring all of the units under your command back to your divine realm. Do you agree?"

The notification voice was cold and mechanical, yet beneath it Han Wu could almost hear the grinding of teeth. Clearly, this concession was the greatest leniency the system could offer to preserve his gains.

Han Wu had no choice but to yield. The system was right; this was a special event, and he should let others earn their own treasures. Trying to claim every treasure for himself would only invite trouble.

As such, he nodded. "I agree."

At that moment, a ten-minute timer appeared before him.

Time was short, so he quickly explained the situation to his companions. "I am being forced to withdraw from the game in ten minutes. My current factions are Rivertown, the Flame Demons, and the skeletons. I'll leave the skeletons here under Jing Jing's command and take everything else with me.

"I also have powerful God equipment that could help you. Take it and collect as many treasures as you can once I'm gone. Don't waste my effort."

When he finished giving instructions, only three minutes remained.

Han Wu turned to look at Smog. The Great Gold Dragon wasn't his subject and counted as little more than an acquaintance. Once he withdrew from the game, returning here would be nearly impossible. Thus, he had only three minutes left to persuade Smog to come with him. If he succeeded, gaining another Great Dragon would strengthen his divine realm immeasurably.

"Great Smog, you must know this entire place will soon disappear into the void without the Will of the Middle Realm sustaining it. It's not wise to remain here. Would you consider joining my divine realm?"

Smog looked at Han Wu and scoffed. The Great Dragons cherished freedom above all else, and the gold ones yearned for it most of all. He would suffocate from boredom if he joined Han Wu's divine realm.

Smog shook his head. “No, I won’t.”

Then his eyes gleamed with curiosity. “Unless... is there anything fun to do in your divine realm?”

Sensing a chance, Han Wu began describing the rare resources within his divine realm, emphasizing the abundance of gold.

Smog rolled his eyes, unimpressed. Everything Han Wu mentioned existed in the Middle Realm. He could easily claim it himself.

Seeing his indifference, Han Wu revealed what would truly appeal to a Great Dragon. “I have many female lightning Great Dragons in my divine realm.”

Smog perked up at once. If not for his inability to fly between worlds, Smog would’ve already dragged Han Wu along to visit his divine realm and see those beautiful lightning Great Dragons for himself. Enticed by the offer, Smog officially joined his divine realm, becoming one of the strongest units in it.

Han Wu then sent a long-range voice transmission to Rivertown and the Flame Demons about the imminent transfer. They had one minute to prepare.

When the time expired, Han Wu was thrust into a gate. Two more gates appeared, one in Rivertown and another in the Flame Demons’ cave. The Flame Demons were drawn in at once, while Rivertown’s humans gathered their belongings and rode through the gate on their wagons.

Soon, Han Wu’s divine realm brimmed with newcomers, and he welcomed them warmly. Before doing anything else, he focused on arranging their living spaces to accommodate the growing population.

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[1,136 words]

Chapter 420 - Developing Divine Realm

Rivertown’s humans most closely resembled the Epistians, so Han Wu arranged for them to settle near Epistian City. The dwarves’ territory lay nearby as well. The humans shared a strong bond with the dwarves and possessed exceptional learning abilities.

Han Wu already anticipated the day that they would forge weapons comparable to the Black Arrows.

The Flame Demons were a powerful race. Within the Divine Civilization's ranking system, they ranked as Unique life forms. Because they must live in places filled with lava, Han Wu decided to create new land for them to inhabit.

He spent a lot of Divine Points to purchase volcano terrain for his divine realm. At its edge, he allocated a section and arranged a circle of volcanoes. He then used the Fire Ring to make the volcanoes erupt all at once. Streams of molten rock poured from their peaks, converging in the center to form a blazing caldera.

The Flame Demons could temporarily settle there. Additionally, he would periodically use the Fire Ring as a conduit to trigger smaller eruptions to hasten the caldera's expansion. In time, he expected it to grow into a territory much larger than the lava caverns that the Flame Demons had once called home.

Overjoyed, the Flame Demons reveled in their new habitat. They had assumed that this was the full extent of their reward, but they soon discovered otherwise. To welcome them into his divine realm Han Wu generously gifted them millions of Fire Crystals. Each crystal brimmed with pure Fire Energy that could enhance the intensity and purity of their flames.

As the first to submit to Han Wu, the Flame Demon King received the largest share. It absorbed numerous crystals and advanced its rank within just three realm-days. Now it could control blue flames that burned hotter than regular flames. Its destructive power increased several hundredfold, enough to defeat even a Sage life form within the caldera.

Satisfied with his new champion's strength, Han Wu left the demons to their own affairs and retrieved the Transmutation Golem's core, which had been heavily damaged by Smog's barbaric extraction. Reconstructing the Transmutation Golem was no longer possible.

Without breaking its outer shell, Han Wu carefully removed the Magic Ring hidden within and called it the Transmutation Ring. Unlike the Fire Ring, this one possessed deeper and more complex powers. It could effortlessly break any object down to its basic elements, then recombine them to create a new item.

After extensive research, Han Wu discovered that the Transmutation Ring's power lay in its ability to disassemble and merge. The concept reminded him of the Refinery in his divine realm and his Divine Power: Merge.

Curious to test their compatibility, he attempted to use Merge, the Magic Ring, and Refinery together. In three realm-months, he succeeded in upgrading the Refinery. The new structure functioned like a complex machine, capable of disassembling and reassembling any item placed inside.

Han Wu named it the Fabricator. All he needed to do was insert a blueprint and the corresponding raw materials, and the Fabricator would continuously produce the item as specified. It sounded simple enough, but its practicality was immense.

Han Wu purchased a wide variety of God equipment blueprints. The materials were inexpensive, but crafting them by hand required enormous effort. With the Fabricator, he could eliminate the entire labor process.

Once he confirmed a blueprint and loaded its materials to the Fabricator, he waited patiently. Before long, it produced a complete piece of God equipment. It lacked a forge master's exquisite touch, but its quality was still high.

More importantly, it was profitable. He had spent three Divine Essence to purchase the blueprint and ten more to purchase enough materials to produce twenty items. Each completed product could sell for one Divine Essence.

His first batch earned him seven Divine Essence in profit. The return on investment for later batches could be as high as 100%, and he could already envision the torrent of Divine Essence flowing into his account.

Still, these were only lower-ranking pieces of God equipment. If he could mass-produce intermediate or high-ranking ones, his profits would skyrocket. It was only a matter of time before he became a billionaire. All he needed to do was keep buying and selling, and he would become as rich as a God King.

It was a nice thought, but he wasn't ready to rest. He had to continue expanding and improving the rest of his divine realm.

Even though the Transmutation Golem's core wasn't functional anymore, it still held research value. The various equations engraved outside and inside it were still useful. The Middle Realm was a fallen civilization that had lost much of its technology. If Han Wu could decipher even part of its mysteries, he could elevate the entire Divine Civilization. With that goal in mind, Han Wu entrusted the core to the Epistians for study.

Ten realm-months passed. After millions of experiments, the Epistian think tank finally deciphered the mystery of one of the equations on the core's outer shell. It described how to animate lifeless matter, granting movement to inanimate objects. It was the fundamental equation for forging golems.

Intrigued, Han Wu commanded the Epistians to test the concept and supplied abundant resources for their research.

In time, the collaboration between the Epistians, Scorching Dwarves, and the humans produced a new type of golem called the Suicidal Spider. It was made from simple materials and could lock onto moving targets. Each Suicidal Spider could carry either a Fire or Lightning Crystal, which they could detonate the moment it reached its mark.

A Suicidal Spider wasn't as strong as a detonating locust, but it had clear advantages. As an inanimate object, it lacked the aura of a living life form and was easy to overlook. Most intelligent life forms instinctively recognized living creatures as threats, yet assumed inanimate objects posed no danger unless they touched them. That assumption made the Suicidal Spiders the perfect weapon against targets like them.

The Suicidal Spiders' birth carried great significance. Han Wu's divine realm would soon gain a new race, the golems, which would become essential to its expansion. Hence, he decided to allocate even more resources to the Epistians so that they could continue their research and create new types of golems.

While Han Wu was busy developing his divine realm, a different kind of battle unfolded at Imperial College.

After getting kicked out of the game, Huang Shengjun immediately leaked news that Han Wu possessed a Magic Ring.

Naturally, the revelation of such a precious treasure spread quickly and drew the attention of many powerful beings, especially once they learned it could control fire. Many Gods and Major Gods who specialized in fire-based attacks personally visited Imperial College to verify the rumors' authenticity.

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[1,295 words]

Chapter 421 - Auction

Han Wu received a summons from his professor and made his way to Xu Hai's office.

"Professor, were you looking for me?" Han Wu had been so absorbed in researching the various golems and their blueprints that he had lost track of everything happening at Imperial College.

Xu Hai could only stare at his student in disbelief. Hard work was admirable, but isolating oneself for too long could stunt one's growth.

"Han Wu, rumors about you obtaining the Fire Ring have spread everywhere," Xu Hai said. "I need you to be honest with me. Is it true?"

Xu Hai couldn't hide his curiosity. The Magic Ring was a treasure that even God Kings coveted. If it had really fallen into Han Wu's hands, then it was no blessing but a disaster waiting to happen.

Han Wu knew the rumor's source. Only Huang Shengjun had known about the Fire Ring. Thankfully, Huang Shengjun was unaware of the presence of another Magic Ring within the Transmutation Golem's core.

Han Wu sighed. "Yes, it is true. I have obtained the Fire Ring. It has the power to control all forms of flame."

Xu Hai's eyes widened in surprise. He had never imagined that his own student would surpass him. With just a clone in the Middle Realm, Han Wu had managed to discover the Magic Ring, a treasure coveted even by the God Kings.

Once Xu Hai confirmed the truth, he spoke with a hint of regret. "Han Wu, I hate to say this, but you can't keep it. Too many people are eyeing it. The Fire Aspect is one of the four fundamental Divine Aspects, and because it's so common, numerous Gods wield fire.

"To them, the Fire Ring is a priceless treasure. If you hold on to it, you will become their target. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

"I do," Han Wu replied. "But I won't give it up for nothing."

Han Wu's affinity leaned toward darkness, so the Fire Ring wasn't particularly useful to him. Still, his Flame Demons needed it to grow; without it their survival would be at risk. He couldn't just abandon his race's development just to avoid danger.

Xu Hai felt some relief when he heard Han Wu's response. "Who said I wanted you to give it up for free? This is a special treasure, and you can trade it for many top-ranking treasures. And since you're its rightful owner, you have the right to raise the price. Understand?"

Han Wu nodded. "Then I'm glad to have your support. The Fire Ring is one of a kind, so its value should reflect that. It would be reasonable for me to ask for treasures that can help nurture units of different attributes."

Xu Hai chuckled, impressed by Han Wu's cunning. "Not bad. Then I will use my authority to hold an auction for the Fire Ring. Just tell me what you need. If anyone tries to contact you in secret, you can push everything to me."

Han Wu understood that Xu Hai was offering to act as his shield, drawing all hostility toward himself instead. He quickly bowed in gratitude. "Thank you, Professor!"

"There's no need to thank me. This is my duty." Xu Hai was actually pleased to have a student that grasped his intentions so easily. After seeing Han Wu off, he used his authority to release a statement on the Imperial College information board about the Fire Ring's auction.

The notice immediately became the hottest topic across the college.

“Holy shit! Which God managed to get a Magic Ring? Please take me as your student!”

“A Magic Ring is something even God Kings desire, and they are selling it? That’s insane.”

“Are you stupid? Keeping the Magic Ring after the news got out would be a death sentence.”

“Everyone’s after it. I heard that a Major God skilled in assassinations has found out who the student is and plans to kill them for it.”

“*Sigh...* Even though the student will lose the Magic Ring, the resources from the auction will be enough for them to become a Major God. I envy them so much.”

The entire campus buzzed with excitement and speculation.

Before long, word of the auction reached many Gods’ ears. Once they confirmed that the Fire Ring existed, many fire-wielding Gods rushed to register for the auction.

Within a single day, more than 1,000 individuals had signed up. Among them were 900 Gods, 100 Major Gods, and even a newly promoted God King who wielded fire. Every one of them would attend the auction in person.

Imperial College threw its full support behind the event once they learned of the God King’s arrival. They had to ensure the auction was a grand affair worthy of his presence. They couldn’t afford the slightest embarrassment in front of a God King.

Hence, under the chancellor’s orders, every professor was required to contribute one or two of their best treasures to be auctioned. What had begun as an event centered around the Fire Ring soon evolved into a grand auction featuring many other treasures too.

Upon learning how extensive the auction had become, Gods who had little interest in the Fire Ring came to register as well. Even Xu Hai hadn’t anticipated that it would grow to such a scale.

The confirmation that three God Kings would personally attend placed it far beyond his ability to manage alone. Thankfully, Imperial College’s backing guaranteed that everything would proceed smoothly.

When the long-awaited day finally arrived, the college mobilized a large number of students to serve as ushers and welcome the guests. Those without assigned duties could only stand outside of the college and watch as beams of divine light descended from the sky.

Each beam of light signified the arrival of a God, and more than 300 had gathered so far.

Once all the Gods and Major Gods had taken their seats, three colossal pillars of divine light appeared above the auction hall.

Their Divine Authorities enveloped the entire Imperial College like a hurricane, drawing the awed gazes of students and guests toward the arrival of the three God Kings.

The first was the newly ascended Blazing God King, who radiated scorching heat. Fire was his element, and his mastery over it far surpassed that of his peers. The second was the True Martial God King, cloaked in a powerful aura and renowned for his unmatched prowess in martial arts.

Han Wu spotted True Martial among the honored guests and immediately suppressed his presence. In the past, True Martial had invested immense resources to unlock the Origin of Mutation's seal, only for Han Wu to seize it by a stroke of luck.

Furious, True Martial had sent a subordinate to kidnap Han Wu, but the latter managed to escape halfway and returned to Imperial College. In the end, the college intervened and forced True Martial to offer compensation to Han Wu instead.

Han Wu worried whether True Martial still held a grudge. His unease deepened when the third God King arrived. It was none other than the God King of Light.

Light's faction had many students from Imperial College, and those who worshiped the light cheered with excitement at his arrival.

Han Wu concealed himself even further. In the past, when he was chosen to participate in Life and Death's game, he had attempted to join the faction of Life and Light. Instead, the system assigned him to the side of the Death and Darkness, where he ultimately emerged victorious.

That outcome had placed him at odds with Light as well. Out of the three God Kings, he had offended two. Han Wu sighed inwardly at his luck and did everything he could to remain unnoticed.

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[1,271 words]

Chapter 422 - Auction Request

The auction officially commenced with the three God Kings' arrival. As the treasures were brought out one after another, the guests eagerly joined the bidding.

Most of the Gods knew that they couldn't compete with the Major Gods and God Kings in terms of wealth, so few even considered vying for the Fire Ring. Instead, they focused on securing some of the rare treasures that Imperial College was auctioning.

The three God Kings sat upon their thrones and looked at the items, watching the proceedings with keen interest. Even they found themselves tempted by some of the treasures. Anything qualified to appear in an Imperial College auction was bound to be of exceptional quality.

When an 8-Star God equipment appeared, the True Martial God King joined the bidding. The Gods and Major Gods immediately withdrew. However much they desired it, none were foolish enough to risk True Martial's ire. In the end, he won the treasure for an astonishingly low price and looked quite satisfied with the result.

Light offered a cordial smile. "Congratulations on acquiring something to your liking, True Martial."

True Martial replied, "It's just luck. I have to admit, Imperial College's wealth is staggering. They can bring out enough treasures to bankrupt a God King just trying to bid for them."

Light chuckled. "True Martial, you are exaggerating. The resources your faction controls could easily rival theirs."

True Martial sighed. "Those belong to the faction, not to me. Every member in my faction is a greedy bastard. They lose their minds whenever I try to claim anything for myself. It's nothing like your situation, Light."

Light chuckled again, silently agreeing. His faction operated under a different system altogether. He stood at its pinnacle, revered by every Major God and God beneath him. All their offerings went directly to him without fail. In a sense, he could take whatever he desired without needing to ask or announce it. He was quite literally their god.

As they spoke, the newly ascended Blazing God King approached. "Greetings, seniors. May I ask for your advice? I have just ascended and plan to form a faction of my own."

The two God Kings welcomed him warmly and shared what they had learned through hardship. They spoke of the various obstacles they faced when establishing their factions, and Blazing listened intently. After all, their experience had been earned at the cost of a huge amount of Divine Essence.

As time went on, the auction neared its end. The final item, the Fire Ring, was revealed on stage.

Blazing excused himself from the two and turned his full attention to it. The Fire Ring was the reason he had come. To purchase it, he had prepared an obscene amount of Divine Essence, even borrowing from his friends to ensure he had enough.

Xu Hai, who oversaw the auction, stepped forward to explain how the bidding for the Fire Ring would proceed. Unlike the other treasures, the Fire Ring's owner had requested that bidders offer items in exchange rather than Divine Essence.

However, the exchange items came with specific restrictions. Han Wu had already provided Xu Hai with a list of his conditions. According to it, bidders needed to present at least four treasures that could be used by Major Gods to qualify for the exchange.

The first needed to be a fire-type treasure, ideally one compatible with the Flame Demons. The second needed to be tailored for insect races, such as a treasure that could advance a powerful Evolution Path for locusts or a Rank 6 Sacred Object with similar effects. The third needed to be a treasure for the undead, preferably one that improved the skeletons' strength. The fourth needed to be related to martial arts, capable of completing an Evolution Path for races that relied on physical combat.

If multiple bidders offered treasures of comparable value, the one presenting more powerful items would gain the advantage. Xu Hai concluded by stating that the Fire Ring's owner reserved the right to reject any treasures that they found unsatisfactory.

The conditions were so restrictive that many Major Gods grew resentful. They suspected that the owner never intended to part with it at all. Yet none dared to act out while under the watchful eye of Imperial College.

Even Blazing was taken aback. He had come prepared with vast stores of Divine Essence but hadn't expected the bidding to depend on barter.

Finding treasures, especially ones meeting those exact criteria, was nearly impossible on short notice. Still, he refused to give up. The Magic Rings were legendary even within the Divine Civilization, and this one aligned perfectly with his element.

If he could claim it, his strength would rise by at least 20%. That was more than enough firepower to solidify his standing as a newly ascended God King and give him the strength to found his own faction.

Determined to seize the opportunity, he stood up and addressed the crowd. "I am Lie Zhentian, and I must obtain the Fire Ring at all costs. I ask to borrow your treasures for the time being. Whatever you lend me, I will repay twice over in the future. I hope everyone can lend their support."

Everyone was stunned. None of them had ever seen a God King lower his head to plead with those beneath him. Many of the Gods who had no chance of obtaining the

Fire Ring but possessed one or two treasures that fit the conditions started stepping forward to offer them to Blazing.

“Lord Blazing God King, I once fought an intense battle in another civilization and almost died. By chance, I obtained a powerful fire treasure. I hope it will be able to help you.”

“Lord Blazing God King, I managed to purchase a treasure fit for the insect race from a mysterious merchant during my travels in another civilization. I hope it serves your purpose.”

“Lord Blazing God King, I have an undead treasure that has followed me for many years. I am willing to part ways with it today, if you’ll allow me to join your faction once it’s established.”

“Oh, Lord Blazing God King, I possess an Epiphany Tree capable of assisting the races to improve their martial arts. Please accept it.”

“Lord Blazing God King, my son has the Fire Aspect. I hope you can accept him into your faction, even if it means assigning him a low-level position. In return, I am willing to part ways with a Rank 6 Sacred Object that can help the insect race grow stronger.”

Many offered their treasures to Blazing. Sensing that the Fire Ring was already within his grasp, he quickly examined the items and selected four that suited Han Wu’s conditions.

While plenty supported Blazing, just as many despised him. Those who opposed him had the Fire Aspect and specialized in using flames as well. To them, the Fire Ring was equally important. If they could obtain it, they would even have a chance to dethrone the current Blazing God King one day.

Still, Blazing had received an impressive number of treasures, many of exceptional quality, which gave him a clear advantage. With so many powerful offerings, his chances of securing the Fire Ring were remarkably high.

Meanwhile, several Major Gods whispered among themselves, conspiring to combine their resources. They all signed Soul Oaths agreeing that, should they obtain the Fire Ring, they would share it equally.

In the end, Xu Hai received eighteen lists of treasures from eighteen different individuals. He discreetly passed them to Han Wu, allowing him to make the final choice.

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[1,096 words]

Chapter 423 - Treasure List

Han Wu smiled as he studied the treasures on the list. Even though he would lose the Fire Ring, an item that even God Kings valued, he stood to gain a wealth of treasures that could strengthen his divine realm's races.

He didn't mind the trade. After discarding the less appealing lists, only two remained. One of them belonged to the Blazing God King, and the four treasures it offered were very rare.

The first was the Magma Flame that could complete an Evolution Path for fire-type units. The second, the Erok Nest, could nurture insects with ten different traits. The third, the Ancient Bone, could improve the skeletons' quality tenfold. The last was the Epiphany Tree, which could help the units that practiced martial arts to break through their current limits.

Each treasure was invaluable and suited Han Wu's needs. When he turned to the second list, he noticed that its treasures were slightly weaker in quality but far greater in quantity. In addition to the four treasures Han Wu had listed, they offered six more treasures that met his conditions.

In total, the second list contained ten treasures, enough to tempt even Major Gods. Although it was not as refined as Blazing's list, ten treasures were still an extraordinary offer!

Han Wu selected the list with the most treasures and quietly sent it back to Xu Hai. When the latter received it, he immediately understood that Han Wu had made his decision.

