

The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

Chapter 551 - The Heart Eater Sacred Object Set

[1,305 words]

Chapter 551 - The Heart Eater Sacred Object Set

Han Wu risked overloading himself by channeling the power of a World life form through his Earthsunder life form body. In the end, he could only endure for three minutes before being forced to release the Tranquil Domain for the sake of preserving his life.

Faido thus regained his chance to escape. Unlike before, he didn't make the mistake of waiting for the light of the Asura Coliseum to engulf him; instead, he used brute force to shatter space and forcefully transport himself.

Both Aisha and the Origin of Mutation hurled their Divine Rings at Faido's to prevent him from escaping, but Faido was decisive. He didn't hesitate to abandon his own Divine Ring the moment he realized they had captured it.

Living took priority over the loss of his Divine Ring. This crucial judgment ended up saving his life, buying him time to drag his injured body into the cracked space and escape back to the Asura Coliseum.

The trio couldn't give chase as they didn't know the coordinates of the Asura Coliseum. Even if they were to pursue him through the cracked space, there was a good chance they would be deposited elsewhere. Moreover, even on the off chance that they did make it to the Asura Coliseum, that was Faido's base. They would no longer be on home territory. Naturally, it was best to make preparations before heading over.

As Han Wu mulled over their next course of action, Aisha and the Origin of Mutation gathered Faido's Divine Ring and the chunks of his flesh that had been left behind. They then had Han Wu decide how they would divide it.

Han Wu could tell that the Divine Ring contained powerful energies filled with certain laws reminiscent of fragments of a civilization's will. Those beneath the World rank would greatly benefit if they absorbed it.

The flesh, on the other hand, was filled with potent Life Energy. A Sage life form could undoubtedly advance into an Earthsunder life form if they ate it. In fact, it was possible that even an Earthsunder life form could advance into a Heavenrender life form if they were to consume all of it.

“Lady Aisha fought against Faido the longest, so it's only fair that you get the larger portion,” Han Wu said. “But Faido was only forced into a corner because the two of us joined the fight, so we should also gain something for that merit. What I mean to say is that we should split it equally. Would Lady Aisha agree?”

Aisha glanced thoughtfully at the Origin of Mutation, then at Han Wu, before finally nodding in agreement. Having gained her support, Han Wu split the Divine Ring and flesh into equal halves, and Aisha happily returned to the Angel Civilization with her spoils.

All that was left was for Han Wu and the Origin of Mutation to decide what to do with their half.

The Origin of Mutation wasn't interested in Faido's Divine Ring and wanted the flesh, which was rich in Life Energy, making it precious experimental material. After some persuasion, Han Wu acquiesced, and it happily left to research the flesh.

With that sorted, Han Wu grabbed the remaining half of the Divine Ring and placed it in his divine realm. Unfortunately, this wasn't the time for him to research it, as he had other things to deal with at the moment. Exiting the arena, he returned to the Blood Coliseum to announce the good news.

Though heavily injured, Faido was by no means dead. He would almost certainly come for revenge after recovering. This meant Han Wu had to find and kill him while he was still weakened.

With the crisis of the Blood Coliseum averted, the students and lecturers of Imperial College happily left with their compensation.

The reinforcements from the God King of Death and the God King of Darkness were about to leave when Han Wu stopped them. Pulling out his half of the Divine Ring, he further split it into three pieces to divide between them. Although this was but a sixth of a Divine Ring, it was still a rare material, even for God Kings, so Han Wu was confident that they would be satisfied.

Eventually, only the staff and the Sanguine Combatants were left.

The Heavenrender Sanguine Combatant stepped forward to kneel before Han Wu, officially recognizing him as its owner.

Han Wu hastily asked it to stand up. After all, the Sanguine Combatants were a powerful race, and he would need their help in the future.

Marks then approached Han Wu. “Boss, our Blood Coliseum didn't suffer any losses from the challenge. In fact, we even earned some money.”

“How did we earn money?” Han Wu asked, bewildered.

“After the first death match, we returned the bodies of the Sage life forms who fought for us to their owners. The dead Sage life forms from the Asura Coliseum, however, became our resources. After the second match, we also collected the remains of the Earthsunder life forms,” Marks explained. “Both these materials are extremely valuable, and with minimal processing, we were able to use them as compensation for the other Gods—and still turned a small profit after.”