He was about to announce the result when Blazing hurriedly stood up. "Wait, I forgot to include an additional list."

The Gods and Major Gods who opposed Blazing reacted with open frustration.

"Can Imperial College please uphold their own rules? Since when can someone raise their bid right before the results are announced?"

"Hey, don't be jealous. The Blazing God King can do that because he can afford to do so. This is a win-win situation for everyone."

"Get lost, you bootlicker!"

As the hall filled with shouts and complaints, Xu Hai quietly contacted the Imperial College's higher-ups for their decision. They all agreed that Blazing's willingness to increase his bid only showed greater support for their auction. With that reasoning, they approved his request.

Han Wu was thrilled to hear that Blazing intended to add more treasures to bid for the Fire Ring. He couldn't wait to see what kind of treasures they would be.

When he received the supplementary sheet, he examined it carefully. Blazing had offered six additional treasures, each one valuable enough to drive a Major God insane. Yet they all shared a single trait: every item improved anything related to fire. Two of them were pure fire-elemental treasures.

As Han Wu read through the descriptions, he realized that Blazing had dismantled some of the treasures from his own divine realm.

How could a God King's treasures be ordinary? Even though Han Wu didn't have an affinity with fire, the allure was impossible to ignore. Ultimately, he chose Blazing's list to exchange for the Fire Ring.

Xu Hai announced the results, and Blazing successfully obtained the Fire Ring.

Blazing leapt into the air, thrilled to have gained what he needed. Even though the price he had paid for it was steep, he knew it was worth it the moment his fingers brushed against the Fire Ring.

The item transfers concluded swiftly under Xu Hai's supervision. Immediately after, Blazing slipped the Fire Ring onto his finger and admired it with satisfaction. A surge of power coursed through him, reaffirming that every sacrifice had been justified.

After receiving the ten precious treasures, Han Wu was quietly celebrated. He quickly returned to his divine realm and began using the treasures to improve his units, starting with the Flame Demons.

Since the Flame Demons had to relinquish the precious Fire Ring, it was only fair that they received the largest portion of the treasures.

With several fire-type treasures in his possession, Han Wu quickly went to work. He placed the Magma Flame at the center of the caldera to replace the Fire Ring. The Magma Flame drew its power from molten rock, ensuring that as long as it burned, magma would flow in abundance around it.

He then set the two pure fire-type treasures within the caldera to increase the eruptions and improve the magma's circulation. Together, the three treasures produced an effect comparable to the Fire Ring itself.

The other races also received the corresponding treasures.

The Erok Nest was under construction. Han Wu planned to use the Transmigrate Helmet to draw more souls from the other worlds to reincarnate in the Erok Nest and hasten their growth.

He gave the Ancient Bone to the skeletons. Because the bone could regenerate, he ground most of it into dust and left a small section to regrow. When the skeletons absorbed the dust's energy, their bones' density changed visibly. Their strength increased tenfold, and the effects were permanent.

He then placed the Epiphany Tree in the Tigermen's town so they could use it to break through.

After confirming that each treasure had been placed in the proper location, Han Wu returned to his room to rest.

He had just lied down when Huang Shengjun called. He immediately rejected the call. The two had become sworn enemies after what happened in the game, and he had no reason to entertain Huang Shengjun.

When Huang Shengjun realized the call had been declined, he contacted someone from Han Wu's class to reach him instead.

Han Wu accidentally picked up the call and heard Huang Shengjun's voice. "I know that you have auctioned off the Fire Ring."

Han Wu chuckled. The only reason he had been forced to sell it was that Huang Shengjun had spread the news on the bulletin. For the sake of his own safety, he had had no choice but to auction it.

"I want five of the ten treasures that you obtained from the auction," Huang Shengjun demanded. "Give them to me, and I won't reveal your information again. Refuse, and you'll suffer the consequences."

There was no way Han Wu would give in. "I won't give you a single thing. Try exposing my identity if you dare."

Huang Shengjun fell silent. Han Wu neither knew nor cared what he was thinking and hung up. He had already decided to spend the next few days in his divine realm, expanding it and converting all of his resources to improve it. He wanted to ensure that Huang Shengjun would be far beneath him once he was out of seclusion.

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[1,253 words]

Chapter 424 - Invasion

When Han Wu hung up on him again, Huang Shengjun was furious. This wasn't their first conflict. In the beginning, Huang Shengjun had the upper hand and could easily defeat Han Wu, but as time passed, that edge slipped away. It was only a matter of time before Han Wu grew stronger and surpassed him.

Huang Shengjun considered his options and made a decision. He would reveal to the Gods, Major Gods, and even the God Kings that Han Wu was the Fire Ring's original owner.

Even though the Fire Ring had been auctioned off, Han Wu still possessed the ten treasures that even Major Gods coveted. For both Gods and Major Gods alike, they were a fortune worth fighting for.

Yet he couldn't spread the information himself. He feared that Xu Hai would trace the leak back to him. He had to use his network. After the message was passed through several intermediaries, an information broker finally released the news that Han Wu was the original owner.

Many Gods and Major Gods were already about to leave after the auction. They hadn't even reached the gate when the information broker distributed the free intel to them.

According to the report, Han Wu of Imperial College was the one who had auctioned the Fire Ring. It even included his school ID, national ID, and other details.

The Gods and Major Gods glanced through the report in confusion. The auction was over, and the Fire Ring now belonged to the Blazing God King. What was the point of this information now?

Then it struck them. Even though Han Wu no longer possessed the Fire Ring, he still had at least four treasures that even Major Gods could utilize. The report also revealed that Han Wu was a newly ascended God.

His national ID alone was enough for others to locate and invade his divine realm. Realizing this, many Gods and Major Gods hastily turned back.

The God King of Light was about to leave as well when he received the report. Seeing the familiar name, he paused in surprise. "Wait a minute. Han Wu was the one who auctioned the Fire Ring? Elina has been trying hard to convince him to join my faction."

He scrolled down and chuckled the moment he saw Han Wu's national ID on the report. With that information, he could use some items to invade Han Wu's divine realm.

"Things have gotten interesting..." he murmured.

Elsewhere, the True Martial God King received the same report. Han Wu's name struck a chord of recognition. After a moment's thought, he finally remembered who he was. Although the two had never met in person, True Martial still recalled him vividly.

"You once escaped the grasp of a God when you were just a Divine Being. I wonder if you can escape a God King's grip," he mused. "No. The Imperial College's higher-ups warned me not to lay a hand on him."

He smirked faintly. "Fine. I won't do it myself. But my men can pose as wandering Gods and locate the Origin of Mutation in Han Wu's divine realm."

He then sent out the orders and details to his underlings.

...

As Han Wu was about to enter seclusion, a sudden alert flashed before him, and his expression darkened. His divine realm was under invasion. Such events were rare, though not completely impossible. Han Wu had to admit that his luck was terrible since someone had accidentally matched his ID.

While he was preparing for battle, two more alerts appeared. Two more people were invading his divine realm. That was when he realized something was wrong. One invasion out of the blue was already rare enough, but three at once? That couldn't be just a coincidence.

He quickly mobilized his units to repel the invasion and sent an urgent message to Xu Hai for support. Unfortunately, Xu Hai was occupied with seeing off the auction guests and hadn't yet checked his messages.

Saliya and Lina were also tied up with post-auction assignments and the afterparty preparations arranged by Imperial College. With no other options, Han Wu informed Qin Shuang and the rest of his comrades about the invasion.

Their responses came quickly. They had already mobilized their troops and were ready to assist him by connecting their divine realm with his.

Han Wu sighed with relief and checked his interface again. While he had been requesting support, six new alerts had appeared.

Fuck! Who's trying to kill me here? He pushed the thought aside. This wasn't the time to wonder. He needed to drive back the invaders.

Scanning his entire divine realm, Han Wu saw chaos everywhere. Numerous races had invaded his divine realm and were clashing with his units. The locusts, skeletons, Tigermen, and Flame Demons all battled the invaders in their respective territories. Every second, more threads of faith snapped, signifying their deaths.

“You filthy invaders! Die!” Han Wu roared and activated his towers.

The powerful towers blanketed his entire divine realm and unleashed devastating attacks and debuffs. Waves of invaders fell under their bombardment, and Han Wu used their corpses to summon skeletons. He spent his Divine Points without any reservation, casting every Divine Skill at his disposal to assist his units.

He also used Merge to create a new army of powerful Osteomancers. For a while, towering figures several meters tall patrolled his divine realm.

Even so, the invasion only intensified. More invaders poured in, their gates crowding the edges of his divine realm like a swarm of hives. A quick estimate suggested there were hundreds of them.

Even a Major God couldn't fend off so many Gods, yet Han Wu held his ground and even struck back because his divine realm housed many powerful units.

The skeletons played a vital role, forming the backbone of his undead legion warfare. Unfortunately, their dominance was short-lived. Once they noticed that Han Wu relied heavily on the skeletons, they started using various Divine Skills designed to counter them, most notably Cleanse.

Cleanse's light swept across vast portions of his divine realm, and every undead below the High Lord rank caught within its reach disintegrated on the spot. The huge skeleton army crumbled, and the rest of Han Wu's units were slaughtered without mercy.

Some invaders even managed to tank the towers' bombardment, reach their bases, and start destroying the precious towers.

Han Wu's divine realm was being ripped apart piece by piece, and he could only watch, powerless to devise a countermeasure. This was the first time he had ever felt such despair.

At that moment, two gates suddenly opened within his divine realm, and Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian emerged with the elites of their troops. When they saw the devastation around them, despair clouded their faces. Victory was impossible. The invading forces numbered at least ten trillion, while Han Wu's side barely reached a trillion. They were outnumbered ten to one.

Sun Qingnian forced a note of encouragement into his voice. “Han Wu, you must hold on. Qin Shuang has gone to search for the professors. We need to endure this, and we can win.”

On the other hand, Jing Jing, rarely one to scold him, snapped, “My God, your units are still fighting for your sake. You cannot give up now.”

Her words jolted Han Wu back to his senses. “No, I haven’t lost. I’ll prove it. You fucking bastards! I’ll show you the price you have to pay for attacking my divine realm!”

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Chapter 425 - Freeing the Origin of Mutation

[1,191 words]

Chapter 425 - Freeing the Origin of Mutation

“All invading forces, heed my warning. Retreat now, and I won’t pursue you. Those who stay will die.”

Han Wu repeated his warning three times, but the invaders only laughed.

“He must be stupid. Does he think he can threaten us when he’s about to die?”

“Us? Die? I’d like to see him try!”

“Go, my units! Destroy his divine realm and crush his Core!”

The invaders issued orders to their units, which attacked with greater ferocity.

Han Wu was losing countless units every second. Jing Jing’s skeleton army was heavily restricted, and Sun Qingnian’s Foxmen were exhausted after supporting Han Wu’s army. Meanwhile, their reinforcements hadn’t arrived yet. Even Sun Qingnian looked close to tears at Han Wu’s predicament.

With a low growl, Han Wu disappeared. An instant later, he reappeared on the Sky Palace’s eighth floor, where he had imprisoned the Origin of Mutation. The latter was currently playing with a tiny worm in a daze. It took it a moment to notice Han Wu.

After being imprisoned for so long, it felt hollow inside and yearned to get out no matter the cost. It longed to see the vivid, ever-changing world beyond its confinement.

“Vessel, please let me out. Please... I will do anything...” the Origin of Mutation pleaded.

Its plea was sincere, though it doubted that Han Wu would agree. After all, it had once committed an act that was no different from killing Han Wu after.

“Fine.”

Han Wu's simple response took the Origin of Mutation by surprise. It thought it had misheard or imagined it and hesitated before asking again. “You... You will let me go?”

Han Wu nodded. “Yes, but you must help me first. Do that, and I will grant you the freedom you crave. You will hold authority second only to mine, and I will allow you to travel to other civilizations.”

The Origin of Mutation trembled with excitement, half-believing it must be dreaming. Even if this was a dream, it was the best one it had ever had. “I agree!”

It followed Han Wu out of the Sky Palace and witnessed the chaotic invasion ravaging Han Wu's divine realm. More than 60% of Han Wu's units had already fallen, and more perished with each passing second.

A sharp pain gripped Han Wu's heart. He had painstakingly nurtured those units, and each one felt like a child to him.

“Punish those invaders,” Han Wu said darkly. “Let them feel the agony of invading my divine realm!”

With that, he granted the Origin of Mutation full authority to use all of the Divine Essence in his possession.

When the Origin of Mutation saw that Han Wu had thousands of Divine Essence, it felt a surge of excitement that made its throat itch. It had never seen such wealth ever since it was born, nor had it ever participated in a war with so much power at its disposal.

“Vessel, fear not,” it declared. “I will make them taste a pain that spans throughout generations.”

Then it launched itself into the fray.

The battlefield teemed with trillions of units, so its arrival didn't attract much attention. Yet the Origin of Mutation was very special and could alter the entire course of war. The moment it appeared, it used Han Wu's Divine Essence to activate every ability it had

unlocked so far: Controlled Mutation, Gene Lock, Gene Recombination, and Life Creation.

Using Controlled Mutation and fueled by the vast reserve of Divine Essence, it spread its influence across every living being nearby. Han Wu's units underwent positive mutations. For example, the Tigermen's arms thickened with strength, the locusts grew larger, and the Scorching Dwarves developed muscular bodies.

In contrast, the invaders suffered catastrophic mutations. Their blood cells twisted and contorted until they could no longer absorb enough oxygen; their hearts warped and couldn't adapt to the strain of such high intensity battles; and their brains shrank, stripping them of coordination and control.

Wherever the Origin of Mutation passed, the invaders died in droves. However, that was only the beginning. Soon, it activated Gene Recombination and transferred every powerful organ to itself or to Han Wu's units.

Within seconds, the invading scorpions lost their stingers, the eagles lost their wings, and the wolves lost their fangs. Meanwhile, the Origin of Mutation transformed into a monster with a hundred stingers, five pairs of wings, and a mouth lined with razor fangs. With those organs fused into its body, it could unleash the abilities contained within them.

The Origin of Mutation could now wield multiple domains such as the Bloodsucking Domain, Poison Domain, Sandstorm Domain, Blazing Domain, and others. Before long, it was shrouded in a multicolor domain that annihilated any enemy that entered its range. Even High Lord life forms couldn't survive more than ten seconds under the crushing force of so many overlapping domains.

Only King life forms could endure the onslaught and fight back. Unfortunately for them, the Origin of Mutation's body housed deadly organs. Hundreds of stingers pierced through the King life forms, and their potent venom killed them in an instant.

Sage life forms could withstand all of the overlapping domains and battle the Origin of Mutation on equal ground, but Han Wu wouldn't let the latter be defeated. He ordered all his Sage life forms to protect it at any cost.

Steely, Alpheus, Smog, and his other powerful units gathered around the Origin of Mutation to protect it. With them holding back the invading Sage life forms, the Origin of Mutation found a chance to advance even further.

While fighting against the Sage life forms, it secretly shaved off bits of their flesh and consumed them.

Through Gene Lock, the Sage life forms' various powers came under its control, and its body transformed once more. The five wings at its back turned into dragon wings. Gold

and black scales spread across its body, and each of its eight arms wielded a powerful greatsword. The hundred stingers on its back fused into a single, spiked snake's head.

It was now temporarily stronger than Sage life forms. Even Han Wu had no idea what existed beyond that rank.

The Origin of Mutation reveled in its newfound strength. It knew that it could easily seize control of Han Wu's body, but it chose not to. Instead, it turned its focus on the invaders and used Steelcutter. Steely had spent years mastering the Skill, yet the Origin of Mutation wielded it effortlessly. With a single swing of its greatsword, it cut through every High Lord and King life form in its path and left even Sage life forms heavily wounded. Worse for its enemies, it could execute this attack eight times in succession.

Seeing the unnervingly powerful Origin of Mutation, the invaders concentrated all their forces on it, determined to eradicate it through sheer numbers.

The Origin of Mutation flapped its wings and soared thousands of meters into the air. Their attacks fell short, and those few that landed were easily deflected by its dragon scales.

Only then did the invaders realize that they faced a very powerful foe.

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Chapter 426 - Han Wu's Ultimate Move

[1,193 words]

Chapter 426 - Han Wu's Ultimate Move

The war shifted into Han Wu's favor with the Origin of Mutation's appearance. The invaders didn't want to give up, but they were powerless to resist. In every era, strength decided everything. Watching the units they had painstakingly nurtured fall one after another, they finally considered retreating to cut their losses.

Just as they prepared to withdraw, something extraordinary happened. A giant gate opened, released a blinding beam of light, and closed as suddenly as it appeared. The beam of light touched the ground and quickly expanded into a towering life form that resembled a heron, but with 100 heads. Its pure white wings unfurled and bathed the area with sacred light.

Everyone froze. The monster was stronger than a Sage life form. The invaders had no idea which side the heron would attack and hurriedly ordered their units to fall back.

Then the heron swooped down on the Origin of Mutation and pecked it with its 100 beaks. The Origin of Mutation's dragon scales shattered like glass and blood splashed across the ground.

The Origin of Mutation retaliated with Steelcutter, but the heron dodged with effortless grace. Unable to land a hit, the Origin of Mutation found its Skills useless against the heron. All the advantages it had created vanished instantly with the strange heron's arrival.

The invaders, who had been ready to flee, suddenly saw hope.

"Everyone, attack! We've lost too much already. How can we return home empty-handed?"

"Destroy his divine realm and his Core."

"He killed the Sage life form that I spent ages nurturing. How can he have so many Sage life forms? Isn't he just a newly ascended God?"

"I'm so jealous. I'll summon all my units and kill him myself."

"*Hahaha!* I just dug up a fire-type treasure. I'm rich. You guys, continue digging around. I'm heading back first."

Their voices overlapped, a flood of chatter and information echoing through the divine realm.

Rage consumed Han Wu as he watched the invaders retreat through their gates with his treasures in tow. Meanwhile, the strange heron was pummeling the Origin of Mutation, and the shockwaves from their clash were tearing through his units.

Han Wu couldn't stand it any longer; he would confront it himself. Yet even at full power, he was only as strong as a Sage life form. He doubted that he could defeat it. That was when he recalled Replicate, his latest Exclusive Divine Power. With enough Divine Essence, he would have a fighting chance.

Without hesitation, Han Wu teleported onto the Origin of Mutation's body and pressed his palm against it. "Replicate!"

His body swelled rapidly. To prevent any backlash, he used the most brutal and efficient method, burning through his reserves of Divine Essence to strengthen himself. The cost was steep, but the Divine Essence transformed into raw power surging through his body.

He then formed an overlapping domain like the Origin of Mutation, and new limbs and organs grew from his expanding frame. Power surged endlessly from his core. By the time he finished, he had consumed 100 Divine Essence.

The strange heron faced another version of the strange monster. One was drenched in blood, while the other remained pristine.

Han Wu turned to the Origin of Mutation. "I will handle this. Teach those invading bastards a lesson they'll never forget. I know you can."

The Origin of Mutation nodded and flew toward the invaders' gates. As it passed through the battlefield, it also picked up the corpses of powerful units and absorbed their flesh and blood to use its fourth Skill, Life Creation.

The mangled pieces of flesh moved and twisted until they formed wriggling red worms. Though they looked small and seemingly harmless, they were the deadly Mind Worms that it had painstakingly nurtured. Their primary method of attack was to remain hidden while releasing a toxin that disrupted the mind. Once inside a host, they could use that same toxin to seize control of the victim's thoughts and actions.

The Origin of Mutation had initially created it to control Han Wu. Now that he had granted it freedom, it intended to use them to repay him instead.

One by one, the blood-red worms leapt into the invaders' gates. The Origin of Mutation commanded them to infest and parasitize as many units as possible, planning to let them spread until at least half of the invaders' units were compromised. Then it would seize control and destroy the enemies' Cores.

The Mind Worms heeded its order and started working.

On the other side, Han Wu battled the monstrous heron. To him, the heron was sluggish, and its pecks posed no threat. He could read every movement it made and defend against it easily.

This wasn't because his replication was stronger than the Origin of Mutation, but because Han Wu had more combat experience. The Origin of Mutation resembled a brilliant scientist who had never fought in a real battle, while Han Wu wielded the same power with ten times the skill. In moments, he bashed more than forty of the 100 heads.

Sensing defeat, the heron tried to flee. Naturally, Han Wu had no intention of letting it escape. He was going to kill it immediately. He unfurled his five pairs of dragon wings and closed the distance in an instant. He merged his eight great swords into a single blade large enough to split his own divine realm in half, swung it brutally using Steelcutter, and cut off every escape path.

Left with no choice, it turned to defend against Han Wu's Steelcutter, but it was useless. The blade severed the heron in half and ended its life.

When the invaders saw the heron fall, they retreated at once. They wouldn't have invaded Han Wu's divine realm if they had known his true strength. They had failed to seize any treasures and lost half their units. Their invasion ended in a complete disaster for them.

Han Wu watched the invaders withdraw from the spot where he had slain the heron. He didn't pursue them, not for lack of will but for lack of power. The strength he had obtained from replicating the Origin of Mutation was nearly spent. He would be helpless if he chased after them.

At that moment, several gates opened at the heart of his divine realm. Qin Shuang appeared with her Thunder Sparrows, while Lina, Saliya, and Xu Hai all led their units to support Han Wu.

The reinforcements came too late to join the battle, but their appearance was enough to make the invaders retreat faster.

"Run! The people from Imperial College are here!" someone shouted.

"Leave your units and run!"

"Shit! I lost three King life forms and got nothing. This is a failure," a voice complained.

"You only lost three King life forms. I lost a Sage life form! Do you think your losses compare to mine? Just run right now, or the rest of your King life forms will die here!" someone barked.

All the invaders escaped, but none of them knew of the greater danger that waited for them back in their divine realms.

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[1,129 words]

Chapter 427 - Mind Worm Infection

Han Wu finally relaxed once his friends and professors arrived. Exhaustion washed over him, and he fainted on the spot.

By the time Han Wu regained consciousness, ten days had passed. Overjoyed, Qin Shuang rushed to call the doctor.

The attending physician from Imperial College was a Major God who specialized in healing. After ensuring that Han Wu had fully recovered, the doctor approved his discharge from the infirmary.

Even though Han Wu's body was fine, his spirit remained heavy. He completed the discharge process quickly and returned to his divine realm.

There, ten realm years had passed during those ten days outside. In that time, most of the war-torn lands had mended, but many of his units still hadn't recovered their numbers.

Sensing their god's return, the Origin of Mutation was the first to approach him. Soon after came Steely, Alpheus, Erebard, Smog, and even Dark Locust.

Han Wu looked at their familiar faces and felt tears sting his eyes. It was as if he had just survived a calamity and was seeing his family again for the first time.

Steely described the war's aftermath. The locusts had suffered the heaviest losses. Their numbers had once reached 1 trillion, but only 10 billion remained. Even after ten realm years, their population had yet to recover. The Epistians, who had suffered the least damage, had still lost half their population. Countless buildings and towers lay in ruins, with only a few left standing.

Worse still, Han Wu's account was almost drained. He had once possessed up to 1,000 Divine Essence, but now less than fifty remained. Meanwhile, part of that came from what he had managed to accumulate over the past ten realm years. The sudden war had stripped Han Wu's divine realm back to the state it had been in when he was still a Demigod.

Fifty Divine Essence would have sufficed for a Demigod, but Han Wu was a God now, and maintaining his Divine Authority required far more. Fifty simply wasn't enough.

Qin Shuang, following behind him, was worried. "Don't worry, Han Wu. As long as your Core is here, you can recover."

Han Wu smiled bitterly. He possessed many powerful Divine Skills and treasures that could recover easily from this, but he couldn't proceed without uncovering how and why the invaders had found him.

The Origin of Mutation drifted closer. "Vessel, ten realm years have passed. Do you wish the invaders to pay the price?"

Han Wu turned to face it, recalling that he had ordered it to punish the invaders.

“What do you have in mind?” he asked.

The Origin of Mutation chuckled ominously. “Of course I have my own methods. I’ve spent years creating a new life form. It would disgrace my name if I remained idle.”

Han Wu nodded. “Then do it. Let them understand the cost of invading my divine realm. Make sure they remember it's something they can never attempt again.”

“As you wish. Watch closely.” With that, it disappeared without a trace.

Qin Shuang looked troubled and whispered, “Aren’t you afraid that it will harm you?”

Han Wu’s gaze drifted toward his divine realm’s horizon. “My divine realm wouldn’t still exist if it weren’t here. I’ll have to accept it if it tries to harm me.”

The Origin of Mutation returned to the Sky Palace’s eighth floor, sat down, and started emitting powerful brain waves. As the Mind Worms’ creator, it could send signals through the fabric of time and space itself. No matter where they were, the Mind Worms would heed its command.

It commanded them to incite chaos through their hosts and destroy their divine realms’ Cores. The Mind Worms buried inside their hosts’ heads received the command and went berserk.

One God, whose core race were the Snow Wolves, was leading a crucial campaign to invade another civilization. In the middle of the decisive battle, his Snow Wolves suddenly lost control and attacked his allies.

The God commanded them to stop, but his words had no effect. In the end, the plan failed. The God not only had to compensate his allies for their losses but also to keep a constant watch on his units to ensure they didn't attack one another.

When he finally returned to the Divine Civilization, he learned that many other Gods and Major Gods had suffered the same disaster. One had watched in horror as their own core race shattered their Core, destroying their divine realm beyond recovery.

The God kept probing for information until he realized that these were the same Gods and Major Gods who had taken part in the invasion ten days ago. Unwilling to believe it, he questioned several of them directly.

Although they denied any involvement, their shifting gazes confirmed his suspicions. Determined to prevent his core race from being wiped out and the Core from being destroyed, he secretly went to Imperial College to find Han Wu. He was willing to pay any price for Han Wu to resolve the crisis.

Facing the invader, Han Wu laid out his terms and made sure that they were steep. He demanded the God surrender 99% of his units and pay 100 Divine Essence as compensation. In return, Han Wu would heal the remaining 1% of the core race.

Naturally, the God refused. He couldn't bear to part with the units he had nurtured so painstakingly, much less pay such a high price.

Han Wu didn't press the issue. He returned to his divine realm and instructed the Origin of Mutation to issue another command to kill that bastard.

Within a single day, the God lost 99% of his Snow Wolves to infighting. The remaining 1% stood motionless, their vacant eyes fixed on nothing. It was clear that something was deeply wrong with them as well.

Even a God who specialized in cleansing couldn't rouse them. Another day passed, and half of the survivors perished. Only 300,000 of his Snow Wolves remained.

Desperate, the God had no choice but to accept Han Wu's original demand to save what was left of his core race.

Han Wu only smirked and raised the price. This time, he wanted 500 Divine Essence. It was a huge sum for any God, but he scraped together the amount to preserve his divine realm and paid Han Wu.

Only then did Han Wu command the Origin of Mutation to leave that God alone. After everything that had happened, the God realized that he had not only lost more Divine Essence but would likely also lose what remained of his core race. At that moment, regret filled him for not accepting the first offer.

One thing was for certain, though. He wouldn't be the last to suffer such a fate.

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Chapter 428 - New Race: Locust Dragon

[1,126 words]

Chapter 428 - New Race: Locust Dragon

Chaotic divine realms, where the core races slaughtered one another and even defied the commands of their own gods, were a sight rarely witnessed in the long history of the Divine Civilization.

Those afflicted by this condition couldn't figure out why it happened and had no means to resolve it. That changed when a God known as Snow Wolf revealed that Han Wu of Imperial College could resolve it.

When the news spread, every God and Major God who heard Han Wu's name felt their hearts twitch. Just ten days earlier, they had tried to kill him. How could they turn to him for help? Still, they were hoping that Han Wu wouldn't recognize them and started contacting him.

Unbeknownst to them, Han Wu had orchestrated the situation to uncover who had invaded his divine realm. Those who contacted him had unwittingly exposed themselves, while his so-called medical fees quickly swelled his account balance.

After enduring the invasion of his divine realm, Han Wu decided to invest all his newfound wealth into strengthening it. Instead of patiently studying and exploring his Divine Authorities to upgrade them, he chose to pour Divine Essence into them.

The cost was steep, but the results were remarkable. It took 100 Divine Essence to improve one Divine Authority by 10%. At present, his two Divine Authorities stood at 60% and 20%, meaning he still needed 1,200 Divine Essence to raise both to their full potential.

For a regular God, that amount was nearly unattainable even after years of effort. For Han Wu, who demanded immense tributes from them, acquiring it was effortless. As long as they wanted to preserve their divine realms, his source of income would never cease.

Beyond increasing his own strength, he also improved all of the units in his divine realm.

Steely mastered the Hurricane Aspect and became a God that controlled wind in Han Wu's divine realm. Dark Locust mastered the Darkness and Reproduction Aspects and oversaw the locusts' propagation.

The black dragon Alpheus obtained the Darkness Aspect and was a God that presided over darkness itself. The silver dragon Erebard controlled the Water, Fire, Earth, and Wind Aspects and presided over his divine realm's four seasons. The gold Great Dragon Smog mastered War and Massacre and was now a God of War.

Han Wu slowly formed the many Gods within his divine realm. With them, he would stand as the God above all Gods, free to focus on furthering his own growth.

Naturally, the Origin of Mutation was the one who benefited the most. Once it regained its freedom, it devoted itself to pursuing that freedom without restraint. With Han Wu granting it unlimited access to Divine Essence, it continued to improve itself.

With enough resources, it embarked on research to create a new life form based on the locusts. The life form needed to retain the locusts' incredible reproduction capacity while possessing great strength.

For that reason, it sought materials from the Great Dragons. Persuading them required great effort. After spending a lot of Divine Essence and thirty realm years, it finally managed to create a new life form in its lab. Proud of its achievement, the Origin of Mutation eagerly called for Han Wu to witness it.

Inside of the chamber, Han Wu saw a locust-like creature with a dragon head crawling along the floor.

The Origin of Mutation presented its creation with pride. "Vessel, this is a new life form that I call the Locust Dragon. It's the fusion of a locust and a Great Dragon."

Han Wu's curiosity deepened. "Anything special about it?"

The Origin of Mutation, an expert in its field, explained, "From a genetic perspective, it's a type of dragon subspecies. It possesses the reproductive capacity of locusts, along with the Great Dragons' incredible breath attacks and defensive capabilities. By the Divine Civilization's standards, they qualify as Heroic life forms from birth."

"Wait, Heroic life forms from birth?!" Han Wu was shocked.

Although his divine realm housed hundreds of millions of Heroic life forms, that didn't mean that they were weak. Once a Unique life form broke through to the Heroic rank, it transformed into an entirely different life form.

A Heroic life form surpassed a Unique one in every aspect. If Han Wu could make the Locust Dragon reproduce naturally, his units' baseline rank would be Heroic! Even a Major God didn't have units of that caliber.

"Wait, how many resources would it take to raise one? Do you have any data on its growth?" Han Wu asked anxiously.

The Origin of Mutation slowly answered his questions. By the end, Han Wu understood that the Locust Dragon would bring sweeping changes in his divine realm and dramatically improve his units' overall strength.

"Use every resource you need to nurture them, no matter what." Han Wu needed powerful units at any cost. Strength was the most fundamental and important factor for him to dominate Imperial College.

The Origin of Mutation loved to do that and agreed. "Sure thing."

It then asked something else. "Wait, why do you need so many units from the other Gods?"

Han Wu replied, "Two reasons. First, I need to punish them for invading my divine realm. If they lose 99% of their units, it will take them more than five years to recover. Secondly, I have a Divine Power that requires the sacrifice of units to obtain treasures. Those units will be my sacrifice."

The Origin of Mutation grew curious. "Aren't you afraid that they will cheat you and won't surrender 99% of their units?"

"No worries. I will calculate their total units based on what they actually surrender. If they truly give me 99%, you can just send a signal to the Mind Worms to kill themselves. Just make sure only the remaining 1% die.

"If they try to cheat me, some Mind Worms should survive in their divine realms. Then a second wave of Mind Worm infection will follow, and I can charge them more."

Han Wu wouldn't let them go so easily, even if they united and pressured Imperial College to let them go. The ball was in Han Wu's court, and the college would back him.

The Origin of Mutation had to admit that Han Wu was much more devious than it had expected. If it had been the victim, it would've let them go after they paid the price by making all the Mind Worms in their divine realms die. That method worked only once, while Han Wu's method promised multiple compensations.

"Vessel, I look forward to seeing them sacrificed. I wonder what kind of treasures you will get."

"You will know soon. Want to see the ceremony?" Han Wu asked.

"Of course!"

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Chapter 429 - Sacrifice's Reward: Revival Stone

[1,040 words]

Chapter 429 - Sacrifice's Reward: Revival Stone

A huge group of units was stranded in a desolate wasteland. Their gods had cast them into this divine realm, leaving them confused and uncertain of their fate.

Han Wu and the Origin of Mutation hovered above the horde, surveying the scene. Through his senses, Han Wu detected nearly 60 billion units below, most of them being Unique life forms. Their bodies brimmed with Life Energy, far greater than that of the Unique locusts.

Han Wu was already eager for the next wave of units to arrive in his divine realm, but he chose to use Sacrifice first. A huge array appeared beneath the units and enveloped them. They tried to flee, but the array expanded faster than they could move.

"Sacrifice!" Han Wu shouted, and the ritual started.

In an instant, every unit's life force surged toward the array. Within a single minute, all 60 billion units had died.

Even the Origin of Mutation recoiled in horror. It had always seen itself as a cruel bastard that could mutate countless life forms, but compared to Han Wu's cruelty and his Sacrifice, its powers seemed trivial.

With one sweep of his arm, Han Wu wiped out 60 billion units.

The Origin of Mutation swallowed hard, realizing just how terrifying Han Wu truly was. It silently vowed never to cross him. Otherwise, it would meet a gruesome end as well.

Han Wu paid it no mind. His focus was fixed on the rewards of Sacrifice.

[Option 1: Revival Stone – Engraves the target's soul onto the stone. If the target dies, they can be revived at the stone. Only a fragment of their soul returns, with partial memory loss, and all attributes reset to 10% of their original value. Considerable energy is required to restore their former strength. Current slots: 100,000]

[Option 2: 9-Star God Equipment: Star Disk – Allows the user to bypass all spatial restrictions and teleport to any previously visited location. Each use consumes 100 Divine Essence.]

[Option 3: Ghost God Kazan – A God from another civilization, equal in power to a Sage life form. Commands part of the Ghost Aspect and possesses Divine Essence on par with a high-ranking Demigod.]

Han Wu eyed the three options greedily, wanting to claim all of them.

The first option allowed him to revive fallen subordinates. With it, powerful units like Steely could place a fragment of their souls into the Revival Stone and become effectively immortal. Even though they would lose 90% of their power upon revival, they could regain it with enough energy. Han Wu had various methods of converting flesh into energy, so supplying what a Sage life form needed to recover would be simple.

The second option, the 9-Star Star Disk, was equally tempting. It could cut through all spatial restrictions to teleport the user to any location they had previously visited. With it, Han Wu could essentially appear inside secret caches or treasure vaults belonging to huge factions and plunder them freely. The catch was the cost. Each use required 100 Divine Essence. That was equivalent to 10 billion Divine Points or 100 quadrillion Faith Points.

No ordinary God could afford to use it. Even Han Wu would have to be prudent; it was an enormous expense for a single teleport. Although he had obtained considerable wealth from the compensations, his reserves totaled only about 6,000 Divine Essence, much of which he had already spent. He couldn't use it as he wished.

The third option was the most straightforward: a powerful God who could aid him in battle. It would bolster his combat power, but it offered little to improve his divine realm.

Han Wu hesitated for three minutes before choosing the Revival Stone. Ever since his divine realm had been invaded, he had come to understand how precious life was, especially the lives of his powerful units. Losing any of them would cause him real pain.

Upon selecting the Revival Stone, it materialized in his palm. It was a gleaming blue gemstone the size of his fist, capable of holding more than 100,000 souls.

Han Wu summoned his most powerful units and gathered them around it. He engraved the souls of the Origin of Mutation, Steely, Dark Locust, Alpheus, Erebard, Smog, Leng Ning, Hu Chi, Hu Yong, Osteomancer, Skeleton Reanimator, and every other powerful unit that he could remember.

With their souls bound to the stone, they had, in essence, become immortals. He carefully placed it within his maze and felt a rare moment of relief.

Still, one Revival Stone couldn't erase his hatred for the invaders. He asked Xu Hai to help him uncover who had spread the news while he conducted his own investigation.

Naturally, his first suspect was Huang Shengjun. The two shared an old and bitter grudge, and he suspected that Huang Shengjun had spread the information after Han Wu hung up on him.

In reality, he was right. Huang Shengjun was the reason that hundreds of Gods had invaded his divine realm. Unfortunately, he had no evidence. He temporarily set the matter aside and turned to the second problem.

During the invasion, while the Origin of Mutation had managed to intimidate the invaders, someone had summoned that powerful heron clad in sacred light, throwing everything into chaos. He had slain it in the end, but the fight had been far from easy.

To Han Wu, the heron's owner was no different from the rest of the invaders—an enemy. But who were they? He tried to recall any information about the strange heron but nothing came to mind.

“Who could it be? Huang Shengjun? But his core race is the goblins. I doubt that he's any good at nurturing birds. That heron was clearly of the light attribute. Could it be Elina?” He muttered half-formed guesses, but he was very close.

“No, it can't be her. She might be the God King of Light's daughter, but she probably doesn't have the resources to nurture that kind of monster. Wait...” Han Wu shot up in disbelief. “Could it be the God King of Light himself?”

He had never imagined that Light would try to kill him. The idea was absurd! Han Wu grumbled at that thought.

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Chapter 430 - Location of Final Battle

[1,209 words]

Chapter 430 - Location of Final Battle

Han Wu couldn't defeat the God King of Light right now. Even with solid evidence, he still lacked the strength to act. Nonetheless, he was confident that he could defeat Huang Shengjun. All he needed was proof that Huang Shengjun had sold his private information.

Han Wu poured every resource and favor he had into gathering intelligence. After spending a vast amount of Divine Essence, he finally secured proof that Huang Shengjun had sold his data. He handed the evidence to Xu Hai and asked him to seek justice for the invasion.

Xu Hai seethed with anger as he reviewed the evidence. *Huang Shengjun! Does he think that he's untouchable at Imperial College? How dare you ignore me and bully my student! I must report this at once!*

Xu Hai used his authority and brought the case before the college management. Everyone was shocked. They had never imagined that a student would sell another student's private information, leading hundreds of Gods and Major Gods to invade the student's divine realm.

What shocked them most wasn't Huang Shengjun's betrayal but the fact that Han Wu had survived such an invasion. It sounded as ridiculous as someone lifting a mountain with a toothpick.

Still, the evidence was irrefutable. The management unanimously agreed that Han Wu possessed great potential and that they must do everything in their power to see justice served.

Han Wu's faction also received word that his private information had been sold. The Death faction put pressure on Imperial College to apprehend the culprit as quickly as possible.

When Huang Shengjun learned that Imperial College was investigating him, he wasted no time informing his master. Butcher was infamous for protecting his own people at any cost. Regardless of the truth, he was determined to protect Huang Shengjun, his loyal student.

The War faction also joined the conflict and pressured Imperial College to halt their investigation. They argued that Huang Shengjun had competed fairly and that, in war, soldiers could not be expected to act with moral restraint. They even shifted the blame to Han Wu, claiming he had failed to safeguard his private information. In the end, the War faction declared that Imperial College would take no action against Huang Shengjun.

Caught between two powerful factions, the management faced a difficult dilemma. They wished to deliver justice for Han Wu, whose potential was undeniable, but the two God Kings' factions held immense power, far beyond that of the college itself. Offending either party would be disastrous.

After urgent deliberation, they reached a compromise: Han Wu and Huang Shengjun would fight on neutral ground, and the loser would face punishment.

As expected, the decision infuriated Han Wu. He was the victim, yet he had to fight again?

To Imperial College, Han Wu's emotions carried little weight compared to the need to preserve the reputations of the War and Death factions. Still, out of guilt, the management decided to give Han Wu a precious treasure suited to the chosen battleground, giving him a slight edge. Even if he lost, he would still keep the treasure.

Resigned, Han Wu sighed and accepted. Under the joint supervision of both factions, Imperial College chose a suitable site for their battle. It was a fragment of a civilization under the college's control known as Tanuki Town.

The town was nestled within a small region of the Zombie Civilization that had been bombarded with radiation.

The Zombie Civilization was highly advanced in technology, and its most infamous product was the virus. These organisms possessed terrifyingly strong infectious properties. In a sense, they were even more dangerous than radiation.

Most Gods avoided fighting in civilizations plagued by such viruses. It was easy to get infected but difficult to purify. In the worst cases, one would have to wipe out every life form in their divine realm to eliminate the contamination.

For Han Wu and Huang Shengjun, however, viruses posed little threat. Both had the confidence and ability to defend themselves.

Under the War and Death factions' oversight, the Imperial College referee explained the rules.

First, they would descend into Tanuki Town using clones. They couldn't bring any Divine Powers or Skills and would have to find a way to unlock them.

Second, regardless of the outcome, all grudges between them would be considered settled. Neither party could continue hostilities after the match.

Third, since Han Wu was the victim, Imperial College would give him a special, one-time-use treasure called the Rewinder. When activated, it allowed him to turn back time to any moment within the past three days, restoring all conditions to that exact state. The Rewinder's effect extended across his entire divine realm.

Huang Shengjun burned with jealousy at the thought of Han Wu receiving that treasure. After all, any treasure capable of reversing time was exceedingly rare, and this one could even resurrect the dead. Yet Imperial College had decided to give it to Han Wu instead of him. The injustice made Huang Shengjun want to kill them for it.

"I object. Why does he get compensation while I don't? This is unfair!" Huang Shengjun protested.

Xu Hai leaped out from his chair in anger and rebuked him. "Unfair? You have no right to say that! You've sold Han Wu's personal data and brought an invasion of hundreds of Gods and Major Gods.

"You are a year his senior, and now you think it's fair to fight on equal terms with him? You've spent over a year at Imperial College, yet you've learned nothing!"

Huang Shengjun seethed but didn't do anything. If he attacked first, Xu Hai would kill him on the spot, and no one would step in to help him. Those who disrespected the strong were fools, and fools deserved to die.

Xu Hai wanted to scold him further, but Butcher stood up and cut him off. "All right, enough. Stop wasting time and start the match."

The referee glanced at the Death faction's representative. Seeing his agreement, the referee signaled for the match to begin. "You two, get ready. The battle starts now."

In an instant, both contestants were transported to Tanuki Town.

Han Wu appeared in a meeting room. One glance at the surroundings and the dried black blood on the walls told him that a vicious battle had taken place there long ago.

He tried moving his limbs and immediately noticed his restrictions. Since this was only a clone, all his Divine Powers were sealed. He couldn't even summon his units or use any of his Skills. At best, he was a bit stronger than an ordinary human. Fortunately, he still retained his combat experience.