Han Wu nodded contentedly at the news. “The Asura Coliseum’s challenge has passed, and it’ll take some time before Faido returns for revenge. I’m preparing to attack him before he can seek vengeance, so I’ll need you to work on strengthening our units before I bring them with me to challenge the Asura Coliseum.”

“Understood, sir.”

After delegating some other tasks, Han Wu returned to his divine realm to inspect his losses. The loss of all his Sage life forms had left a gap in his army—one that he needed to fill as quickly as possible, at the risk of impacting the rate at which he gained Earthsunder life forms.

Just then, Jiang Ming sent him a message stating that he had successfully refined the Heart Eater materials into Sacred Objects. All Han Wu needed to do was Merge these lower-ranking Sacred Objects to get the set he needed.

Some time later, Han Wu had six Rank 8 Sacred Objects in hand.

Though he could only individually equip five to his Core, he soon found he could actually equip all six at once when done as a set. Moreover, each item in this set had unique effects.

Han Wu took the time to study them carefully.

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Eyes. Grants dynamic vision and increases the chance of locating enemy weak points when equipped.]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Brain. Awakens a random attribute in each member of the core race according to its affinity when equipped. Also provides a corresponding starting skill.]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Claw. One’s attacking limb or weapon will be enhanced when equipped.]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Stomach. Drastically increases digestion and absorption when equipped.]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Kidney. Increases breeding rate and newborn survival rate when equipped.]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object: Heart Eater Body. Increases defensive stats when equipped. Also provides a chance for newborns of the core race with a specific affinity to gain a passive defensive skill at birth.]

[Set Effect: 1. Can partially ignore Core level cap without incurring any penalty. 2. Heart Eater: Each unit can consume its heart once for a permanent increase to all stats. They can also consume another life form's heart to change into that life form's race.]

Han Wu's heart pounded when he saw the set effects.

He could equip this set without penalty despite his Core only having a level cap of 40! His hard work had paid off! The set effect of the Heart Eater Sacred Objects was truly amazing!

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[960 words]

Chapter 552 - Objective: Revenge!

Han Wu's core race had gained the ability to change their race, albeit unpredictably, after obtaining Random Evolution. This meant they only had a minute chance of evolving into an exceptionally powerful race.

However, with the Heart Eater Sacred Object set, they now had the option of selecting which race they turned into through consuming a heart from that race. This was infinitely more reliable than Random Evolution.

Equipping the set allowed the effects of the Sacred Objects to affect all members of his core race, and many didn't hesitate to consume their own hearts on the spot to permanently increase their strength.

Amelia was the first to ascend. Though originally a locust, she had transformed into a War Angel through Random Evolution and had swiftly become an Earthsunder life form. Consuming her heart elevated her into the foremost Heavenrender life form in Han Wu's core race.

Dark Locust quickly followed suit. The Dark Energy within its body swelled with the consumption of its heart. Gaining full control over this energy similarly allowed it to reach Heavenrender rank.

Many of Han Wu's units used this chance to increase their strength, bringing him a wave of powerful core race units. Unfortunately, units not of his core race didn't have this privilege.

Steely, Han Wu's first strong unit, was somewhat crestfallen at this.

He had been there from the beginning, steadfast as Han Wu's strongest unit, overpowering even an Ancient Dragon. His growth was nothing short of miraculous. However, he simply couldn't compete with the benefits that Han Wu's core race was receiving, regardless of how hard he worked.

Being born into a rich family was truly better than working hard to be rich. Dark Locust and the other members of Han Wu's core race simply didn't have to work as hard to become Heavenrender life forms.

His frustration bled through to Han Wu through the strands of faith.

This wasn't just an isolated feeling either. Other units not of Han Wu's core race felt the same as well. It was less about envy at the core race's growth and more so frustration at themselves for their own slowness. They lamented their inability to be of service to their God.

From an outsider's point of view, Steely and the others were actually growing at an unprecedented rate. For a regular Heroic life form to become an Earthsunder life form in just a few years was a feat most other Gods and Major Gods couldn't have achieved. If they were to hear of Steely's frustration, they would've cried at their own incompetence.

Still, Han Wu needed to do something to encourage them. If Steely and the others were motivated to grow stronger, it was his job to try his best to make it happen.