After confirming that he was fine, he examined the meeting room more closely. His attention settled on the metal table. Its triangular legs looked sturdy enough to be used as makeshift weapons.

With some effort, he removed two table legs. The sharp crack of metal echoed beyond the meeting room, and soon faint groans drifted in from the corridor.

Gripping one of the legs tightly, he carefully peeked out and saw a humanoid figure slowly shambling toward him from the corridor.

Han Wu recognized it at once. It was the most notorious virus product of the Zombie Civilization: a zombie.

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[948 words]

Chapter 431 - Zombie Civilization

The zombies were once human, yet they could still move, listen, smell, and see objects. Unlike the living, they couldn't think or feel and fed on flesh by instinct.

With the right method, even a child could easily kill a slow, stupid zombie. Han Wu only needed one glance to figure out how. However, when he saw there were only five of them, he discarded all strategies. He didn't need a plan for this.

He stepped out of the meeting room and smashed the zombies' heads one by one with one of the triangular, metallic table legs. Each zombie dropped like a puppet with its strings cut, motionless on the floor.

Han Wu was afraid that they were feigning death and used the table leg's sharp edge to sever their heads, ensuring they were truly gone. He shook the blood from the table leg and started looking for a restroom to clean it off when he suddenly noticed a strange crystal inside one of the zombies' skulls.

Human skulls weren't supposed to contain anything like that. He cracked it open and retrieved an irregularly shaped crystal. The moment he touched it, a notification echoed in his mind.

[Energy found. Absorb?]

[Energy Points can be used to unlock the host's Divine Powers, Skills, and units.]

Han Wu smiled. The rules did state that they had to find a way to unlock their own powers, and it seemed that he had already figured it out on the very first day. After absorbing the crystal, he gained two Energy Points.

A list appeared in his mind, showing the available options. Out of the many, only one was currently accessible.

[Summon Locust (Common) – 1 Energy Point/unit]

He cursed them for the system. Killing a zombie yielded just two points, but that was only enough to summon two Common locusts. He knew how weak they were, and wasting precious energy on them was undoubtedly unwise.

Han Wu ignored the list and cracked open the remaining heads. Only one lacked a crystal. In total, he obtained twelve Energy Points from five zombies. As his energy reserves grew, more options appeared before him.

One of them was Mighty Cleave, an ordinary Skill that doubled his strength during a cleaving strike. He decided to get it. Once unlocked, he felt a slight surge of power course through him.

Now he was eager to hunt zombies and murmured excitedly, "As long as I hunt enough of them, I'll gather plenty of energy and use it to summon my units here."

Han Wu actively hunted down zombies. The thudding of his table leg attracted even more of the sluggish zombies toward the trap he had laid. As they stumbled in, he welcomed them with Mighty Cleave, striking down hard on their heads.

By the time a full day passed, he had accumulated eighty-four Energy Points. He now had enough points to unlock three new options on the list.

[Summon Locust (Elite) – 25 Energy Points/unit]

[Unlock Silver Bladefall – 50 points]

[Summon Locust (Unique) – 80 Energy Points/unit]

For the sake of his safety, he decided to summon an Elite locust and unlock Silver Bladefall. With those two additions, his overall strength increased.

The summoned Elite locust was half the length of his arm and among the weakest units in his army, yet it was now a reliable helper. Other than its insatiable appetite, it excelled in self detonation. That alone made it useful enough for him.

Han Wu ordered the Elite locust to bite the zombies' necks. The locust suffered no harm from consuming flesh and blood tainted by the virus. Back in his divine realm, the Origin of Mutation had modified the locusts' genes, granting them immunity to most viruses. That was also the main reason he had dared to accept this battle.

Moments later, the first zombie's neck snapped as the locust chewed through it unnoticed. The zombie collapsed with a heavy thud, and the sound drew a swarm of nearby zombies toward it.

Han Wu commanded the locust to extract the crystal and bring it back to him. A Common zombie yielded only three Energy Points at most. It was barely anything, but he didn't mind. All he needed was to find more zombies.

After several days of recovery, he had finally replenished the locust population within his divine realm. As long as he had enough Energy Points, he could summon as many of them as he needed here.

The Elite locust worked tirelessly through the night and collected ninety Energy Points for him. That was enough for him to summon three more of its kind. With four Elite locusts now under his command, their hunting efficiency increased, and they hunted down even more zombies.

Including the day's harvest, Han Wu had collected more than 400 Energy Points. The list expanded, but he dismissed most options and summoned even more Elite locusts. He spent the entire sum to summon sixteen additional Elite locusts, swelling his army's ranks.

Meanwhile, Han Wu realized that the first Elite locust he had summoned was ready to reach the Unique rank after devouring large amounts of zombie flesh.

The virus in the zombie flesh had no effect on the locusts, allowing them to feast on zombies without risk. Even better, the zombies felt no pain, so they wouldn't retaliate even as the locusts devoured them.

Han Wu glanced at the remaining thirty Energy Points on his stat screen and had a bold idea. Acting on it, he spent his Energy Points to summon thirty Common locusts, each no larger than a finger.

“Go and feast on the zombies to your hearts' content!” he commanded.

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[1,098 words]

Chapter 432 - Mutated Zombies

The locusts turned ravenous once they received Han Wu's order. Due to the effects of the Law of Gluttony, they were like miniature black holes that could never be satisfied.

The zombies paid them no mind, perhaps seeing them as nothing more than flies. In reality, the locusts were tearing off huge chunks of decayed flesh. Within moments, they stripped the zombies bare and reduced them to piles of bones.

When they were done with one of the zombies, three out of the thirty locusts reached the Elite rank. The rest hovered on the brink of advancement.

Han Wu found the fastest path to power and ordered his locusts to hunt for the next group of zombies.

With each kill, the swarm grew stronger. Their evolution accelerated at a shocking rate, and Han Wu collected more crystals than before. Seeing how vital his units were, he chose to forgo unlocking new options. Instead, he repeatedly selected the cheapest upgrade to summon additional Common locusts. As they emerged from his divine realm, each received the same order: devour every zombie in sight.

It didn't take long for the zombies on Han Wu's floor to be completely devoured. To boost their efficiency, he divided the swarm into two groups, each led by a Unique locust. One group would fly upward, the other downward, with a single purpose: to eat any zombies they encountered. The Unique locusts would be in charge of collecting the crystals.

With no need to fight personally, Han Wu found some food and water before resting for the night. The next morning, he woke up and spread his senses to locate his locusts. They brought back both good and bad news.

The good news was that they had cleared all zombies within three floors above and below him, and every locust had reached the Elite rank.

The bad news was that a powerful zombie lurked at the top of the building, only three floors above Han Wu. Several Elite locusts had already fallen to it.

Han Wu recalled what he had learned in class about the Zombie Civilization. Among the numerous infected, a few would inevitably mutate. The mutated zombies were usually more powerful, sometimes possessing enhanced strength, speed, or size, and others even wielded elemental powers such as fire or frost. In the Zombie Civilization, anything was possible, and the unpredictability of these mutations was what made this civilization so dangerous.

Still, Han Wu didn't panic. Instead, he calmly absorbed the crystals that his locusts had gathered and gained 1,000 Energy Points in the process. Now he could unlock new options from his list.

[Skill: Flash Kick – 500 Energy Points]

[Summon Locust (Heroic) – 500 Energy Points/unit]

[Skill: Spectral Dash – 700 Energy Points]

[1-Star God Weapon: Steel Blade – 1,000 Energy Points]

...

Han Wu studied the list carefully since he needed something strong enough to defeat the powerful mutated zombie. In the end, he selected the 1-Star Steel Blade. With a proper weapon and his combat experience, he could easily take down opponents stronger than himself. Ordinary zombies were now as fragile as paper before him.

He ascended the stairs with the weapon in hand. Even though his clone's parameters were low, the aura he had forged through conquering worlds merged with him seamlessly. Each step he took radiated confidence and overbearing force.

At the top of the building, the mutated zombie was just about to rip apart one of the locusts when it heard footsteps rising from below. Moving with extreme speed, it rushed toward the stairwell and glared at the man ascending.

Han Wu raised his head and glared back at the mutated zombie. From its wavering eyes, he sensed a trace of intelligence. Even the faintest spark of thought made a zombie a hundred times more difficult to deal with than the ordinary kind.

Han Wu's glare made the mutated zombie falter and take a step back. Seizing the moment, he charged up the stairs and brought his Steel Blade down toward its head.

At the last possible moment, the mutated zombie reacted and avoided the blow.

Han Wu chuckled. "A smart zombie is worth more dead than alive!"

He swung again, this time in a horizontal arc. The mutated zombie stepped back to avoid it, but the air pressure alone sliced open its abdomen. Rotten flesh and organs spilled across the floor from its wound.

The Steel Blade was covered in rotten blood, and Han Wu grimaced at the stench. He would have discarded it if not for the 1,000 Energy Points he had spent on it. He kept slashing at the mutated zombie, putting more force into each swing.

The mutated zombie was fast, but it couldn't escape forever. Three minutes later, Han Wu found an opening and struck down with full power, cutting the mutated zombie down. He then severed its head, ending it once and for all.

Han Wu summoned his locusts to devour the remains, then cracked open the skull to search for a crystal inside. When the locusts finished stripping the flesh, he reached inside and pulled out a pale blue crystal. At its center was an image of a figure in mid-run.

Recognizing its unusual quality, he realized it was a rare crystal and absorbed it without any delay. Instantly, he gained 200 Energy Points and felt his body grow lighter, his movements quicker, as if all weight had left him.

"To think that the mutated zombies' crystals could have such an effect. Not bad," he remarked.

As he carefully experienced the changes in his body, his locusts finished eating. Apparently, a mutated zombie's corpse was more nourishing than that of an ordinary zombie. After feeding, many of the Elite locusts reached the Unique rank, and four of the Unique ones evolved further into Heroic ones.

All of them transformed differently. One became a Heroic Locustman that could use the weapons granted by the Sacred Object: Sixfold Artifact. The second turned into a Heroic Primal Locust, growing tenfold until it reached the size of an aquarium. The third evolved into a Heroic Dark Curse Bug that could fly, hide in the shadows, and fire deadly Shadow Nails. The last one turned into a Heroic Locust Dragon.

Each species possessed distinct strengths. The Locust Dragon alone could easily overpower the other three Heroic locusts combined. If Han Wu had a Locust Dragon earlier, he wouldn't have needed to face the mutated zombie alone. Still, this was a promising start. He studied the four Heroic locusts and planned his next move.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[974 words]

Chapter 433 - Human Camp

Han Wu never forgot why he had entered Tanuki Town, the fragment of the Zombie Civilization. He was there to defeat Huang Shengjun. If he succeeded, Huang Shengjun would be expelled from Imperial College as the lowest form of punishment. Without him around, Han Wu could finally breathe easier.

Still, he acknowledged Huang Shengjun's talent. Even though Han Wu had secured plenty of resources recently, Huang Shengjun had been accumulating even more for over a year.

Lacking absolute confidence, Han Wu pushed himself to stay alert and keep working relentlessly. He gathered all his locusts and attacked the zombies lurking on the lower floors.

With the four Heroic locusts leading the charge, the ordinary zombies fell with little resistance. Han Wu tore through the building, slaying thousands as effortlessly as if he were on a leisurely outing. Yet frustration gnawed at him. The entire building had only one mutated zombie. Without proper prey, he couldn't raise the rank of his Heroic locusts.

After killing thousands of zombies, he had collected roughly 800 crystals, which he converted into 2,000 Energy Points. With that much at his disposal, he decided to strengthen his combat power. He opened the list and noticed that it had been updated. There's even a 2-Star God item available now.

[2-Star God Equipment – Wind Boots. 1,200 points]

...

Han Wu chose the Wind Boots and equipped them immediately as they had two special traits. They boosted his movement speed and allowed him to step on air for a short duration.

The effects seemed minor, but he was thrilled. With Wind Boots, he could move swiftly across battlefields or retreat if necessary. It was an exceptionally practical piece of God equipment.

He spent 1,200 Energy Points, leaving himself with only 800. With the remainder, he summoned 800 Common locusts. The swarm materialized like a dense black cloud, swirling in the air. They could strip a zombie down to bare bones in under three minutes.

However, if he wanted to get more high-ranking locusts, he'd need stronger prey than the ordinary zombies. He needed mutated ones. As such, he selected 100 Common locusts and sent them to scout for mutants in the surrounding area.

In an instant, those 100 locusts became his eyes, each one transmitting what it saw directly to him. It didn't take long before he finally found a target: a mutated zombie with bulging muscles lurking nearby. Its metallic-green skin looked impossibly tough.

Knowing the 100 Common locusts couldn't bite through it, Han Wu ordered them to stay back. He drew his Steel Blade, activated his Wind Boots, and sprinted toward the mutated zombie.

The mutated zombie sensed Han Wu the moment he entered its territory. It was a blatant declaration of provocation, so it grabbed its bloodied cleaver and charged toward him.

Han Wu didn't dodge; he met the attack head-on, swinging his Steel Blade forcefully. The first swing splintered the cleaver, and the second decapitated the mutated zombie. The entire fight ended in seconds.

His strike had been so clean that the severed neck gleamed smooth like a mirror. He then ordered his Unique locusts to devour the corpse, and three of them reached the Heroic rank.

Before he could rest, a report from one of the locusts startled him. It had discovered a human camp!

Han Wu was stunned. The Zombie Civilization was saturated with deadly viruses, so how could humans still exist here? Even if a few survivors had managed to endure, they shouldn't have had the numbers or resources to form any real resistance.

Yet, the locust's report was clear: there were thousands of humans inside the camp. After a brief hesitation, he followed the locust's lead and soon saw the human camp with his own eyes.

The camp's defenses were impressive. Four towering walls enclosed the camp, shielding the inhabitants from the zombies outside. There were also turrets mounted along the ramparts that would decimate any zombie horde that attempted to attack.

The guard standing watch outside spotted Han Wu. Instead of offering help, he barked a warning. "Damn zombie! Get away. Don't come any closer!"

Han Wu blinked in confusion. *Do I look like a zombie?*

"Hey, I just want to talk. Are you still accepting people?" Han Wu asked.

When the guard realized that Han Wu could speak and wasn't a zombie, his stance eased slightly.

"This is the Blazing Sun Camp," he stated. "You'll need to prove that you aren't infected if you want to enter."

Han Wu frowned. "And how am I supposed to do that?"

The survivor chuckled mockingly. "That's simple. There's a cage over there. If you can stay inside for an hour, then you'll prove that you aren't infected."

Han Wu suspected the man was mocking him, but he had no proof. He turned to leave, but the guard dashed to one of the turrets and aimed it straight at Han Wu.

"Since you're already here, you might as well contribute something to us, your fellow survivors. That blade on your back looks fine, and those boots too. Hand them over, and I'll let you live. Otherwise, I'll shoot you down like a zombie," he demanded.

Han Wu wasn't the type to tolerate such a threat. He turned and tilted his head. "Are you sure about that?"

"Stop blabbing and give me those items," the guard barked.

Han Wu chuckled and silently ordered one of his Locustmen to approach the guard undetected. Once it did that, it drove a blade into the guard's heart.

The man stared in shock at the blade jutting from his chest. His strength drained away, his final words dying on his lips as he collapsed to the ground in agony.

"I gave you a chance," Han Wu mumbled, then vaulted effortlessly over the wall into the Blazing Sun Camp.

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[1,167 words]

Chapter 434 - Camp's Mission

Naturally, Han Wu's sudden appearance inside the camp drew immediate attention. Several scouts were already rushing to report an intruder to their leader.

Scanning the camp, Han Wu noticed that all of the humans present were skinny and malnourished, as if they hadn't eaten in days. They looked more like refugees.

As he debated what to do, a squad in sturdy leather armor carrying machine guns swiftly surrounded him. They were nothing like the frail refugees.

Their squad leader stepped forward and studied Han Wu. "Are you an ability user?"

"An ability user?" Han Wu echoed.

"How else could you have jumped into the camp if you are not one?"

Realization flickered in Han Wu's eyes. "Then you can treat me as an ability user."

The squad leader nodded with satisfaction at Han Wu's admission. "Ability users are a valuable resource here in the Blazing Sun Camp. Please, follow me to meet our leader, Lie Yang."

Han Wu's brow lifted in suspicion. "Lead the way."

As the squad leader guided him, Han Wu passed more survivors in tattered shirts, their bodies thin and frail from hunger. He also noticed the absence of young women and suspected they had been taken elsewhere.

They soon reached a mansion, and the sound of women's laughter drifting from within confirmed his suspicion. Entering through the back door, Han Wu found a scene of indulgence: beautiful women of every kind, dressed in revealing clothes, laughing and playing without a care. The contrast to the starving refugees outside, separated by only a single wall, was stark.

For a moment, Han Wu almost believed that he had accidentally stumbled into another civilization.

The squad leader guided him further inside until they reached the camp's leader. Lie Yang was a muscular man, bare-chested, his abdomen sharply defined. Three beautiful women were massaging him as he reclined in comfort.

The squad leader bent close to whisper something to Lie Yang, and the latter laughed heartily. "Another ability user joins my camp. Welcome, Brother. Tell me, what's your ability?"

Even though Han Wu's current strength was average, his knowledge surpassed anyone here. He could tell at a glance that Lie Yang was as strong as a Lord life form.

Unfortunately, Han Wu wasn't strong enough to defeat him yet. To avoid unnecessary trouble, he answered casually, "My ability's quite strong. I can easily swing a huge blade and leap several meters into the air. I could probably clear a wall several meters tall."

Lie Yang burst out laughing. "You call that an ability? A regular person could do the same if they absorbed enough crystals and trained hard long enough."

The women giggled, covering their mouths as they mocked Han Wu. The squad leader flushed with embarrassment and shot Han Wu a resentful glare.

"Still, even though your abilities are weak, you're technically an ability user," Lie Yang said, his tone dripping with false generosity. "You can stay."

He dismissed Han Wu with a wave, as if granting a favor, then turned his attention elsewhere.

The squad leader growled, "If I'd known you were that weak, I'd never have brought you here. You made me look like a fool."

Han Wu was confused. How was his ability weak?

The squad leader sneered. "Swinging a large blade around means nothing. You might be strong, but can you beat a gun? One bullet and you're done. Still, jumping high isn't useless. It might help you escape zombies from time to time."

Han Wu was stunned. Although he had made up those two abilities on a whim, they reflected part of his power. He wasn't sure whether to laugh or feel insulted that mere mortals dared to look down on God like him.

I will make sure to surprise all of you once I can showcase my true strength, he thought grudgingly.

The squad leader assigned him a clean room in the mansion, then sent a cheerful young woman to tend to his needs before leaving.

Han Wu gladly took the opportunity to rest. He sprawled across the bed in satisfaction while secretly commanding his locusts outside the camp to hunt every zombie nearby to strengthen themselves. He also instructed them to gather the zombies' crystals in one place so that he could absorb them later.

Night slipped by quickly. When morning came, Han Wu was still fast asleep in his warm bed until someone barged into his room.

“You lazy pig, get up! The leader’s got a mission for us.” The man shook Han Wu to wake him up.

Han Wu got dressed and followed the man to the plaza. Eighteen others were already assembled there, each radiating power beyond that of ordinary humans. Han Wu could tell that they were all ability users gathered under Lie Yang’s command.

Moments later, Lie Yang appeared and barked his orders. “Brothers, let’s cut to the chase. Today’s mission is simple—thirty crystals per person. Fail to deliver, and don’t blame me for what happens next!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Good. Let’s move out!” Lie Yang waved his arm and climbed into a modified Hummer lined with spikes.

The others jumped into their own vehicles and followed close behind.

Han Wu looked around and spotted an old motorcycle. He didn’t care about its condition and kicked it to life, trailing after the convoy. He wanted to see where Lie Yang was taking them.

The old motorcycle roared so loudly that it drew a swarm of zombies. Han Wu suddenly realized that he could use that to his advantage and summoned his locusts to his location for a zombie buffet. Within moments, they descended and started eating the zombies chasing him.

Without the zombies disrupting them, the convoy had a smooth trip and soon reached an abandoned shopping mall.

Lie Yang stopped at the entrance, gripping an AK in his left hand and a rifle in his right. Standing there, he looked like someone about to pull off a miracle.

“My brothers, I’ve sent men to scout this place before. There’s a powerful mutated zombie on the mall’s fifth floor. Once we kill it and get its crystal, we can create another ability user for our camp,” Lie Yang announced. “I’ll handle the mutated zombie myself. You only need to get rid of the zombies in the four lower floors so I can conserve my stamina.”

“No problem, Boss.”

“Boss, you can fight the mutated zombie without any worries. We’ll take care of the small fries.”

“Boss, how will the crystal be split once you kill the mutated zombie—” The man didn’t finish his question before Lie Yang shot him.

“Since when do you have the right to question how I allocate resources?” Lie Yang growled.

The other ability users fell silent, afraid that Lie Yang would turn his gun on them next.

Meanwhile, Han Wu absorbed every word of their exchange. *Can the crystals from mutated zombies really turn ordinary humans into ability users? Can I use them on the locusts?*

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Chapter 435 - Taking Over the Mall

[1,003 words]

Chapter 435 - Taking Over the Mall

With a single order from Lie Yang, all the ability users charged into the mall and started fighting against every zombie in sight.

Han Wu noticed that most of them were fairly weak. Some were weaker than Heroic life forms, technically classified as Unique life forms. In a sense, they were barely stronger than ordinary people. Even 100 of them together wouldn't be enough to defeat a Heroic life form. Their strength came only from their guns, which allowed them to easily dispatch zombies with one or two shots.

Gripping his Steel Blade, Han Wu sliced through zombies as if they were vegetables and headed smoothly to the second floor. Without any other ability users in his path, he faced numerous zombies alone, but Steel Blade's power allowed him to clear a path effortlessly and move on to the third floor.

There were fewer zombies there, but he sensed that they were much stronger than the ones below. Following the aura of a powerful zombie, he cut through the weaker ones in his way until he came upon a mutated zombie.

To his surprise, it was a dog, or rather, a zombie dog. It had once been covered in thick, glossy fur, but its body was now stripped bare, exposing raw flesh and sinew that gave it a grotesque, unsettling look. Facing this *cute* dog, Han Wu didn't hesitate and swung his blade.

The zombie dog somehow dodged his strike and darted through a hole in the nearby wall to hide. Unfortunately for it, Han Wu could still sense its presence. He followed the path to the other side, walked down the corridor, and feigned ignorance. As he reached the hiding spot, he suddenly swung his blade.

At such close range, the zombie dog had nowhere to run and died. This time, Han Wu didn't mind getting dirty and cracked open its skull to retrieve its crystal. To his surprise, there was none.

"Such misfortune!" he exclaimed. He never thought that he'd be unlucky enough to encounter a one-in-ten-thousand chance of a mutated zombie without a crystal.

He tossed the skull aside, summoned his locusts to the third floor to feast, and made his way to the fourth floor.

He cleared out the weaker zombies first while spreading his senses through the area. Before long, he detected another powerful zombie guarding the fourth floor. It was huge, its skin tough as concrete, and the aura it emitted was more powerful and purer than that of the zombie dog below.

Even so, it was no match for his Steel Blade. The 1-Star God weapon could easily tear apart the zombie's skin, and he defeated it within minutes.

Han Wu checked its skull for a crystal but was stunned to find none. The zombie dog's missing crystal could have been a coincidence, but finding two in a row without one was abnormal. He was certain that there had to be a reason behind it.

Han Wu glanced up at the top floor. He suspected the cause had to do with the Frost Zombie that Lie Yang had mentioned. He was about to head up to confirm his suspicion when Lie Yang reached the fourth floor, moving at a leisurely pace.

Seeing the carnage around Han Wu, Lie Yang gave him an approving look. "Newbie, I didn't expect your ability to be that strong. I will reward you handsomely once we get back. The one upstairs is too strong for you to handle. Leave it to me."

As Lie Yang made his way upstairs, Han Wu watched his back and cursed inwardly, *Would it kill you to stop bragging?*

He followed Lie Yang anyway. The latter noticed him but didn't chase him away. Instead, he whispered, "Once the battle starts, don't do anything reckless and break my rhythm, or we're both dead."

Han Wu said nothing, and Lie Yang took his silence as agreement. The air grew colder as they climbed. When they reached the top, they finally saw the strongest mutated zombie in the mall. Its ability clearly stemmed from ice and frost, evident from the thick sheets of ice and the frozen humans surrounding it.

The Frost Zombie also appeared highly intelligent. It didn't panic upon spotting Han Wu and Lie Yang. Instead, it eagerly presented its ice sculptures. "Finally, someone is here. Look, this is my first project after my mutation. It's called The Half-Bitten Child."

The name fit disturbingly well. Inside the ice stood a small, half-eaten child, her skull and torso partially devoured but perfectly preserved in the frozen block.

"The next project is Crystal Alice," the Frost Zombie continued proudly, revealing a beautiful young girl, sealed forever in crystal ice.

"The next one is called—"

It never finished. Lie Yang pointed both his AK and rifle at it. "You've committed too many sins. Time to go to hell."

He pulled the trigger, and something extraordinary happened. The gun muzzles flared as bright as the sun, and the bullets that tore through the air carried solar power, scorching the Frost Zombie on impact.

The Frost Zombie summoned thick walls of ice to shield itself from Lie Yang's gunfire, but the barrage was overwhelmingly powerful. The ice walls crumbled easily, leaving the Frost Zombie exposed.

Lie Yang poured every ounce of his power into his weapons and turned every round into a burning bullet. In less than three seconds, the magazines of his AK and rifle were emptied. In return, the Frost Zombie's body was riddled with holes like Swiss cheese.

Lie Yang stumbled to the ground, overcome by severe fatigue. "I'm so tired."

Han Wu strode forward and severed the Frost Zombie's head to ensure it couldn't regenerate. He split open its skull to look for the crystal and, this time, he found one the size of a fist. It gleamed brightly, with the image of an ice block suspended inside.

Lie Yang raised his gun and aimed at Han Wu. "Hand over the crystal, now!"

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[1,106 words]

Chapter 436 - Forceful Suppression

Lie Yang had killed the Frost Zombie, so Han Wu hadn't planned to claim the crystal for himself. However, when Lie Yang aimed his guns at him, he changed his mind. If Lie

Yang saw him as a pawn, then he would take the crystal. Invading a world has always been about ruthlessness; the strong took everything, and the weak either served them or died.

When Han Wu didn't hand over the crystal right away, Lie Yang's glare sharpened. He had already been wary of Han Wu's strength after watching him reach the fourth floor alone. Deep down, he suspected that Han Wu was stronger than him.

Someone like Han Wu could threaten his position in his own camp, so it'd be better to eliminate him now. Once the thought formed, Lie Yang acted without hesitation and used his ability with the last of his stamina. Flashing bullets flared from the gun muzzles and streaked toward Han Wu.

Han Wu reacted with lightning speed, spinning his Steel Blade to deflect the incoming bullets before leaping high into the air. "Silver Bladefall!"

He plummeted down with crushing force. The impact sent Lie Yang hurtling upward, and Han Wu followed through with Mighty Cleave. With unparalleled speed and power, he cleaved Lie Yang clean in half before the man even hit the ground.

Blood rained down as Lie Yang's final scream echoed through the entire mall. Hearing it, the other ability users rushed to the top floor, only to find Lie Yang's bisected corpse and Han Wu standing over it with a bloodstained blade.

Han Wu raised his head slowly and fixed the ability users with a bloodthirsty glare. If any of them dared to move against him, he would cut them down without a second thought.

One of the ability users was smart enough to throw down his weapon and raise both hands. "The mutated zombie has killed our leader! We need someone new to lead us. I say the newcomer who slew the mutated zombie is the best fit to lead us forward!"

The others turned toward him, confused. They all knew that Han Wu had killed Lie Yang, so why claim that the mutated zombie had done it?

Sensing no one else understood, the quick thinker hissed, "Do you guys want to get buried alongside the boss?"

Realization spread through the group. If they couldn't defeat Lie Yang, they stood no chance against Han Wu, who had slain him with ease. One by one, they followed the quick thinker's lead, throwing their weapons aside and raising their hands in surrender.

When most had already submitted to Han Wu and turned a blind eye to Lie Yang's death, the rest who had resisted at first eventually followed suit.

Only one man remained standing; he was the squad leader who had brought Han Wu to meet Lie Yang. He was Lie Yang's sworn brother. After confirming that Lie Yang was dead, he ignored his own life and raised his gun in a desperate bid for revenge. He pulled the trigger and fired a stream of bullets at Han Wu.

Han Wu reacted swiftly and used his 1-Star God Steel Blade to deflect the bullets. He then appeared before the squad leader like a gust of wind, swung the blade, and severed the man's head from his shoulders without a trace of hesitation.

Blood sprayed out from the severed neck, splattering across the onlookers' faces. The blood was hot, but the ability users felt only a chill that sank deep into their bones.

He killed him!

The new leader killed him!

He's too fast!

Han Wu raised the bloodstained blade and asked coldly, "Does anyone else want to stand against me?"

Every head shook. When he pointed the blade their way, they clamped their mouths shut. None of them dared to go against someone that powerful.

"Boss! Boss!" the quick thinker shouted, and the others followed in unison.

Han Wu lowered his blade and gave his first command as the Blazing Sun Camp's leader. "Gather all the food and daily supplies. Load everything into the trucks. Some of you, stack the zombie corpses in a corner. Extract their crystals and hand them over to me."

The ability users were crestfallen. The crystals were beneficial for ability users like them because they could strengthen them, and losing that source of power meant they had little chance to improve. Still, none of them dared to object. Defying Han Wu would mean certain death.

It wasn't long before Han Wu received a bag full of crystals. He set the mutated zombie's crystal aside for now, absorbed the rest, and obtained 7,000 Energy Points.

With the added points, the list of available options expanded further. However, he didn't spend them to purchase items or unlock more of his strength this time. He decided to wait and save them for a larger purchase.

Once he finished with the ordinary crystals, his attention shifted to the pile of zombie corpses nearby. Even from ten meters away, the pungent stench was overwhelming.

His underlings watched closely, curious about what he would do next.

Han Wu pinched his nose and silently ordered his locusts to converge around him. Moments later, they swarmed through the mall and descended on the pile of corpses to eat them.

The underlings stared in disbelief. The sight of countless ravenous locusts consuming the zombie corpses was even more revolting than the zombies themselves.

Within ten minutes, the corpses were gone. Every locust had advanced to the Unique rank, and twenty had reached the Heroic rank.

To Han Wu, Heroic locusts were invaluable combat assets. Nodding in satisfaction, he summoned the Heroic Locust Dragon and handed it the Frost Zombie's crystal.

The Locust Dragon absorbed the crystal, and faint blue markings spread across its body. The markings imbued it with the power of ice and frost, allowing it to draw in surrounding chill and exhale a freezing breath that could immobilize its foes. It was a powerful ability that could be used to suppress and freeze its enemies.

Pleased but not yet content, Han Wu ordered two of his Heroic locusts to devour Lie Yang and the squad leader. He wanted to know whether the locusts could mutate by eating the ability users' corpses.

The locusts eagerly tore into the corpses and digested them completely. Soon after, a faint, luminous marking appeared on the body of the Heroic locust that had consumed Lie Yang, and it obtained his ability as well.

Han Wu observed the transformation, and his excitement grew. The prospect of creating an entire locust army with abilities thrilled him.

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[1,105 words]

Chapter 437 - Fabricator

Back at the Blazing Sun Camp, Han Wu drove the women out of the mansion and started consolidating the camp's resources inside it.

He discovered that the camp had managed to amass enough food through ordinary raids to last everyone three entire months. Yet Lie Yang had rationed it so harshly that the ordinary survivors received only enough to keep them alive.

Lie Yang had also forced those same survivors to venture beyond the camp in search of supplies. Only those who brought back enough were allowed to stay. Lie Yang would then store the resources and distribute them among the ability users.

Han Wu frowned at the camp's management. If the camp were a kingdom, then Lie Yang had ruled as a tyrant, ruling for his own luxury and pleasure.

Now that Han Wu had taken charge, he swore to impose some measure of order. Even if he doubted the camp's future, he would at least give its people clear rules to live by.

He quickly drafted several new rules aimed at ending the starvation that left most survivors too weak to fight. If they had the strength to battle zombies, they could earn more resources in return.

Items that once seemed worthless, like scrap metal, tires, and broken glass, would now serve as barter. Han Wu decreed that anyone could trade such materials for food.

The survivors' spirits revived once they heard the new laws. They quickly rushed out from the camp to scavenge whatever they could find, thrilled that gathering scraps could earn them a meal lasting an entire day.

Han Wu also assigned several locusts to follow each team. That way, the teams of survivors would act as bait for the zombies, and the locusts would hunt and consume them. That was more efficient than sending his locusts to search blindly for zombies.

However, the ability users resented the new rules. The Blazing Sun Camp's food supplies would soon run out if they were traded for mere junk like iron scraps and old tires. They had risked their lives just to collect that food; how could it be handed out to the useless survivors?

As such, they gathered their courage, went to Han Wu's mansion, and demanded that he revoke those rules or they would abandon the camp altogether.

Han Wu didn't even acknowledge their threats. He had his locusts supporting him and didn't mind losing those ability users. In fact, he could run the camp just fine without them.

Still, Han Wu despised betrayal. Those same ability users had thrived on the camp's resources to gain their strength, and now they wanted to leave without offering anything in return? Not on his watch.

He assigned each of them a mission based on their strength. The stronger the ability user, the harder the mission. That way, they would each pay a fair price for trying to leave. The most powerful among them had to deliver 1,000 ordinary zombie crystals to earn their freedom. The weakest one owed 200. Anyone who tried to escape without paying would find themselves hunted down by Han Wu's locusts.

The ability users had witnessed Han Wu's Locust Dragon unleash its frost breath before, freezing numerous zombies into frozen sculptures. None of them dared risk sharing the same fate, so they obediently paid their dues and ventured out to hunt zombies without complaint. Only by doing so could they hope to earn enough to leave the camp quickly.

Under Han Wu's management, the camp regained its vitality. Since many people needed food, they worked nonstop collecting scraps and junk. Soon, mountains of iron, tires, glass, and other debris filled the camp.

Many ability users mocked Han Wu, convinced that he had made a foolish decision.

Han Wu had planned for this all along. He had gathered the crystals from the survivors and those gathered by his locusts, amassing a staggering 15,000 Energy Points. That amount was enough to unlock the Fabricator within his divine realm.

The Fabricator was the amalgamation of his Divine Power: Merge, Refinery, and his Transmutation Ring. By inserting a blueprint and the required materials, he could produce any item listed on it endlessly.

Han Wu had already collected numerous blueprints during his time in the Divine Civilization, so all he needed to do was load the necessary ones into the Fabricator. What he lacked were the raw materials, which was why he had ordered the survivors to gather junk.

He took out the Fabricator and examined its stored blueprints. He carefully selected the ones he needed. The first one he chose was the handgun, a simple weapon that could damage the ordinary zombies. As long as he had enough handguns, he would be able to enable the survivors in his camp to fight against zombie hordes.

Without hesitation, he shoved the raw materials into the Fabricator, which started churning out numerous handguns. At the same time, he fabricated the bullets. Since bullets required only a small amount of raw materials, the Fabricator could produce tens of thousands of them per minute.

When the survivors returned from scavenging, Han Wu told them that they could exchange the junk they had collected for guns and ammunition as well.

They rushed toward him at once. They knew too well how dangerous it was to venture outside in search of scrap. With handguns, they could take greater risks and earn more rewards. Even though the trade cost them large amounts of junk, they didn't hesitate to offer everything they had.

In one exchange, Han Wu obtained a vast supply of resources and crystals.

Naturally, that wasn't enough for him. He hadn't forgotten why he came here, which was to defeat Huang Shengjun. Although his life seemed peaceful now, he never knew Huang Shengjun could attack him at any moment. That uncertainty pushed him to swiftly keep growing stronger.

He was thinking about creating more powerful weapons when a survivor burst into his mansion, panting in panic. "Boss, big trouble! A huge zombie horde is approaching our camp!"

Han Wu's eyes widened. "Zombie horde? How many?"

"Millions! I think they were drawn here because so many of us went scavenging. If not, how could such a huge horde come after us? Boss, what should we do? Do we escape or fight?"

"Of course we fight. Let's show them our Blazing Sun Camp's strength," Han Wu replied evenly.

"But how can we hold out? There are too many. They could easily surround our camp three times over!"

Han Wu patted the Fabricator with confidence. "Just wait. I'll secure the weapons we need to protect our camp."

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[1,269 words]

Chapter 438 - Suppressive Fire

The survivors grew restless as the zombie horde closed in on the camp. Beyond the iron wire mesh, a massive wave of the zombies advanced from only five kilometers away. Some of the meeker survivors couldn't handle the looming threat of death and wanted to escape the camp on their own.

Han Wu ensured that his rules applied to everyone without exception. Anyone could leave, but they had to pay their dues first. An ordinary survivor owed one to ten crystals before being allowed out. It was a small fee, but most had nothing left to spare and were forced to stay here.

Han Wu would be more than happy if some broke his rules and tried to escape. If they did, he would have a reason to set his locusts on them. After all, the flesh of the living provided more nourishment than that of the zombies.

Despair swept through the camp. Many of the survivors gave up hope and spent the last of their resources on food for their final meal.

Han Wu made no effort to lift their spirits. He needed them to sink into the deepest part of the abyss before he could save them. Only then could he harvest the purest kind of faith.

As a God, he understood its value. Humans would offer true devotion only when rescued from the brink of despair. If he intervened too soon, they would depend on him rather than revere him.

Within half an hour, the zombie horde had closed the distance to a single kilometer. Han Wu was certain that some sort of commander was directing their movements. The path they took was too deliberate, too organized. Zombies with brains the size of walnuts couldn't possibly form a crescent formation to encircle the camp on their own.

The camp's survivors had descended into panic, collapsing to the ground as if they had already accepted death.

That was when Han Wu took action. He ordered anyone who still wanted to survive to gather in the center of the camp, where they would arm themselves and make one final stand against the zombies.

The survivors were hesitant, unsure whether to trust him. How could handguns possibly hold back millions of zombies? They doubted they could even slow them for a single second.

Still, a few who refused to die without a fight decided to heed his orders. They thought that it would be worth it to take down a couple of zombies before they died. They headed toward the center of the camp and froze in shock.

Thousands of eight-barrel Gatling guns were lined up neatly in ten rows. Stacks of ammunition boxes rose high on the side. Mortars, grenade launchers, flamethrowers, and other weapons filled the area, and three Panzerkampfwagen VI Tiger Sd.Kfz.181 tanks loomed among them!

The survivors gasped. Since when had they possessed such firepower? With this arsenal, they could easily decimate a zombie horde of tens of millions, much less a few million zombies.

The sight of those powerful weapons rekindled their will to live. For some, it also generated the purest kind of faith that linked them to Han Wu in the form of a thread.

Lie Yang, the former leader, could never have achieved something like this. The survivors grabbed their weapons and prepared for the coming siege.

Word of the weapons spread through the camp like wildfire. Those who had been sunk in despair snapped back to life, rushing to arm themselves before taking positions along the camp's perimeter. They mounted their weapons and waited for the zombies to enter their firing range.

At the rear of the zombie horde, a tiny mutated zombie stood alone on the high ground and observed the camp through a pair of binoculars. Despite its frail appearance, it was the horde's leader. Its mutated ability allowed it to command vast numbers of ordinary zombies with ease, and that power drew other mutated zombies under its banner, forming this unstoppable zombie horde.

Through the binoculars, it noticed that the humans inside the camp were moving a lot of weaponry around. The sight made it scoff in disdain, convinced they were desperate and nearing collapse. There was no way such meager firepower could stand against its horde.

Nevertheless, it erred on the side of caution and used its ability to order the ordinary zombies to advance in waves toward the camp. It wanted them to deplete the survivors' ammunition first.

Inside the camp, the survivors spotted the first wave entering their firing range.

"The zombies are here! Fire! Don't let even one of them through our defense line," someone shouted.

Thousands of Gatling guns roared, spewing azure flames. A hail of bullets tore through the zombies, turning them into meat paste under the relentless barrage.

The suppressive fire elevated the survivors' adrenaline levels. The Gatlings alone couldn't satisfy their hunger for destruction. Thus, they fired mortars, launched grenades, and even unleashed torrents of fire from their flamethrowers to decimate the invading zombies.

Hundreds and thousands of zombies died from their suppressive fire. The tiny mutated zombie observed the battlefield through its binoculars and felt relieved that it had made the right decision.

Thank zombieness I didn't send in the mutated ones first. They'd have all been wiped out under such intense firepower, the little zombie thought.

Even though the little zombie had lost much of its fodder, it still believed in its horde. It expected that the human survivors' onslaught would die down once their ammunition ran low, giving it the chance to breach the camp with minimal effort.

Unfortunately, the situation didn't pan out as it had hoped. The suppressive fire never ceased. The dead zombies had piled into a wall nearly four meters high, yet not a single zombie managed to break through the defense line.

After losing another 300,000 zombies, the little zombie started panicking. *Why isn't it over? How can a tiny camp like this have so much firepower? Did they build it on top of an ammunition depot or something? No, that doesn't make sense. Even if they did, how could they keep firing for this long? Just how much ammo do they have?*

At the same time, Han Wu ordered another group of survivors to replace those guarding the defense line. It was time to switch their shifts.

Even though the little zombie couldn't hear Han Wu's orders from afar, it could see everything. When it noticed the humans firing less, it naively assumed that they had run out of ammunition.

Believing victory was within reach, it ordered the remaining ordinary zombies to charge the camp. They were to trample the bodies of their fallen comrades to break through the humans' defense line.

Overwhelmed by the endless tide of zombies, the first shift of survivors had grown weary from the prolonged fight. Their shots lost precision and power, allowing several zombies to breach past their defense line.

Just as they closed in for the kill, Han Wu sent out his locust army. The Locust Dragon released a breath attack that froze the zombies solid, and the survivors quickly opened fire, shattering the frozen zombies easily.

The tiny zombie froze in disbelief before erupting in fury. It had gathered such a massive force, yet it failed to destroy such a small camp. Its standing within the zombie community was in tatters.

How could it show its face again after this humiliation? Determined to salvage its reputation, it took command itself and drove the horde into a full-scale assault. One way or another, it would wipe the camp from existence!

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- Chapter 439 - Post-Battle Statistics

[959 words]

Chapter 439 - Post-Battle Statistics

The remaining 700,000 zombies received the little zombie's command and charged in unison. They tanked the bullets with their bodies, trampling over the fallen zombies' corpses to breach the defense line and pour into the camp.

The survivors panicked and scattered in all directions.

Han Wu stood on a rooftop and shook his head in disappointment. They had enough guns to take on a horde of ten million zombies, yet they were failing against barely a million. The problem was not their weapons; it was their softness. They weren't battle-hardened warriors. The zombie vanguard had rattled them, and instead of holding their ground, many escaped while the enemy was still far away. Victory was impossible for those too fragile in mind to fight.