Han Wu racked his brains for a solution.

His fragment of Faido's Divine Ring contained the essence of 500 different beasts, each with a sliver of a God King's power within them. This would help an Earthsunder life form tremendously if they absorbed it.

Grabbing the fragment of Faido's Divine Ring, Han Wu allowed Steely his pick of the essences within. Han Wu planned to do the same to any other units that had accrued merits during the challenge, though they had to line up after Steely.

After perusing through the selection, Steely chose four: the Gale Eagle, Gale Tiger, Flutterfly, and Tempest Scorpion. Absorbing the essences of these beasts would boost his growth tremendously.

Following Steely were Alpheus, Erebard, Smog, Bakir, Umbral Mouse, and the others. The reward selection ended once all the essence within the Divine Ring had been claimed.

Han Wu waited impatiently, eager to see the outcome of his units absorbing this essence.

Three months passed in a flash.

All of Han Wu's avatars finally returned. After fusing with them, he broke past the bottleneck of an Earthsunder life form to finally become a Heavenrender life form. This wasn't a temporary power granted by Replicate; it was his true strength.

Many of his units had also upgraded a rank, giving him a total of six Heavenrender life forms: Dark Locust, Steely, Amelia, Alpheus, Smog, and Umbral Mouse.

Besides that, he also had twenty-six Earthsunder life forms and 200 Sage life forms. He was now a hundred times stronger than before. The sight of his army brought a thrill of exhilaration through his veins.

This newfound strength gave Han Wu the confidence to deal with Faido.

Faido was undoubtedly biding his time to recover and seek revenge. This unpredictable time bomb for both Han Wu and the Blood Coliseum was a threat Han Wu needed to remove before it was too late.

When the management of the Blood Coliseum heard that Han Wu was going to hunt down the Asura Coliseum, they sent their strongest Sanguine Combatants, numbering one Heavenrender-rank, sixty-eight Earthsunder-rank, and 1500 Sage-rank. The remaining Sanguine Combatants were all too weak to participate.

The legion left Han Wu in shock. The Blood Coliseum didn't have so many powerful Sanguine Combatants before.

Seeing his astonishment, Marks explained that the Blood Coliseum spent all their savings over the past three months to nurture as many Sanguine Combatants as possible. While they hadn't managed to get another Heavenrender Sanguine Combatant, they did double their number of Earthsunders and even nurtured 1500 Sage Sanguine Combatants from nothing. Han Wu was naturally ecstatic with the results.

"Sir, destroy the Asura Coliseum for the sake of the Blood Coliseum!" Marks called out.

Han Wu nodded resolutely. Gaze sweeping across his mighty army, he commanded, "Let's depart!"

His army moved as one. Their presence alone emitted an aura of power so great that foreboding blood clouds formed above them.

A bloodbath was coming for the Asura Coliseum.

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[1,181 words]

Chapter 553 - Han Wu's Arrival

In the underground palace of the Asura Coliseum, Faido had just completed his recovery training for the day. Although his physical body had long healed, it would take time to reconstruct his Divine Ring.

His Divine Ring had yet to reach the threshold of 10,000 beasts, still only containing 8,500 beasts within. Rage simmered within him at the reminder.

“Shit! That damned brat from the Blood Coliseum, I’ll kill him!” he roared, voice echoing across the palace.

The sentries stationed outside had become accustomed to his yelling in recent days. In fact, the fear they previously harbored toward him had decreased from this constant exposure.

At that moment, a tiny dwarf was hurrying over, calling out from outside the hall, “Lord Faido, something terrible is happening!”

“Come in!” Faido ordered, finally halting his tirade.

The dwarf rushed inside and kneeled in front of Faido. “Lord Faido, those guys from the Blood Coliseum are just outside! They’re challenging the Asura Coliseum!”

“That damned brat! Where did he get the balls to come and challenge us? Imbecilic whelp!” Faido snarled, golden armrest caving under his furious grip. Then, a sudden calm overtook him as he interrogated the dwarf, “Did you see a high-ranking Seraphim with them?”

The dwarf swiftly scanned his memories. “There’s an angel with them, but I’m not sure if it’s a Seraphim.”

“Then did you see a floating person with two wings, six arms, and a snake-like tail?”