He ignored the survivors and chose to face the remaining zombies alone. He ordered his locusts to appear all at once. Ten thousand Unique locusts and three hundred Heroic locusts appeared from the shadows. Their combined power far surpassed that of the camp's survivors.

"Kill them all!" Han Wu shouted.

The locusts turned into murder machines. Empowered by the Sacred Object: Sixfold Artifact, the locusts could summon one of its six weapons.

Under the Frost Locust Dragon's command, the locusts materialized bows and arrows and unleashed a storm of projectiles. Each volley sent over 10,000 special, razor-sharp arrows slicing through the air.

Due to their elevated position, the arrows gained terrifying momentum, and their velocity magnified their piercing power. Each shaft felled a zombie cleanly, so 10,000 arrows brought down 10,000 zombies. Within two minutes, Han Wu wiped out 700,000 ordinary zombies.

The display of overwhelming firepower horrified the tiny zombie observing from afar. It was too unthinkable! How could any of its zombies survive such an onslaught?

The tiny zombie decided to run. Only an idiot would stay and fight. Many of the mutated zombies supported its decision and followed its lead, fleeing in the camp's opposite direction.

Unbeknownst to them, Han Wu rode atop a massive Primal Locust, watching their retreat with keen interest. Many of the fleeing zombies were unusually strong.

The powerful mutated zombies had an elevated sixth sense and sensed that someone was following them. When they turned, they saw a mere human astride a giant insect.

Han Wu chuckled and called out, "Go on, keep running. I'm just watching."

The zombies growled and leapt upward, trying to drag him from the air. Although the mutated zombies were somewhat smarter than ordinary zombies, they still lacked the intelligence of a five-year-old child.

Watching its subordinates flounder helplessly, the tiny zombie grew anxious. It wanted to help them but knew how weak it was. If it showed itself, it would likely be killed on sight or captured for experimentation. Trembling in fear, it hid in the shadows.

As it was waiting for the mutated zombies to be slain, a voice echoed from above. "How long are you going to hide there?"

The little zombie froze in horror and looked up to see Han Wu gazing down with a smirk. Realizing escape was impossible, it wanted to end its own life on the spot. Despair filled its dead heart, but it refused to die cowering. Hence, it summoned the last of its strength and lunged forward for one final stand. A huge blade then descended from above and ended its undead existence.

Upon seeing Han Wu land from above, the other mutated zombies attacked him simultaneously. Han Wu didn't flinch. Wielding his 1-Star God Steel Blade, he cut them down one after another. In less than three minutes, he was the only one left standing.

Victory came swiftly and without any complication. He summoned his Heroic locusts to devour the mutated zombies' corpses in hopes they would evolve. Then he collected the crystals from the zombie skulls to nurture more powerful locusts.

Back in the camp, many humans had survived thanks to the locusts' help. The zombie horde had been annihilated, and they had lived through the onslaught. Now they needed to stabilize the situation in the aftermath of the invasion.

This time, the zombies had been the aggressors, and they paid dearly for it. More than 1 million zombies had been wiped out. The humans had also suffered losses; a third of them were infected and had to be executed to stop the spread. Only Han Wu's locusts remained unscathed.

As the survivors cleared the battlefield, they recovered numerous crystals for Han Wu. He absorbed them all, amassing 3.4 million Energy Points. With such reserves, he checked the list and discovered several newly unlocked items. Scanning through them, he noticed that many of his Divine Powers carried price tags in the millions. He first spent 1 million to acquire Replicate, then another 2 million to summon the Origin of Mutation to his side.

The Origin of Mutation thrived in the Zombie Civilization like a fish in water. It greeted Han Wu, then darted off into the wilderness to pursue its own goals.

Han Wu was already used to this. As a researcher, the Origin of Mutation possessed an insatiable curiosity and a natural drive to explore new knowledge. He hoped that its discoveries would eventually yield something useful for him.

That night, the Origin of Mutation returned with some results. It had brought back a towering mutated zombie. It was an underling it had recruited during its exploration.

It planned to conduct a series of experiments on the mutated zombie to uncover the origin of the crystal within its skull, the power source that sustained most mutated zombies. To do so, it asked Han Wu for several of the crystals he had obtained. Each crystal carried a distinct mark of power, and their nature was cloaked in mystery.

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[1,104 words]

Chapter 440 - Finding Food

As the Origin of Mutation delved deeper into its research on zombies and their crystals, the connection between the two gradually came to light. Eventually, it discovered the crystals' true nature.

They were actually condensed hormones produced when humans were infected by the virus! The higher the compatibility between the virus and the host, the higher the crystal's quality. Once that purity reached a certain threshold, the crystal would mutate into an ability crystal that granted the mutated zombies their powers.

After understanding the crystals' formation, the Origin of Mutation proposed to Han Wu that they administer the substance to a few humans to test its hypothesis. If successful, this would mean the discovery of a way to artificially create ability users.

This discovery was vital to Han Wu, but he still had a bottom line. He refused the proposal for the time being. Even though he cared little for the survivors' lives, he still couldn't bring himself to force them into experiments with the zombie virus. As such, he proposed that they volunteer instead.

Those who chose to participate would receive daily food and a chance to become ability users. The reward was meager, but many still stepped forward. In a world where survival itself was uncertain, even the faintest hope for tomorrow was enough to make people risk everything.

The Origin of Mutation got the subjects it needed and started the human trials immediately. Meanwhile, Han Wu focused on nurturing his locusts. With the zombie

horde's corpses as sustenance, he could feed far more of them and soon expanded his swarm. Soon, he commanded 200,000 Unique locusts.

Moreover, the Locust Dragon had devoured vast amounts of flesh and successfully evolved into a Lord life form. After ranking up, it was the size of a buffalo, and its combat strength soared.

However, as Han Wu summoned more locusts, a new problem arose. His swarm was great in battle but consumed food at a staggering rate. Even the zombie corpses at hand could only sustain them for a few days. If he wanted to maintain or expand his swarm, he would need to secure more food.

After consulting the survivors, Han Wu learned that their camp was situated on Tanuki Town's outskirts. The number of zombies increased drastically as one ventured toward the town center.

Determined to replenish his resources, he resolved to lead his swarm into the center of the town.

Han Wu left the Origin of Mutation at the camp to continue its research, then mounted a flying locust and set off. Within five hours, he reached Tanuki Town's borders. Extending his senses, he detected numerous zombies wandering among the skyscrapers, and more than a few survivors scattered within.

Han Wu directed his locusts toward a nearby building and started clearing it floor by floor. The locusts entered one after another and used the sound of the elevators to lure the zombies near them. Without hesitation, they activated Sixfold Artifact and summoned their bows and arrows to attack the zombies.

Although these bows were Divine weapons, one rank below God weapons, they possessed destructive power comparable to that of a sniper rifle. The zombies never had a chance to resist; the arrows struck them down immediately. Their corpses then became food for the locusts, which devoured the flesh before collecting the crystals and delivering them to Han Wu.

He hardly needed to move to amass a fortune in crystals. Yet his calm exterior was deceptive. Even as he rested, he maintained control over 200,000 locusts at the same time. Only through his precise control could the entire swarm swiftly kill the zombies in the building.

When the last zombie fell, the survivors hiding inside finally dared to emerge in search of supplies. Some saw Han Wu directing the swarm and begged him for protection, even promising to pay a million credits.

Han Wu ignored them. He had no intention of wasting energy to protect them, and 1 million credits meant nothing here. The world had already ended, and money was as

worthless as scrap paper. If anything, toilet paper had more value. Thinking they could buy his protection with a stack of bills was laughable.

When a man realized that Han Wu wouldn't respond, he raised his offer from 1 million to 5 million, then 10 million. When that failed too, he accused Han Wu of being too greedy.

Irritated, Han Wu ordered one of his locusts to bite off the man's head. Silence returned at last, allowing him to focus on controlling the swarm to eat the zombies so that they could evolve.

It didn't take long before his activity drew attention. With so many locusts swarming the area, it was impossible to stay unnoticed. A helicopter patrolling the skies over Tanuki Town had been observing zombie activity when its crew noticed something unusual: that area was empty of zombies and crawling with locusts instead.

The scout onboard immediately grew alert. "Tanuki Town, Mammoth Sector. We've spotted a huge swarm of locust-like organisms, which are ten times larger than normal locusts. They appear to have mutated from the virus."

He paused, eyes wide. "Wait... These organisms appeared to prey on zombies. Hold on—what's that? The unknown organisms are extracting the polymer from the zombies' skulls and delivering it to a man!"

A moment later came another exclamation. "Who is that guy? To think that those organisms that killed the zombies aren't attacking him at all..."

The scout relayed everything to their superior through the radio.

A response came quickly. "That man is most likely a special ability user that has obtained the powers to control locusts. Capture him alive. The organization wants him for research. We might be able to extract some rare gene from his body."

"Copy that."

The helicopter banked and descended toward Mammoth Sector, landing on the rooftop helipad. Three heavily armed scouts disembarked and headed down the stairwell.

Along the way, they passed clusters of locusts feasting on zombie corpses. They braced themselves for an attack, but the locusts didn't react. Even after several tense moments, not one turned toward them.

One of the scouts voiced the thought they were all thinking. "What if the locusts don't harm humans?"

To test it, he stepped closer to one. The locust noticed him and clutched the zombie corpse beneath it with its spindly legs, blocking his hand from touching it.

The scouts misread the gesture, assuming that the locust was timid and would latch onto nearby objects out of fear. In truth, the locust was protecting its food.

“What a cute fella,” the scout muttered.

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[1,050 words]

Chapter 441 - Parasol Corp

After confirming that the locusts posed no threat, the three scouts descended the building and swiftly reached the bottom.

Han Wu had sensed their presence long ago but had chosen to ignore them. Whether they came to rescue or kill the survivors didn't matter to him, so long as they didn't interfere with his work nurturing the locusts.

To his surprise, the scouts headed straight for him and raised their guns. The leader said, “We are scouts from Parasol Corp.. We are here to rescue you, so please come with us.”

Han Wu scoffed. Only an idiot would believe that. *Rescue me? I don't need rescuing. Since when do rescuers point their guns at the person they are trying to save?*

“Don't resist,” one of them warned. “The only right choice is to follow us.”

“My gun can't tell friend from foe,” another added. “So you'd better follow our orders if you want to live!”

Their threats couldn't have been clearer.

Han Wu smiled, rose to his feet, and faced the scouts. “You want to take me away? Then let's see if you are capable of doing so.”

The leader barked an order to the others. “Ron, Rick, take him down. Professor Zweisteine won't blame us as long as he's still breathing.”

The scouts aimed for Han Wu's legs and pulled their triggers.

The instant the bullets left the muzzles, Han Wu avoided them with astonishing speed. The scouts froze in disbelief, unable to comprehend how anyone could move faster than bullets.

“Don’t be fooled!” the leader shouted. “He must’ve used another ability to dodge the bullets. Keep firing! He can’t dodge them all.”

The others nodded and opened fire again, but Han Wu wasn’t about to stand still like a target. He jumped up high into the air and brandished his 1-Star God Steel Blade.

“Silver Bladefall!” he shouted, plunging downward. The Skill’s shockwave deflected the three scouts’ incoming bullets.

Han Wu slammed into the ground and drove his blade deep into the dirt. The impact sent another shockwave rippling through the area and knocked the scouts off their feet. He seized the opening and rushed forward to sever their arms so they couldn’t fire again.

Han Wu preferred to finish off his enemies, but these three appeared to belong to a larger organization. That piqued his curiosity. “Tell me about your organization, and I will let you live.”

The three scouts weren't ready to surrender. They roared in unison, and their bodies transformed. Multicolored fur burst from their skin, their muscles expanded, and even their severed arms regenerated. In the blink of an eye, they had turned into beastmen.

Han Wu noticed that they weren’t true beastmen; there was a distinct difference. Evidently, they were using their special abilities.

“You brat, do you think you are the only one with special abilities?” the leader growled. “We will show you today that there are even more powerful abilities out here!”

The three scouts lunged at Han Wu to tear him apart.

Han Wu didn’t panic. He weaved through their attacks like a butterfly while summoning his locust swarm to assist. Within seconds, three powerful figures appeared behind him: the Lord Frost Locust Dragon, a Heroic Locustman, and a Heroic Dark Cursed Bug.

They released their abilities and stopped the scouts in their tracks. The Frost Locust Dragon used its frost breath and froze the scouts’ lower bodies to prevent them from moving. Then the Dark Cursed Bug fired a volley of Shadow Needles, pinning their shadows to the ground and locking them completely in place.

Han Wu approached them and spoke again. “Tell me about your background, and I will spare you.”

“Never!” the leader spat.

“Long live Parasol Corp.!” shouted another.

“Parasol Corp. will avenge us!” the last cried.

Those were their final words. Their eyes widened, and a moment later, they were dead.

Han Wu blinked in surprise, then crouched to inspect their bodies. A quick check revealed that all three had bitten down on poison capsules hidden in their mouths. Their organization had most likely provided them to ensure they could die before revealing any secrets.

“That’s too bad... Wait, there’s one more!” Han Wu muttered, his gaze snapping upward.

He looked up toward the rooftop, where the helicopter waited. The pilot had been watching everything through his binoculars. He had seen his three comrades fall after transforming.

A wave of dread washed over the pilot. His comrades had been defeated, captured, and driven to take their own lives with the poison capsules they carried.

When he noticed Han Wu staring back at him, his scalp prickled and a horrifying chill crept down his spine. Acting on instinct, he quickly restarted the helicopter and lifted off.

The rotor thundered above him, but he couldn’t care less. This was a matter of life or death, so the noise was the least of his concerns. He pulled the helicopter higher and sighed in relief once he saw that he was thirty meters above the rooftop.

Then Han Wu’s voice sounded right beside him. “Hey, where are you going?”

The pilot jolted and whipped his head around. Han Wu was sitting leisurely inside the cabin.

“How... How did you get up here?” the pilot stammered.

“That’s not important,” Han Wu said evenly. “What matters right now is whether you want to live or not.”

The pilot swallowed his saliva and answered truthfully, “Yes. I want to live.”

“Then tell me about Parasol Corp.,” Han Wu replied. “What do they do?”

At the mention of the name, the pilot turned serious. Han Wu noticed the shift and pressed the muzzle of his gun to the man’s temple. “Seems like you’d rather die than talk.”

“Wait, I will tell you what I know. Just don’t kill me.”

Han Wu lowered his gun slightly, and the pilot started explaining what he knew about Parasol Corp. However, the information was useless because none of it contained the crucial details Han Wu needed. Thus, he pressed for more. “Just tell me the important bits.”

“The important bits?” The pilot gave a shaky laugh. “Well, we’re now 10,000 meters up. If I let go right now, we’ll both die.”

Han Wu sneered. “Do you really think you have the right to threaten me?”

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[1,121 words]

Chapter 442 - Invading the Base

The pilot and Han Wu clashed in a deadly contest of nerve and cunning 10,000 meters above the ground. The pilot believed that Han Wu would die if they both fell from that height, while Han Wu doubted the pilot had the courage to take that risk.

“One last chance,” Han Wu drawled. “Tell me everything about Parasol Corp.”

The pilot kept his composure. “I’ve told you everything I know.”

“Seems like you are still being dishonest.” Han Wu pointed the gun at the pilot’s head again. “Never mind, then. It seems that you don’t really value your life.”

Sweat streamed down the startled pilot’s forehead, but he didn’t yield. “You won’t shoot me. Without me piloting the helicopter, you will die too.”

Han Wu scoffed at the threat and snapped his fingers. The Locust Dragon, which had been keeping pace with the helicopter, appeared just outside the cockpit window. The pilot’s bluff crumbled the moment he saw it. He realized that he had nothing left to threaten Han Wu.

Han Wu was about to pull the trigger when the pilot broke. If he spoke now, his superiors would punish him later. If he kept silent, Han Wu would kill him on the spot. To survive, he chose to disclose information about Parasol Corp.

Han Wu listened closely and was impressed by Parasol Corp.’s insanity. For the sake of studying the virus, they had released it across Tanuki Town, turning every resident into a living experiment.

Even Han Wu, a God who had destroyed plenty of countries, was appalled by their ruthlessness. An organization like that deserved divine retribution, and he was eager to deliver it.

Han Wu forced the pilot to fly toward Parasol Corp.'s secret base in Tanuki Town. The pilot obeyed and landed at the base. As soon as Han Wu stepped out, the pilot quickly took off again. He knew that returning to Parasol Corp. after leaking its secrets meant certain death. His only faint chance of survival lay in escaping now.

He had barely cleared the compound when a missile streaked through the night sky and struck the helicopter. The explosion blossomed above like a lone firework.

Inside the compound, alarms blared. "Intruder alert! Dispose of the intruder immediately!"

Han Wu frowned. "How was I exposed so quickly?"

He replayed everything that had happened during the flight and examined each detail until he caught his crucial mistake. The pilot had landed and then flown away without waiting for instructions from the base. That irregular behavior had tipped them off.

"Damn, that was careless of me." Han Wu looked at the fading explosion as the sirens wailed. Rather than hide, he checked the list in his mind and selected several pieces of God equipment to boost his combat power.

He spent 200,000 Energy Points and equipped a full set of 4-Star God equipment for protection, along with a 4-Star God weapon called Flying Arrow, which could be controlled with his mind.

Han Wu then strode into the base openly. Parasol Corp.'s security forces appeared almost immediately, clad in heavy combat armor and carrying rifles and riot shields made of reinforced composite.

As they closed in and came within range, they opened fire without warning or receiving instructions. A hail of bullets burst from their muzzles and streaked toward Han Wu, but every round stopped midair. The force field generated by his armor had blocked them just twenty centimeters away from him.

In response, Han Wu mentally guided the Flying Arrow and easily sent it slicing through the guards' shields, combat armor, and flesh. One by one, the seasoned veterans collapsed under its deadly attack. Han Wu advanced brazenly, moving deeper into the base.

Back in the control room, the highest authority of the base, Zweisteine, was looking at Han Wu with a serious face through the screen. He had to admit that Han Wu's special ability was very strong.

Inside the control room, Zweisteine studied Han Wu with intense curiosity. “How did he get this strong? Is it a special ability or a unique mutation? I’d love to dissect you and see how your body is built. How did you gain such a powerful gift?”

He then picked up the microphone and ordered, “Rank 1 ability users, prepare for combat. Capture the intruder alive, and you’ll be promoted to Rank 4!”

The moment Zweisteine’s order went out, the prison doors within the secret base swung open. The Rank 1 ability users excitedly burst from their cells. If they could defeat the target Zweisteine had designated, they would be promoted to Rank 4. To fulfill their dreams, they were willing to stake their lives on the mission!

Following the path marked by Zweisteine, they soon came face to face with Han Wu. The instant they spotted him, they used their special abilities. Some transformed parts of their limbs into those of beasts, some fired condensed energy waves, and others amplified their physical strength.

Unfortunately, they were far too weak to stand against Han Wu’s full armament. He didn’t even bother to dodge. None of their attacks could pierce his God equipment’s defenses, and he could easily kill them with his Flying Arrow.

Within three minutes, hundreds of Rank 1 ability users lay dead, their corpses strewn across the ground.

Unwilling to waste such high-quality food, Han Wu used his Energy Points and summoned more Common locusts to let them feast on the ability users’ corpses. They would help his locusts to develop special abilities.

Zweisteine had been observing everything through his monitor, and his curiosity about Han Wu grew with each passing moment. The Rank 1 ability users had been nothing but cannon fodder to gauge Han Wu’s strength, so their deaths meant little to him.

Now, it was time for a real test. He would send out the strongest ability user stationed there to deal with Han Wu. Parasol Corp. had assigned that particular individual to protect the facility.

At his command, a young blond man emerged from the depths of the base. Dressed in a black leather jacket and shades, he carried a longsword and moved with the effortless grace of a supermodel who could charm any woman in sight. He was Fawkings, a Rank 5 ability user and the strongest operative Parasol Corp. had dispatched.

“I thought we were under attack by a zombie horde, but you’re sending me after a mere invader?” Fawkings complained through the video call.

Zweisteine played the footage showing Han Wu stopping bullets in midair, then cutting down his enemies with the Flying Arrow.

Fawkings' eyes lit up as he watched. "What an interesting invader we have here. He might actually be worth my time."

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Chapter 443 - Fawkings Blocking the Path

[1,098 words]

Chapter 443 - Fawkings Blocking the Path

Han Wu advanced through the base smoothly, killing anyone who crossed his path. His heightened senses let him avoid dead ends and navigate directly toward the facility's core areas.

He rounded a corner and came face to face with Fawkings, who stood menacingly in the middle of the passage, clad in a black leather jacket and gripping his longsword.

"Invader, you aren't half bad." Fawkings complimented him as they locked eyes.

Han Wu didn't bother to respond and sent his Flying Arrow hurtling toward Fawkings. This time, the sharp weapon met its match. It stopped just ten centimeters from Fawkings and couldn't move any further no matter how hard Han Wu tried.

That immediately alarmed Han Wu. After all, his Flying Arrow was a 4-Star God weapon; if it couldn't pierce the force field, then Fawkings was someone formidable.

Fawkings gave an approving nod. "Not bad. To think that your weapon actually pierced my force field to within ten centimeters of me. You're only the fourth person I've ever met who could pull that off."

Realizing the Flying Arrow was useless, Han Wu recalled it and opened his list. He spent 50,000 Energy Points to summon a 4-Star God greatsword.

Fawkings' eyes widened as a greatsword suddenly materialized in Han Wu's hands. "You have a special ability related to space? It seems that I've underestimated you."

Envy flickered across his face. He had always considered himself gifted, but even he didn't have a spatial ability.