The dwarf shook his head. "I didn't see anyone like that in the group."

Faido was relieved. Seraphim Aisha and the Origin of Mutation were both World life forms. Even at his full strength, he hadn't been able to take the two of them on at the same time, much less in this weakened state.

Based on the dwarf's reports, Aisha could be aiding Han Wu. However, the crucial point was that the Origin of Mutation responsible for absorbing his four Divine Kings was absent. Faido wasn't afraid of a single World life form. Even without his Divine Kings, he had managed the Asura Coliseum for an exceedingly long time and naturally had other cards up his sleeve.

"Those guys..." Faido chuckled, his shadow undulating ominously. "They came knocking on our door, so they can't blame me for attacking."

Outside the Asura Coliseum, a muscular man on par with a High Lord life form had halted Han Wu and his army in their tracks.

"Hey, who are you guys? Don't you know the rules of the Asura Coliseum? We only accept one-on-one matches, not group matches. Why did you bring so many people with you? Are you an idiot?" berated the man, deliberately humiliating Han Wu in public.

Han Wu did not rise to the bait.

Steely twitched his finger, and the man's arm was sliced clean off with a wind blade.

"Those who disrespect my God shall be punished," Steely said darkly.

The muscular man cried out in pain, and the other guards behind him retreated in fear. They didn't want to end up like him.

At that moment, Faido leisurely ambled out of the Asura Coliseum. The pressure he exuded blew away the blood cloud above Han Wu's army.

"You brat, I never thought you would have the gall to come and find me. I'm not sure if you're brave or foolish. Do you really think you can take on my Asura Coliseum with that puny army?" Faido mocked.

"I'll keep this short," Han Wu said curtly. "This time, I'll be the one challenging you and the Asura Coliseum. Will you accept?"

Faido frowned, eyes darting around Han Wu's army to identify potential threats. Han Wu did have an angel, but she wasn't Seraphim Aisha. This angel was far weaker and wouldn't pose a threat to Faido. The Origin of Mutation also didn't appear to be present. Han Wu had only brought his higher-ranking units to challenge Faido.

A mix of triumph and outrage washed over Faido. No one in Han Wu's army could pose a threat to him, but that in itself clearly showed how much Han Wu looked down on him. It was an insult to challenge the entire Asura Coliseum without bringing a World life form!

Faido's anger simmered to a boil.

Meanwhile, his underlings replied in his stead.

"You?" scoffed a middle-aged man with purple robes. Stepping out from behind Faido, he released his presence to show his strength as a Heavenrender life form. "You're going to challenge the Asura Coliseum? Run back home and suckle on your mother's tits before we get angry."

A disheveled figure appeared from behind the middle-aged man. "I shall follow my brother's footsteps."

This man was also a Heavenrender life form. He wore tattered clothes and emitted a stench so foul he was akin to a living bioweapon.

The smell didn't appear to affect Faido or the middle-aged man, as they greeted him without issue. From their conversation, Han Wu learned that the man with purple robes was called Zi Jin, and the man with tattered clothes was called Huang Shu. The pair stood slightly behind Faido like watchful guardians.

Then, a barbaric-looking man came running out from the Asura Coliseum, his face flushed red and his body muscular. "Which one of you hurt Lord Faido? Come out! I, Han Zai, will break all the bones in your body!"

All three newcomers were Heavenrender life forms. Han Wu hadn't expected Faido to recruit three powerful units to replace his four Divine Kings in such a short time.

Fortunately, Han Wu still had more Heavenrender life forms on his side. Even discounting himself, he had seven—six from his own units and one from the Sanguine Combatants. He had enough for them to fight two against one, with the last acting as a cheerleader on the sidelines.

Naturally, Faido also noticed Han Wu's powerful units. His envious eyes swept across the seven Heavenrender life forms. He had created the Asura Coliseum and could benefit from its assets, but even he didn't have seven Heavenrender life forms.

The young Han Wu had somehow achieved Faido's dream before he did. This caused him to suspect that Han Wu was actually the son of two God Kings, possibly born out of wedlock.

Faido's lack of a response to the challenge prompted Han Wu to ask again, "Lord Faido, will you accept the challenge from the Blood Coliseum?"