"Stop wasting my time," Han Wu muttered, lunging forward.

Fawkings raised his longsword to meet the charge. The longsword was forged from an unknown material that could absorb the impact of Han Wu's 4-Star God weapon without a single crack.

They exchanged blow after blow, each surprised by the other's strength. Han Wu realized that he had met a worthy opponent today.

Meanwhile, Fawkings was exhilarated. "At last, an enemy who can withstand my full power. Try to survive this!"

Fawkings spread his hands, and the iron studs embedded in his leather jacket shot outward. With a gesture, he directed them toward Han Wu like a storm of bullets. They struck Han Wu's force field and stopped just fifteen centimeters from his body. To his surprise, they were stronger than bullets.

Fawkings showed no surprise when his iron studs failed to pierce Han Wu's force field. He channeled more power into his magnetic ability and hurled his longsword straight at Han Wu.

Fueled by magnetism, the sword flew faster and hit harder than the iron studs, stopping just five centimeters away from Han Wu. Fawkings pushed his power further, and the longsword edged forward, driving deeper with steady force.

Han Wu swung his greatsword and knocked the longsword aside, but Fawkings redirected it midair. The longsword curved around and lunged at Han Wu from another angle.

Each strike stripped away a layer of protection from the 4-Star God armor he was wearing. Han Wu could feel the armor weakening. It would break apart if it sustained a few more blows.

To prevent it from breaking, Han Wu went on the offensive. The greatsword felt weightless in his grip as he swung it effortlessly, deflecting the longsword and counterattacking in one motion.

Fawkings wasn't a pushover. He blocked his attacks using a magnetic force field, but Han Wu soon noticed that it weakened each time he struck it. Thus, the fight turned into a test of endurance to see who would wear out first.

As expected, Fawkings lacked Han Wu's combat experience. The latter dodged most of Fawkings attacks until he sensed the exact moment the magnetic force field had weakened enough to break.

Han Wu channeled his strength for one powerful attack. "Mighty Cleave!"

The strike carried twice the power of his usual slashes. Fawkings' magnetic force field could barely withstand ordinary slashes, and this time it shattered under the force. Han Wu's Mighty Slash tore through it and severed Fawkings' arm.

This was the first grievous injury Fawkings had ever suffered. He cried out in anger, and his severed arm began to regenerate, the flesh knitting together with astonishing speed. Within five seconds, a new arm had fully formed, though the effort drained much of his energy.

Realizing he couldn't continue, Fawkings decided to retreat. He launched a barrage of iron studs to distract Han Wu, then turned and ran. As he retreated, he also used his magnetism to wrench metal gates from the walls and hurl them toward Han Wu in a desperate bid to slow him down.

Han Wu cleaved the flying gates apart with ease and advanced step by step.

"Don't get any closer! Professor Zweisteine, save me!" Fawkings shouted.

Zweisteine didn't want to lose a valuable ability user like Fawkings, so he slammed several switches to seal the remaining base gates and block Han Wu's advance.

Han Wu ignored the metal gates completely. With a single sweep of his greatsword, he sliced through the metal gates as if they were paper. The ten-centimeter-thick steel split cleanly in two, doing nothing to slow him down as he closed in on his opponent.

For the first time, Fawkings felt death breathing down his neck. Desperation drove him to summon every ounce of his magnetic power, compressing the shattered gates into a massive sphere of twisted metal before hurling it at Han Wu.

Han Wu met it head-on, cleaving the metal ball apart with one stroke. Nothing could stop Han Wu's advance. He continued forward, his gaze fixed on Fawkings.

Realizing the vast gap in strength, Fawkings dropped any thought of resistance and muttered repeatedly, "Please let me go... Please let me go..."

Han Wu seized Fawkings by the neck but stopped short of killing him. Instead, he activated Replicate to copy Fawkings' abilities. The process granted him three new abilities: Magnetic Force Field, Magnetic Control, and Hyper-Regeneration. Combined with his God equipment, his combat capabilities doubled.

"Your abilities belong to me now," Han Wu whispered and manipulated the surrounding iron nails with magnetism before shooting them at Fawkings.

At first, Fawkings managed to deflect the projectiles with his own magnetic force field, but exhaustion soon broke his concentration. The force field flickered, then collapsed.

The iron nails pierced his body and impaled him onto a metal door. Even his Hyper-Regeneration failed to heal his wounds this time.

Han Wu had no intention of giving him another chance. He stepped forward and brought his greatsword down, ending Fawkings' life. Han Wu then summoned several locusts to consume Fawkings' corpse and moved deeper into the base.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,153 words]

Chapter 444 - Releasing the Zombies

After replicating Fawkings' abilities and factoring in his God equipment, Han Wu had reached his peak strength in this place. The magnetic force field worked seamlessly with his God equipment's defensive force field, rendering him almost invincible. Bullets and explosions no longer affected him.

Moreover, he could manipulate magnetic forces to weaponize the surrounding metal, conserving both energy and stamina. Meanwhile, Hyper-Regeneration acted as a safety net in case he was ever injured; though so far, nothing had managed to harm him.

In the control room, Zweisteine was losing his composure. If even the strongest fighter had failed, who else could possibly stop Han Wu?

"All ability users, attack! Whoever kills the intruder will become the base's strongest fighter!" he bellowed through the broadcast system.

A reward was all it took to stir the desperate into action. Many ability users were fired up and ready to fight. In a world ravaged by the zombie apocalypse, power was nearly impossible to attain. However, they now had a chance to seize it by killing Han Wu. Following the route Zweisteine had laid out, the ability users positioned themselves to launch an ambush.

Zweisteine planned to overwhelm Han Wu through sheer numbers. Normally, Han Wu would've been cautious, but after replicating Fawkings' abilities, he saw no need to hold back. He pressed forward, ignoring every trap and ambush that lay ahead.

He controlled countless tiny but sharp metallic shards to orbit around him. With a little force, the shards accelerated into a metallic tornado that protected him and shredded anyone who dared attack. Agonized screams echoed for an instant before being silenced by the metallic tornado.

For the first time, fear gripped Zweisteine as Han Wu left a trail of destruction in his wake. The strongest ability user, Fawkings, had already fallen. Now, even if all the ability users joined forces, none could bring Han Wu down.

Zweisteine was down to his last option. He glanced at the camera feed in the corner of the large screen, which showed a laboratory. Inside were nearly two dozen zombies that he had ordered captured alive. He had conducted countless experiments on them, infecting each with a virus of higher purity. Their strength had increased dramatically, and they were much more powerful compared to the mutated zombies roaming in the wild.

Even Fawkings, who once sparred with these mutated zombies, had warned Zweisteine never to relax that laboratory's security. If they ever broke free, then Tanuki Town would be completely destroyed.

Zweisteine looked at the few remaining ability users still alive and knew that he had run out of options. Without hesitation, he pressed the button. The vats in the laboratory hissed open, releasing a flood of fluid dense with sedatives. One by one, the mutated zombies opened their eyes, and an eerie aura filled the room.

Even Zweisteine wasn't sure whether he had done the right thing, but he had no choice. Stopping Han Wu was all that mattered now.

There were twenty-three mutated zombies in total. Twenty of them had received a higher-purity strain of the virus, which granted them the strength of Rank 4 ability users at the cost of their intelligence, making them dumb killing machines. The remaining three were as powerful as the Rank 5 Fawkings. They had awakened their special abilities and retained the intelligence of ordinary humans.

As the mutated zombies awoke, fragments of memories flickered through their minds, driving them into a frenzy. Overwhelmed by the flood of information, they yearned for human flesh to ease their madness.

Zweisteine quickly opened a passage leading toward Han Wu's position. As expected, the noise of the metal doors drew the zombies from the laboratory. Sweat beaded on Zweisteine's forehead as he had been worried that they would not take the bait, but to his relief, everything went according to plan.

He opened the doors one after another, guiding the twenty-three powerful mutated zombies until they came face to face with Han Wu. The moment they saw a living human, they went berserk and lunged at him, each desperate to be the first to taste human blood.

Han Wu took one look at them and waved his arm. The metallic tornado surrounding him intensified as the shrapnel, drawn by his magnetic control, spun into a deadly vortex. The mutated zombies leading the charge were shredded into minced flesh,

leaving only their crystals scattered on the ground as evidence that they had ever existed.

Upon realizing how strong Han Wu was, the zombies in the rear stopped. Then they spread out and circled him in search of an opening in the metallic tornado.

Among them was a mutated zombie with a mid-range ability. It raised its claws and aimed at Han Wu. In the next instant, its claws extended more than ten meters, striking straight into Han Wu's force field. Feeling the resistance, the mutated zombie poured more power into its claws.

Han Wu was also busy blocking the claws. The combined power of his magnetic force field and his defensive God equipment stopped the claws just ten centimeters away from him.

Han Wu looked at the mutated zombie mockingly, then drew the longsword he had taken from Fawkings and slashed at its claws.

With a sharp crack, the metal-hard claws split cleanly in two. The mutated zombie howled, enraged by the loss of its weapons, and lunged at Han Wu to tear him apart and devour him.

Though he seemed to handle the fight with ease, Han Wu was actually vigilant. He had only slain five mutated zombies so far, and eighteen still remained. He worried that he couldn't defend against all their attacks at once, so he decided to thin their numbers. He took out his 4-Star God Flying Arrow and controlled it with his mind.

The Flying Arrow weaved past the mutated zombies with ease. Some fell instantly when the arrow penetrated their skulls, while others deflected the strikes with their hardened bodies.

Han Wu conserved his energy, shifting targets whenever the arrow failed to kill. In rapid succession, he eliminated fourteen of the eighteen mutated zombies. Of the last four, three were as strong as Fawkings, and the fourth rivaled a Rank 4 ability user with metallic skin.

Surprisingly, they showed almost human expressions of shock, fear, and doubt at the sight of their fallen kin.

Han Wu retrieved his Flying Arrow and switched to close-combat armor. With his longsword of unknown material in one hand and his greatsword in the other, he approached the four mutated zombies.

The zombies instinctively retreated.

In the control room, Zweisteine had been watching closely. He quickly sealed the doors behind the mutated zombies, trapping them inside and forcing them to fight Han Wu.

The mutated zombies let out guttural snarls, their ugly faces contorted in rage and frustration. With no way out, they had no choice but to fight.

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Chapter 445 - Fighting Against the Mutated Zombies

[1,217 words]

Chapter 445 - Fighting Against the Mutated Zombies

The three Rank 5 mutated zombies activated their special abilities. The first grew scales across its body as a thick mist enveloped it. Supported by the mist, it could glide through the air like a fish through water.

The second sprouted dense bone spikes until they covered its entire body, forming a peculiar bone armor. At the same time, its arms warped as the spikes twisted together, reshaping into razor-sharp pikes.

The third differed from the others. It possessed telekinetic power, allowing it to manipulate nearby objects at will. With a mental command, it tore a metal plate from the wall and twisted it into a huge lance. It planned to impale Han Wu with it.

Finally, the Rank 4 mutated zombie showed little intelligence. After activating its ability, its skin darkened to a metallic black, and its figure resembled that of a metallic gorilla. It was also the first to attack.

It jumped up high into the air and swung its fist downward to crush Han Wu's skull. The strike was savage and powerful but riddled with openings in Han Wu's view. He easily sidestepped the blow and sliced off the zombie's arm with his longsword.

After losing one of its arms, the zombie snarled and tried slapping its chest to display its frustration. Han Wu seized the opening and beheaded the zombie.

"This is a battle. What are you dancing around for?" he muttered, flicking the blood off his longsword. The gorilla-like zombie was already lifeless and could no longer hear him.

After witnessing how easily Han Wu dispatched the last Rank 4 mutated zombie, the remaining three exchanged wary glances. They were more intelligent and capable of strategy. With a single look, they already understood what each of them needed to do.

The first to take action was the mutated zombie shrouded in mist. It glided through the air like a mermaid swimming in water. It could use the mist to shield its allies or weaponize it to strike with its enhanced form. It moved with blistering speed, attacking from unpredictable angles that made defense nearly impossible.

Fortunately, Han Wu's battle experience allowed him to anticipate its trajectory and counter in time.

Before he could swing, the second zombie attacked. The telekinetic one hurled the giant lance toward Han Wu, using it as a diversion to cover the mermaid zombie.

Han Wu sliced the giant lance in two, but the halves twisted midair and reformed into twin lances. He struck again, only for the telekinetic zombie to manipulate the broken pieces into even more lances.

Each blow strained his combined force field. No matter how many times he cut the lances, the telekinetic zombie could easily reshape the halves into more lances to attack him.

Han Wu focused so intently on fending off the lances that he failed to notice the zombie covered in bone spikes gathering energy. Like a raging bull, it charged straight at him.

It was too fast and too strong, and Han Wu realized the danger only at the last second. The impact sent Han Wu flying across the air. He crashed into the thick metal doors and left a human-shaped indentation on it.

The spike zombie's brute strength and hardened bone spikes had torn through Han Wu's defenses, leaving two gaping wounds in his chest and abdomen.

When the mermaid zombie noticed that he was gravely injured, it lunged from an odd angle. Han Wu gritted his teeth through the pain and swung both his greatsword and longsword in unison to push it back.

At the same time, he activated Hyper-Regeneration to quickly heal himself, but the process consumed an enormous amount of energy. If he kept taking damage, he would most likely die here. Under such circumstances, fighting alone was suicidal. To turn the tide, he had no choice but to summon his locusts.

A huge swarm emerged from the hole that Han Wu had carved into the metal door. Most of them were Unique life forms, though a few had reached the threshold of a Lord life form, like the Locust Dragon.

The Locust Dragon approached Han Wu with deep reverence but was infuriated when it noticed the blood on his body. It unleashed its breath attack to freeze everything in its path.

The spike and telekinetic zombies easily blocked the attack. The first, protected by layers of bone spikes, felt no fear of the cold. The second ripped metal plates from the wall and raised them as a barrier.

Only the mermaid zombie failed to retreat in time and was struck head-on. The mist surrounding its body worked against it, freezing solid and turning into ice. The mermaid zombie crashed to the ground and thrashed like a fish on land. No matter how it struggled, it could no longer glide.

The locusts seized the moment and summoned countless weapons to hack the mermaid zombie apart. Within ten seconds, nothing remained but a heap of bones. The locust then presented Han Wu with the mermaid zombie's crystal.

The two remaining zombies witnessed the locusts' power and immediately gave up the fight. They had no desire to die here and turned their attention to the door that was blocking their escape.

The spike zombie charged forward, its sharp bone spikes easily punching two huge holes through the metal. The telekinetic zombie then used its special ability to widen the openings until it could squeeze through, then slipped away.

The spike zombie tried to follow, but its bulk caught in the narrow gap. It roared for help, yet the telekinetic zombie ignored its cries and vanished into the depths of the base.

Zweisteine frantically pressed the buttons, trying to seal the exits before the telekinetic zombie could escape. However, it used its powers to slow down the doors' closing speed and slipped through the narrowing gap just before they clamped.

The trapped spike zombie watched helplessly as its companion fled. It howled in despair, but its cry ended abruptly when Han Wu beheaded it with his greatsword. He then turned toward the direction the telekinetic zombie had fled and slowly followed it. One way or another, he would tear this entire base apart today.

Back in the control room, Zweisteine knew that he had lost and decided to escape through the secret passageway. Before doing so, he needed to take the last vial of high-purity virus and several key pieces of experimental data.

It wasn't out of passion for research. He needed them to stay alive. Parasol Corp. cared only about results, not progress. Returning empty-handed meant death.

He was still reaching into the deep freezer for the vial when the telekinetic zombie appeared behind him without warning. In the next instant, it slammed him to the ground and ate him.

The telekinetic zombie then seized the vial and swallowed it in one gulp. As the virus coursed through its body, every cell seemed to surge with energy, and its mind grew sharper than ever. Memories of its human life flooded back, including fragments of who it once was and the brief, excruciating moment of infection.

“This... feels good...” a male voice rasped from the telekinetic zombie’s mouth. At that moment, it felt that it was a king that could control everything.

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[1,114 words]

Chapter 446 - Telekinesis

Han Wu extracted all the crystals from the mutated zombies’ skulls and fed their flesh to his locusts. The energy within the flesh caused many of them to evolve, and two even advanced to the Lord rank.

Han Wu’s strongest unit, the Locust Dragon, also reached the High Lord rank. After devouring the spike zombie, it also awakened a new ability called Bone Spikes. Once activated, its close-combat strength soared, while its frost breath granted it deadly long-range power, making it a truly formidable foe.

Sensing his Locust Dragon’s immense strength, Han Wu abandoned Fawkings’ abilities and used Replicate on his Locust Dragon. In an instant, Han Wu transformed. Sharp, tough bone spikes jutted from his skin, forming an armor that drastically increased his defense. The bone spikes could also reshape at will to form any weapon he desired. With these bone weapons, his close-range attacks became brutally destructive.

Han Wu gained the Locust Dragon’s frost breath as well. He could freeze any opponent who dared to approach before piercing them with his spikes, shattering them into icy fragments.

Satisfied, he led his strongest locusts deeper into Parasol Corp.’s secret base. When the door slid open, Han Wu found the telekinetic zombie sitting on the office chair, waiting for him. It was gnawing on a human thigh and complaining about how dry the meat tasted.

The moment their eyes met, Han Wu felt an oppressive pressure radiating from the telekinetic zombie. Just two hours earlier, it had seemed insignificant. Now, it radiated a violent aura that screamed danger.

The telekinetic zombie tossed the half-eaten limb and looked at Han Wu. "I've been waiting for you. You're finally here. You are strong, and your flesh will taste far better than that stupid old man's."

Though startled, Han Wu masked his reaction. "It seems that you've grown stronger."

"I've consumed a vial of high-purity virus. I am much stronger now." The telekinetic zombie's voice trembled with excitement as it unleashed its full force. Without warning, the table in front of it shot forward and crashed toward Han Wu.

Han Wu quickly summoned bone spikes to shield himself and blocked the blow, but the telekinetic zombie wasn't finished. Various items within the office floated upward, as if lifted by invisible hands, then hurtled toward Han Wu and his locusts. Worst of all, two Heroic locusts were ripped in half before his eyes.

"Kill it now!" Han Wu howled.

He fired two bone spikes to destroy a flying monitor, then charged straight at the telekinetic zombie with his longsword, greatsword, and Flying Arrow.

The Locust Dragon followed his lead, summoning bone spikes as armor. Now it was strong enough to stand against the telekinetic zombie.

Unfortunately, their attacks failed to land. The telekinetic zombie's special ability blocked every strike with an invisible force field about three meters away. After consuming the high-purity virus, its power had condensed into something as strong as a solid object. Both Han Wu and the Locust Dragon felt as if they had crashed into a wall and couldn't reach their target.

Drunk on its newfound strength, the telekinetic zombie laughed maniacally. "Submit to my power and become my dinner!"

"Use your breath attack!" Han Wu ordered the Locust Dragon, then unleashed his own.

Unexpectedly, the telekinetic zombie was strong enough to restrain their attacks and conjure two solid walls with its telekinetic ability to block them. Even the combined might of their breath attacks couldn't break through.

"You're powerless. Only death awaits you!" the telekinetic zombie taunted. Yet its grin faltered when it noticed that neither Han Wu nor the Locust Dragon looked afraid. Instead, they regarded it with pity.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” it demanded, glancing between them. “I’ve evolved into the perfect life form and can kill you both easily!”

It stared at them until a strange stiffness crept through its body. When it looked down, it saw that its legs had frozen without realizing it. The ice crept higher, spreading up its limbs with each passing moment.

The telekinetic zombie frowned in disbelief. “Wait, I wasn’t hit by your breath attack. How am I injured?”

Han Wu answered, “You weren’t hit directly, but you underestimated the aftermath. Our breath attacks can temporarily drop the surrounding temperature to -20°C. Even steel can’t withstand that for long, much less your frail body!”

The telekinetic zombie’s expression twisted as it understood its mistake. Obsessed with blocking the attack, it had ignored the freezing air itself. Within moments, it was completely encased in ice. Han Wu summoned his Flying Arrow, shattered the frozen corpse, and sifted through the remains until he found the telekinetic zombie’s crystal.

The crystal stood out from the ones found in other mutated zombies. It had the shape of an octahedron and bore a golden mark depicting a human brain. The mark most likely symbolized the telekinetic ability.

Han Wu decided that this would be his preferred special ability. Ever since his clone descended into Tanuki Town, he hadn’t absorbed a single crystal from the mutated zombies there. The ones he had collected before lacked the uniqueness he sought. Though powerful, God equipment could replicate their special abilities, which made them far less valuable.

However, the telekinetic ability was different. It offered immense potential, remarkable versatility, and was shapeless when used, which made Han Wu favor it even more. Without a second thought, he absorbed the crystal on the spot.

The moment he did, his mind felt clearer, and his senses sharpened dramatically, allowing him to perceive his surroundings without relying on sight. Within 1,000 meters, nothing escaped his awareness. When he focused in one direction, his perception stretched as far as five kilometers. This was a minor but useful perk of his telekinetic ability.

Han Wu nodded with approval. “Not bad.”

The Locust Dragon then handed him a black box. It looked refined and was most likely valuable. It had found it beside Zweisteine’s corpse and thought it should bring it to him.

Han Wu motioned for the locusts to carry the black box back to their base and ordered them to collect anything else of value before returning with him.

A day later, another helicopter landed at the secret base, and two Rank 5 ability users from Parasol Corp. stepped out.

The secret base in Tanuki Town had failed to report to headquarters for an entire day, so they had sent those two to investigate.

As soon as they set foot on the site, they froze. The site was nothing but scattered rubble and churned earth.