This time, Han Wu used some Divine Points to amplify his voice so that the oblivious crowd within the Asura Coliseum could also hear him. Hearing this challenge, those inside quickly ran out to catch the spectacle.

Some well-prepared ones even brought a small table and chairs with them, making themselves comfortable on the sidelines with accompanying snacks to watch the imminent showdown.

The rush of spectators forced Faido to respond for the sake of the Asura Coliseum's reputation and honor.

"The Asura Coliseum fears no one," he sneered. "What are your terms for the challenge? Bring them on!"

Han Wu's lips stretched into a grin. He had been waiting for those words.

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Chapter 554 - Exchanging Terms

It was paramount for rules to be established during challenges between two coliseums. It didn't matter if Faido wanted to use his numbers and strength to try to bully the Blood Coliseum into giving up. At the end of the day, he still had to abide by the rules, lest others in the same business attack him.

Marks had explained this system to Han Wu before he departed.

"Lord Faido, since you've accepted my challenge, let us first establish the rules!" Han Wu called.

Faido frowned. The two coliseums had different match systems, but he couldn't avoid this challenge if he wanted to maintain his reputation. All he could do now was ensure the rules were in his favor.

"We will only accept matches on closed rings!" Faido decided.

This would prevent Han Wu from conducting matches on a huge terrain. No matter how large a ring was, it still had a boundary. Moreover, only he knew the specific arrays and

elements of the rings of the Asura Coliseum, and this knowledge would naturally work in his favor.

Han Wu frowned. Having the matches done in rings meant that anyone pinned down or knocked out of the ring's bounds would be disqualified. This was completely different from the matches at the Blood Coliseum. Rings also limited the number of units he could send in, taking away his advantage. Unfortunately, as the challenger, he had no choice but to accept Faido's rule.

"Very well," Han Wu said. "My rule is to set the upper limit for each ring to one hundred units."

Faido was surprised. Han Wu had turned one-on-one combat into a group battle! Even though the battle was going to be conducted on a ring, the essence of it had changed due to the unequal number of fighters on both sides.

Han Wu had ninety-four Earthsunder life forms. Faido, on the other hand, had lost a lot during the last challenge. Even with his connections, he could only get hold of seventy at most.

The Blood Coliseum had the clear advantage in this. Even in terms of Heavenrender life forms, Han Wu had seven, while Faido only had three. These matches would essentially be rigged from the start.

Even the experienced fighters of the Asura Coliseum couldn't fight against so many enemies at once!

Faido fell silent. Then, he heard a whisper in his ear. Chuckling, he set another condition. "The challenge will end in a single bout. We will send all our units to fight in a single grand match to decide the winner!"

The pressure was back on Han Wu. He had the advantage in the number of Heavenrender and Earthsunder life forms. If the matches had been best two out of three, he could have simply forfeited the last round and still come out victorious.

However, Faido wanted a single match where the winner took all, and it was all but certain that Faido would personally fight. No number of Heavenrender or Earthsunder life forms would matter in the face of a World life form!

Only World life forms could fight against other World life forms. Han Wu would have to call Origin of Mutation to aid him in battle, and even then, there was a reasonable chance the Blood Coliseum would lose.

Han Wu's silence brought a smile to Faido's face. Unable to resist rubbing salt in the wound, Faido upped the ante. "Winner takes all. We'll bet on our respective coliseums. If you win, I will surrender my entire coliseum to you."

This only increased the stress on Han Wu.

If the Blood Coliseum absorbed the Asura Coliseum, his position would rise significantly. Even if he weren't a God King, he would still be recognized as a peer. Conversely, the outcome would be horrible if he lost. The loss of the Blood Coliseum was one thing, as it wouldn't actually affect him much, but Faido would never let him go afterward.

Han Wu had used a lot of Divine Essence from the Blood Coliseum's account to become stronger. Moreover, he had inherited Duel, which was also an asset of the Blood Coliseum. If he lost, Faido would definitely ask him to surrender it, and Han Wu would most certainly die from having his Divine Jurisdiction extracted.

"You whelp! How could you be foolish enough to challenge us? Are you having cold feet? If you kowtow a hundred times, I will persuade Lord Faido to forgive you." Zi Jin laughed derisively. "A hundred kowtows for your life. Don't you think it's worth it?"

The spectating crowd also started mocking and booing Han Wu.

"Run back to your mother like the milk-nursing brat you are!"

"Have you even entered a ring before? How dare you challenge Lord Faido when you're so weak? Go back home."

"To think the Blood Coliseum would get a new owner like him. The Blood Coliseum has truly fallen..."

Their jeers and taunts meant little to Han Wu, but they could affect the reputation of the Blood Coliseum. As the new owner, he had to accept the conditions, regardless of his confidence.

Fortunately, there was one last chance for him to set another condition in response to Faido's. After carefully considering his options, he said, "Then I propose that the ring be sufficiently large, at least 10,000 kilometers in diameter, and infused with Dark Energy!"

The ridicule only became more vicious at his words.

"A ring that's 10,000 kilometers in diameter? That's not a ring, that's a continent! Do you even know what a ring is?"

"I've fought in many matches, but even I've never seen a ring that large!"

"You're supposed to set a condition, not make a wish!"

Han Wu ignored them, eyes fixed calmly on Faido. "I heard of the Asura Coliseum's capabilities in fulfilling its participants' demands, yet you can't even do something like this? It seems the rumors were false after all!"

Faido merely laughed at Han Wu's taunts. In his eyes, he had already won. There was no way for Han Wu to defeat him with these rules in place.

"Very well, I don't mind investing in a single ring for the sake of an entire coliseum. Men, prepare the ring!"

Faido was going to kill Han Wu today, no matter the cost!

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Chapter 555 - Match in the Ring

[1,082 words]

Chapter 555 - Match in the Ring

A massive ring was swiftly constructed. It spanned 10,000 kilometers in diameter, and arrays for infusing it with Dark Energy were hastily engraved across its surface. As the inscriptions activated, Dark Energy flooded the structure, and a strange, penetrating chill washed over the crowd even from afar.

The two coliseums dispatched their strongest forces. Faido sent his three Heavenrender life forms, seventy Earthsunder life forms, and twenty-five Sage life forms. He also activated his battle form and revealed his Divine Ring, which brimmed with the essence of 8,500 different beasts. Their heads writhed and snarled as if they were going to burst free from the Divine Ring.

Faido and his army advanced onto the ring at the same time as Han Wu. The latter led his forces at the front, while another Han Wu followed behind him.

The crowd thought they were seeing double.

Meanwhile, Faido immediately recognized the Origin of Mutation and felt a flicker of panic. It was a World life form, just like him, and demanded constant vigilance. Still, he burned with the desire to destroy it at any cost. After all, it had absorbed all four of his Divine Kings just to ascend into the World rank. That fact alone filled Faido with hatred down to his bones.

Seven Heavenrender life forms and ninety-two Earthsunder life forms trailed behind the Origin of Mutation. Outside of the ring, two more Earthsunder life forms waited on standby.

By sheer numbers, the Blood Coliseum held the advantage, yet the crowd continued cheering for Faido. In the Asura Coliseum, he was a legendary, undefeated fighter. Everyone present knew that.

Han Wu also studied Faido's army, but no matter how many times he counted, he found only ninety-nine combatants.

He was perplexed. *Has the Asura Coliseum been weakened so badly they can't even gather 100 fighters? But there are still a few Asura Sage life forms outside of the ring...*

The referee stepped onto the stage and announced the rules. Although they were standard rules governing combat within the ring, Han Wu still listened carefully, unwilling to risk missing anything important.

After announcing the rules, the referee stood to the edge of the ring. Only the two opposing forces remained.

"Brat, today will be the day you die," Faido growled. Aside from himself and his three Heavenrender life forms, the rest of his army charged forward.

Han Wu's side responded in kind. Other than him, the Origin of Mutation, and the seven Heavenrender life forms, the remaining Earthsunder life forms all attacked at once.

The death match erupted into a bloody melee. Earthsunder life forms were incredibly powerful, and at this level of intensity, even their attacks' aftershocks carried devastating force.

The crowd went wild.

Han Wu observed his units and noted how valiantly they fought. Under the Heart Eater Sacred Object set's effects, his core race exceeded their normal limits. Even though the Asura army was formidable, its weakness was swiftly exposed. The Blood Earthsunder life forms swiftly killed the twenty-five Asura Sage life forms, and the battle soon turned into a brutal imbalance, with the Blood combatants ganging up on the Asura combatants.