They exchanged bewildered looks. “Was there always a cave here? Where did the base go?”

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[987 words]

Chapter 447 - Disgusting Goblins

Back at his base, Han Wu consolidated all the resources and used them to expand his territory. With the Fabricator’s help, the base was now surrounded by a huge concrete wall reinforced with three meters of metal. It was so solid that even a horde of ten million zombies couldn’t breach it.

The Origin of Mutation sifted through the materials Han Wu had brought back and found the black box. Drawing on its memories of the Divine River Civilization, it recognized the device as a storage data unit. After some tinkering, it managed to decrypt the information hidden within it. It contained vast experiment records about the zombies’ special abilities and the artificial creation of ability users.

The trove of experimental data thrilled the Origin of Mutation. Struck by sudden inspiration, it rushed back to the lab to resume its experiments.

Three days later, it had successfully developed a drug that could grant ordinary humans new abilities. The awakened ability would be at Rank 1, yet it enabled ordinary humans to exert two to ten times their normal strength, making the drug highly valuable.

Many volunteers joined the experimental program and became the lowest-ranking ability users. As their numbers grew, they were no longer content within the cramped space they occupied. They wanted to explore and expand their territory.

Han Wu encouraged them to venture outside. He assigned a group of locusts to accompany every ability user who left the base. The locusts served two purposes: to ensure no one escaped before repaying their debt and to consume the zombie corpses

the humans had killed. Through this method, Han Wu swiftly upgraded his millions of locusts.

As his base grew stronger, more survivors arrived seeking refuge. Han Wu welcomed them all. They could trade scavenged items and junk for food and guns.

He also gained a lot of Energy Points from the crystals they handed over. In just ten days, his total exceeded 5 million Energy Points. With his newfound wealth, his list expanded once again.

He reviewed the list and finally saw that he could summon one of his strongest locusts, Dark Locust.

[Summon Dark Locust (Saint) – 5,000,000 Energy Points]

Han Wu didn't hesitate and summoned Dark Locust. His Energy Points were drained, and Dark Locust appeared before him, bowing in greeting.

"Good. You'll stay by my side and protect me for now," Han Wu said with satisfaction. He patted Dark Locust's head, then used Replicate on Dark Locust to gain his Skills.

Unfortunately, Han Wu's clone wasn't strong enough to withstand Dark Locust's full power. Otherwise, he would become a Saint life form too.

Naturally, Dark Locust obeyed his command and faded into a shadow that merged seamlessly with Han Wu's shadow.

With Dark Locust guarding him, Han Wu felt more secure now. Once he stabilized his position in Tanuki Town, he turned his focus to his ultimate objective: find Huang Shengjun, kill him, and obtain victory.

He dispatched numerous locusts and survivors to search the surrounding area. After half a month, they finally brought back vague reports. Some of the survivors had spotted a short but vicious type of life form in the mountains east of Tanuki Town.

The monsters weren't particularly strong, but they appeared in large numbers and shared an unusual habit—they captured every female life form they encountered for breeding. It didn't matter whether the targets were human survivors, zombies, or even large animals; they took them all to procreate.

After hearing the report, Han Wu confirmed that the survivors were indeed describing Huang Shengjun's goblins. Only goblins would commit such vile acts.

The problem was that Han Wu's forces were stationed west of Tanuki Town, while Huang Shengjun's force was hundreds of kilometers away to the east. Between them lay the town itself, infested with hundreds of millions of zombies.

Crossing that distance to engage Huang Shengjun was nearly impossible for now. Thus, he had no choice but to focus on strengthening his forces. He needed to fight more powerful opponents, accumulate more Energy Points, and nurture even more powerful locusts.

Another month passed just like that.

Han Wu had just completed the third expansion of his base. It was now a hundred times larger than its original size, and its outer perimeter stretched all the way to Tanuki Town's outskirts. The location proved to be beneficial as the survivors could easily enter the town and hunt more zombies.

As usual, the survivors set out with the locusts to kill zombies and gather resources. However, today, something unexpected occurred. Just as they were about to finish off the remaining zombies nearby, a group of short, ugly monsters appeared.

They went berserk, attacking the survivors while desperately trying to save the female zombies. It didn't seem to matter to them that the females bore bite marks or carried the virus.

Han Wu witnessed everything unfold through his locusts from afar. He knew that the time had come. Huang Shengjun's goblin army had expanded so much that their territory had overlapped with the edge of his own. The countdown to their final battle was already ticking.

Determined to secure victory, Han Wu poured everything into expanding his army, sparing no cost to strengthen both his forces and himself. The goblins his locusts encountered also served as their fresh nourishment.

Back on the eastern side of Tanuki Town, Huang Shengjun was happily looking at the female zombies, aiding the goblins reproduce. Even though they were technically undead, his goblins' reproductive prowess still proved superior as the zombies gave birth to more goblins.

Goblins could reproduce with any species, and their numbers multiplied by the day. With Huang Shengjun's Divine Talent Quality in Numbers, each goblin grew stronger than the last.

Huang Shengjun watched the tiny goblins emerge from the female zombies and grinned with cruel delight. "Han Wu, what could you possibly have that could defeat my army?"

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[1,199 words]

Chapter 448 - Clash of Might

The war between the locusts and goblins raged on as the two armies clashed repeatedly. By now, the survivors and locusts had all but abandoned their missions to collect resources. Whenever they spotted goblins, they dropped everything to hunt them down. On the other hand, the goblins focused all their efforts on kidnapping female survivors.

With each passing day, the fighting intensified until even killing zombies became secondary.

Han Wu and Huang Shengjun were controlling their forces from afar, and had started to take the conflict seriously.

Over the past few days, Han Wu's army had slaughtered many goblins, and something about it felt off. The goblins were far too weak; most were Unique life forms, and some were even Common goblins.

The imbalance alarmed Han Wu. Within just a month or two, he had successfully upgraded all his locusts to Unique life forms. How could Huang Shengjun, whose talent rivaled his own, still command such weak units? The only plausible reason was that Huang Shengjun was concealing his true army, keeping his real strength off the battlefield.

Han Wu couldn't ascertain how much Huang Shengjun was hiding, so he summoned his strongest unit, Dark Locust, to give him a secret mission.

"Dark Locust, I am assigning you the most difficult mission. Locate Huang Shengjun's main base and report back how many powerful units he has," Han Wu instructed.

Dark Locust nodded and flew east toward Tanuki Town. After issuing his order, Han Wu turned his attention to strengthening his forces. He sought out the Origin of Mutation and told it to halt its research on the genes responsible for triggering special abilities. For now, he wanted it to focus on nurturing the locusts.

Naturally, the Origin of Mutation agreed. Han Wu had currently summoned only 20 million locusts, which was barely a fraction of his true army. To enhance their power, the Origin of Mutation used Controlled Mutation and sacrificed a portion of their lifespan. Under its direction, the locusts grew exceptionally powerful. Their average strength now matched that of a Heroic life form, but their lifespan had been shortened to one year.

A year was fleeting for a human, but it was more than enough for the final battle. Still, the upgrades didn't stop there. Han Wu also instructed the Origin of Mutation to create even stronger species of locusts.

Eager to comply, the Origin of Mutation asked Han Wu to capture several living goblins. It then used its most versatile Skill, Gene Recombination, to transfer the goblins' dexterous hands and graft them onto the locusts.

Soon, Han Wu's swarm was teeming with bizarre locusts sporting mismatched limbs. They resembled the Radiation Beasts that had consumed nuclear wastewater: grotesque yet powerful. With the grafted hands, the locusts could then use Sixfold Artifact to summon all six weapons at once. Those dexterous limbs gave them better control over their arsenal, turning many into mobile turrets capable of unleashing volleys of arrows within seconds.

Some of the locusts had goblin kidneys grafted into them, which drastically enhanced their reproductive abilities. They could now breed with remarkable ease, but this improvement would take time to reveal its true value. Han Wu still needed time to nurture the newly hatched locusts.

Overall, the Origin of Mutation's hack-like skills had transformed his swarm. More than 1,000 Lord life forms were produced, and the sight filled Han Wu with elation.

Before long, Dark Locust returned with news. He had located Huang Shengjun's base and determined that he commanded 15 million goblins.

Han Wu drew a sharp breath. His locusts were inexpensive to summon, which allowed him to field 20 million of them. Meanwhile, Huang Shengjun's goblins cost at least ten times as much to summon. How had he managed to amass 15 million of them?

Dark Locust continued his report, and the answer stunned Han Wu. Huang Shengjun had been using surrogate mothers to expand his forces. His army consisted of various goblin species, but one group stood out for its depravity.

Their strength was mediocre at best, yet they possessed an absurdly powerful Skill known as Cross-Species Reproduction. As the name suggested, they could impregnate females from other species and produce goblin offspring. These offspring sometimes inherited portions of their mothers' Skills and abilities. For that reason, Huang Shengjun allowed them to mate freely with females of various species in his camp. Those females were giving birth almost nonstop, expanding his army with frightening speed.

Han Wu watched the footage transmitted by Dark Locust and noticed that even female zombies could give birth to goblins. The ability to impregnate technically undead life forms and produce living goblins was nothing short of a BUG-like exploit.

Han Wu also started to understand how Huang Shengjun had managed to expand his goblin army without limit. The answer likely lay in Huang Shengjun's Divine Talent: Quality in Numbers. Once his army reached a certain scale, he could nurture stronger goblins as easily as bamboo shoots sprouting after rain.

According to Dark Locust's report, Huang Shengjun commanded 100 goblins as powerful as High Lords, and three Goblin Kings. However, Dark Locust could not confirm whether he possessed a Saint life form.

A chill crept down Han Wu's spine. Among his powerful units, Dark Locust was his only Saint life form. The second strongest, the Locust Dragon, was only a High Lord. The rest consisted of 1,000 Lord locusts and nearly 20 million Heroic locusts.

While Han Wu held an overwhelming advantage in lower-ranking units, the battle would ultimately be decided by who possessed more powerful units, and he didn't have enough of them. If they fought now, Han Wu would almost certainly lose.

"No, I cannot fight yet. I need to find a way to improve my army," Han Wu muttered.

However, Tanuki Town's resources were scarce. Even if Han Wu used the Fabricator to produce as many weapons as possible, it would only give his locusts a slight boost in strength. They could not grow much stronger unless he found more powerful mutant zombies and allowed the locusts to absorb their crystals.

The other option was to weaken Huang Shengjun's army. At that thought, a flash of inspiration struck Han Wu, along with a rather nasty idea. If he couldn't enhance his locust army, he could at least reduce the enemy's strength. That would still tilt the odds in his favor.

Han Wu quickly made up his mind and turned to the Origin of Mutation for assistance. After hearing his plan, it immediately concurred. Confident in its expertise, it told Han Wu to leave everything to it.

Over the next few days, the Origin of Mutation poured immense energy into creating the second generation of Viral Maggots. This new generation was an improved version of the first and was engineered specifically for the Zombie Civilization. In addition to inheriting the first generation's fearsome infection rate and rapid reproduction, it also transformed its hosts into mindless zombies.

Han Wu could already picture the chaos that would erupt if the second generation spread through Huang Shengjun's base. The Origin of Mutation was equally eager, restless to witness the catastrophe its creation would cause!

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Chapter 449 - One's Loss is Another's Gain

[915 words]

Chapter 449 - One's Loss is Another's Gain

Han Wu ordered his locusts to capture several female zombies to implant them with the second-generation Viral Maggots. Once the procedure was complete, he had the locusts toss the female zombies near the goblin army's patrol route.

Dark Locust monitored the entire operation. Soon, a small goblin patrol entered the area. The goblins were abnormal, with mismatched limbs jutting from their bodies. They were scouring the area for female life forms to take back to their base.

As planned, Han Wu's female zombies drew their attention. The goblins grew excited when they spotted the five of them. If they could capture them, the Heroic goblin in charge of them would surely reward them.

To make the ruse more convincing, Han Wu sent a group of survivors and a few locusts to appear nearby. The two factions had been locked in fierce combat for days, and by now, it was no exaggeration to call them mortal enemies.

As expected, the goblins panicked when they saw the survivors and locusts appear together. They split into two teams: one to capture the female zombies and the other to stop Han Wu's survivors.

Han Wu had instructed his people to act weak and run away after feigning defeat. The goblins were elated after chasing them away and carried the female zombies back to their base.

Dark Locust concealed himself in the shadows and followed them to transmit a live feed to Han Wu.

Four hours later, the goblins arrived at Huang Shengjun's base with their captives. The sight of the five female zombies drew the attention of several perverse-looking goblins, which immediately started calculating how many offspring they could produce with them. In that war-torn period, offspring had become the most precious currency of all.

Before long, the five female zombies were led to the designated breeding area. Dark Locust hovered above, circling as the obscene noises continued late into the night. He saw everything, even when the goblins invited others to share in their vile acts.

Han Wu watched the revolting footage, forcing himself to endure the disgust that churned inside him. Still, a flicker of satisfaction crossed his face. "They did it!"

Based on their mating patterns, the Origin of Mutation had guaranteed him that Huang Shengjun's army would face the second-generation Viral Maggots' true terror within ten days.

As time passed, Dark Locust continued sending reports. He had detected that the first goblins had already succumbed to it, and the lower ranks started displaying signs of zombification.

At first, Huang Shengjun ignored them, assuming that a few goblins had been accidentally infected and displayed the symptoms. He believed that burning them in time would keep the rest safe.

Yet no matter how many he burned, more goblins kept turning into zombies. Their appearance differed slightly from human ones, yet they shared the same traits. They had razor-sharp hearing and could locate prey by the faintest sound, but their eyesight was poor and could not reach beyond ten meters.

Their minds were gone as well. The zombie goblins had become vacant, muttering husks that stood motionless unless they sensed flesh nearby. However, the moment they caught the scent of blood, they flew into a frenzy and charged forward with terrifying speed that few life forms could match.

By the time Huang Shengjun realized the scale of the outbreak, it was already too late. Too many of his goblins had been infected, sending a chill through him. Four-fifths of his army had been turned, and their condition worsened each day. Only one-fifth of the newly born goblins showed no symptoms.

Huang Shengjun immediately decided to expel all the infected goblins and forbid them from ever setting foot in his territory. Many of those with milder symptoms begged and prayed for mercy, but he had to protect the uninfected. He remained steadfast and drove them all out.

Even so, he couldn't stomach the notion of losing so many goblins without gaining anything in return. He had invested countless resources to raise them. Even if he was sending them to their deaths, he would at least make sure their end served some purpose.

Thus, he gave one final command to the goblins that were about to turn into zombies: they were to charge toward Han Wu's base before the transformation completed. Even if they died, Huang Shengjun intended for them to infect Han Wu's locusts at the very least. He wanted Han Wu to feel the same misery he was enduring.

On that very day, close to 12 million goblins stormed into Han Wu's territory in the final moments of their lives. However, Han Wu showed no concern; he only grinned. To him, the goblins were a feast delivering itself to his locusts. Rather than drive them away, he welcomed them into his base, funneling them straight into his swarm and letting them watch as their flesh was stripped away and their lives faded.

The locusts gorged themselves and grew stronger. Under Han Wu's command, his forces now included another King life form, several thousand High Lords, and tens of

thousands of Lords. In contrast, Huang Shengjun had lost 80% of his army. His remaining strength amounted to only three King life forms, and 500 High Lords.

With his plan complete, Han Wu finally gained the confidence to challenge Huang Shengjun's army. Once the goblins were devoured, he ordered his locusts to take flight and launch a full-scale assault on Huang Shengjun's base.

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[1,257 words]

Chapter 450 - Locusts vs Goblins

Nearly 20 million locusts swarmed over Tanuki Town, darkening the sky. Zombies with even a trace of intelligence ducked into the shadows to avoid detection, knowing they would lose their heads the instant the locusts spotted them. Only the dull, ordinary zombies that continued to stumble through the streets, oblivious to danger. The locusts descended on them, devouring their decayed flesh until nothing remained.

Han Wu rode at the rear on his King Locust Dragon, surveying the vast swarm and Tanuki Town below. His battle with Huang Shengjun had devastated the town's zombie population. Almost two thirds had been wiped out, and the few that remained hid themselves to survive.

With just a casual glance, Han Wu could sense several powerful mutated zombies still lurking within the town, and he burned with the urge to hunt them down. "Once I finish off Huang Shengjun, I will come back for them if there's time."

Every powerful mutated zombie represented a crystal capable of granting its wielder a special ability. Those same crystals could also produce a Heroic locust, while stronger ones could produce Lord or High Lord locusts. Even if he chose not to use them himself, he could distribute them among his units. After all, a Heroic life form was a valuable unit.

For now, though, his priority was Huang Shengjun. Han Wu looked ahead and locked onto Huang Shengjun's main camp.

Huang Shengjun's expression darkened as he listened to his goblins' reports, and he growled, "Damn it! That bastard is attacking me at my weakest... Wait, maybe he was the one who infected my goblins! Han Wu, don't get cocky. Even if I've lost most of my units, I won't let you humiliate me!"

Huang Shengjun pulled a stone from his pocket. It was the most powerful treasure in his divine realm, and he had spent 3 million Energy Points to acquire it. It could absorb souls and form a Soul Giant to fight alongside him. The life form's strength grew in direct proportion to the number of souls it had absorbed.

The stone had already absorbed several million goblin souls, and Huang Shengjun couldn't help but wonder how much stronger the Soul Giant would become with more. He wasn't certain, but he believed this would be his key to turning the tide.

While he weighed his options, the battle outside had already erupted. All 20 million of Han Wu's locusts clashed with the remaining 3 million goblins. Most of the locusts had already reached the Heroic rank, but the goblins were mostly newly born and still at the Common rank.

Han Wu held both the numerical advantage and superior life forms, turning the battle into a one-sided slaughter. The locusts easily tore through the goblins' defense line and poured into Huang Shengjun's base.

Huang Shengjun's surviving powerful goblins had no choice but to join the fight. The Heroic goblins pounced and unleashed devastating attacks. Each of them could block the attacks from ten locusts. Unfortunately for them, Han Wu had a swarm a hundred times their number. If ten locusts couldn't bring down a single Heroic goblin, then he would send a hundred.

The Heroic locusts' combined force killed the Heroic goblins. The same outcome awaited the Lord and High Lord goblins, which were surrounded by locusts of matching rank.

Huang Shengjun's three Goblin Kings grew frantic. They were his generals, and the sight of their subordinates dying filled them with agony.

One of them could no longer contain its rage. It pointed its blade at the locusts in the sky and roared, "Let's kill them!"

To prevent the Goblin King from disrupting the rest of his units, Han Wu dispatched his newest King locust to intercept it. Since the locust had only recently turned into a King life form, Han Wu didn't order it to win at all costs. Its mission was simply to stall the goblin until its allies could help it.

The locust heeded his order and dove toward its target. Blades met venom as the two clashed on their own battlefield. Their fight was fierce, but it would clearly drag on since the locust was deliberately stalling the goblin.

Seeing its companion locked in combat, the second Goblin King turned toward the distant battlefield. There were too many locusts, the goblins were losing ground fast as their numbers fell by the second.

Panicked and furious, the Goblin King drew its staff and started channeling a spell. Thick storm clouds gathered overhead, lightning flashing within their depths. If completed, the spell would unleash a barrage powerful enough to kill hundreds of High Lord locusts.

Han Wu wouldn't let his locusts die just like that. He patted his Locust Dragon to stop it. The Locust Dragon gathered Frost Energy in its jaws and released its frost breath upon the clouds.

The air temperature dropped sharply as hailstones the size of human heads plummeted from the clouds and crashed into the goblin army below. The storm clouds broke apart, and the gathered lightning vanished with them.

Enraged, the Goblin King charged its staff with lightning and fired at the Locust Dragon. The Locust Dragon relied on its strong elemental resistance to tank the lightning strike, then activated its special ability. Bone spikes burst from its body as it lunged toward the Goblin King.

Although the Goblin King excelled at lightning magic, it was frail against physical attacks and fled in panic. The Locust Dragon pursued it relentlessly. It would take some time before anyone knew which of them would emerge victorious as well.

Meanwhile, the final Goblin King noticed that no locusts were guarding Han Wu and assumed that this was its chance. It would personally assassinate Han Wu and claim victory for its God.

This Goblin King specialized in stealth and killing. It concealed itself within the darkness and approached Han Wu without any sound or trace of aura. Just as it positioned itself beneath Han Wu and was about to attack, it suddenly sensed a larger Dark Zone beside it. The darkness radiating from it was denser and purer than its own.

While the Goblin King had frozen in shock, the Dark Zone instantly seized and attacked it. A huge, pitch-black locust emerged from within and started devouring the Goblin King's Dark Source.

The goblin struggled to resist, but its efforts were futile. Its opponent was a Sage life form, a being far stronger than any King. The Sage locust's sheer pressure alone was enough to immobilize and imprison the goblin within its own Dark Zone. Death was inevitable.

Less than a minute later, Dark Locust flew back to Han Wu and let out a satisfied burp. Han Wu patted Dark Locust and ordered him to join the others in battle and support his swarm. Then he turned his attention to Huang Shengjun's position and appeared in front of him.

"Senior Huang, long time no see," he said evenly.

The two were sworn enemies, and the air between them bristled with hostility. Han Wu's killing intent surged the moment he saw Huang Shengjun, and the feeling was mutual.

Seeing the junior, whose talent far surpassed his own, Huang Shengjun wished he could go back in time and kill Han Wu before his rise, even if it meant breaking his own principles. Unfortunately, that chance was gone. His only hope now was to defeat Han Wu in this final battle.

Huang Shengjun gritted his teeth and roared, "Han Wu, today we'll see which of us walks away alive!"

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