What began as two against one escalated into three or even four against one. Most of Han Wu's units were the Sanguine Combatants. As members of the same race, they fought with exceptional coordination and seamless synergy. They slew many of Faido's Earthsunder life forms, and blood stained half of the black ring.

Faido remained unfazed, even as his units were falling.

Han Wu and the Origin of Mutation didn't dare to advance while Faido stood still. They waited patiently until all of Faido's Earthsunder units had been wiped out.

Only then did Faido break the silence. "Whelp, do you think you've won?"

Han Wu chuckled. "I don't think so. Not unless I've killed you."

Zi Jin scoffed. "Brat, don't even think about it. Faido is immortal, that means you will never win."

The other two Heavenrender life forms remained silent, but they were confident that Faido would ultimately win.

Faido continued, "Brat, you must have your reasons for infusing this ring with the power of Darkness. You should probably use your hidden card now, while you still can."

Something felt wrong to Han Wu. By all logic, he held the advantage. Aside from himself and the Origin of Mutation, he still had seven Heavenrender and seventy-two Earthsunder life forms. The disparity in strength was overwhelming.

Why is Faido so calm? The question gnawed at him. Does he have a hidden card?

Han Wu couldn't find the answer, but unease crept in all the same. From that moment on, he grew cautious with every move, wary of Faido's trap.

Still, since Faido wanted him to use his strongest move, there was no reason to continue holding back. "Time to fight!"

At his command, all of his Earthsunder units raised their arms. Huge streams of energy formed from darkness and blood gathered in their hands. With the ring's special darkness array, Han Wu could absorb Dark Energy several times faster than usual.

He drew on that power and converted it into energy armor for his seven Heavenrender units. Each unit received armor that synergized with its innate attribute. Though formed from pure energy, the armor could withstand many blows and even block a fatal strike once. Han Wu achieved this effect after researching Conversion for some time.

Once the Earthsunder units had transferred their energy, they held no further value on the stage. Han Wu ordered them to leave the ring. One by one, they stepped out and were disqualified from the match.

The massive black ring was left with Han Wu's elite units, each of whom had the overall power to defeat at least 200 Earthsunder units alone.

"Time for the real fight. Kill them," Han Wu commanded.

Apart from Han Wu himself, the Origin of Mutation, and the Umbral Mouse, the remaining six Heavenrender life forms charged forward and surrounded Faido and his three Heavenrender units.

Their powers resonated through the ring's array, forming a powerful seal. Crushing pressure descended on Faido and his three Heavenrender life forms. They felt like mountains were pressing down on their backs.

Han Wu could already hear the sound of cracking bones from the three Heavenrender life forms. They couldn't resist the seal's power.

At that moment, Faido let out a chuckle. "Brat, is this your full strength? If that's all you have, you can die now."

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Chapter 556 - B-Boss, There's a Mouse!

[924 words]

Chapter 556 - B-Boss, There's a Mouse!

Faido stepped forward and broke the six Heavenrender life forms' seal. All six suffered from backlash. Their armor bore the brunt of it and shattered, preserving their lives at the cost of total destruction.

Han Wu frowned. Faido was clearly abnormal. He was much stronger than he had been in the previous fight!

How did Faido, who was supposed to be recovering, shatter the six powerful Heavenrender life forms' seal? What's happening?

Han Wu didn't have an answer, but the Origin of Mutation understood at once. It quickly whispered to Han Wu to activate Replicate immediately.

Han Wu did so without hesitation. He was already a Heavenrender life form and could channel more energy from the Origin of Mutation.

The Divine Ring with four attributes rose behind him, and powerful elemental energy surged into his body. He converted it into dense energy armor and donned it, preventing his flesh from collapsing due to the overbearing energy.

The Origin of Mutation also released its full power. Compared to Han Wu, its Divine Ring manifested faint illusions of the four Divine Kings encircling it: a phoenix, a snake, a Skywurm, and a giant ape. Evidently, the Origin of Mutation had deepened its understanding of the World rank.

Faido bristled when he saw the four illusions. With just a single step, he appeared directly in front of the Origin of Mutation, swung his fist with overwhelming speed, and punched it.

The Origin of Mutation was hurled backward for tens of kilometers before it could steady itself. The impact point had shattered into pieces, its flesh falling apart like sand. Yet in the next instant, the Origin of Mutation swiftly recovered itself.

This recovery was not due solely to its powerful regenerative abilities and genes. It also stemmed from the flesh it had previously assimilated from Faido. He had been a World life form for a very long time. Even after being separated, his flesh still brimmed with astonishing vitality and regenerative powers.

After confirming its suspicion, the Origin of Mutation shouted, "Vessel, be careful of his shadow!"

Han Wu quickly shifted his attention to Faido's shadow. Thanks to the warning, he noticed that Faido's shadow was unusually dark and didn't align perfectly with Faido's movements.

Faido showed no concern that his trump card had been exposed. Instead, he spoke with calm deliberation. "It seems that I no longer need to hide it. Shadow Demon, come out!"

A black figure slowly rose from Faido's shadow. Its true face remained indistinct, but its silhouette resembled Faido's.

Han Wu suddenly noticed a completely black Divine Ring floating behind Shadow Demon. It was a World life form, and it was at its peak. The sight caught him completely unprepared. He would have hesitated if he knew that the Asura Coliseum had two World life forms, but it was too late now. He was already on the battlefield, with no other choice but to fight.

At that moment, the Umbral Mouse squealed and jumped with delight. "Hehe! Master, I smell something delicious. That black shadow smells amazing. Can I eat it?"

Han Wu stopped it. It was only a Heavenrender life form, and he feared that even a single punch would kill it.

"That thing is a World life form. You can't defeat it," Han Wu said.

The Umbral Mouse chuckled. "Don't worry, Master. I am extremely fast. It can't catch me, and I can eat it!"

Han Wu was perplexed. The Umbral Mouse was the weakest among his Heavenrender units, or rather, it possessed almost no combat ability. It excelled in escaping, stealing, and assisting. He had never imagined that it could play a crucial role in this situation.

He had been considering how to deal with the World Shadow Demon, and with the Umbral Mouse stepping up, he wasn't as pressured as before. "Be careful."

With his permission, the Umbral Mouse shot forward like lightning.

Faido saw a shadow hurling toward him and prepared to attack, only to find his fist locked in midair. He couldn't swing his fist down at all.

Faido shouted at Shadow Demon, "What are you doing? Why aren't you copying my movement?"

"B-Boss, there's a mouse!" Shadow Demon stuttered.

Faido was stunned. "What? What are you talking about?"

How could a World life form be afraid of a mouse? He felt his perception shift wildly.

"Boss, it's here! It's going to eat me. I have to run now. Please don't bite me..." Shadow Demon's tone changed from fear to horror, then collapsed into raw panic.

Faido mistakenly assumed that Shadow Demon was a spy Han Wu had planted to sabotage him. That assumption collapsed when he sensed Shadow Demon's genuine terror. The Umbral Mouse tore into it, and Shadow Demon couldn't escape. The fear was primal, like that of prey encountering its natural predator.

Faido was still a World life form, but without Shadow Demon's assistance, his strength visibly waned.

Han Wu and Origin of Mutation approached him with dense energy in their palms. "Lord Faido, time for a real fight!"

The three Heavenrender life forms wanted to help Faido, but he ordered them to assist Shadow Demon in getting rid of the Umbral Mouse. "You lot, go and deal with that mouse! You can't do anything here to help me."

Han Wu's six Heavenrender life forms wouldn't give them the chance, so they quickly surrounded the three foes. The Asura Coliseum was now losing against the Blood Coliseum. It was only a matter of time before one side fell.

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[1,190 words]

Chapter 557 - Victory

Faido's Divine Ring expanded as the essence of the 8,500 beasts within it erupted in roars and howls. Their voices merged into one, and a deafening bellow rang out. The roar continuously battered Han Wu and the Origin of Mutation, inflicting damage over time.

Thankfully, their regeneration speed was formidable. The Origin of Mutation had assimilated Faido's flesh, granting it one of the fastest regeneration rates among World life forms. On the other hand, Han Wu wielded the Life Aspect. With his Divine Ring supplying him with a constant stream of energy, he could recover just as swiftly.

The two tanked the attack and retaliated.

The Origin of Mutation fought in close range, hammering Faido with a storm of metal fists. Each blow carried the weight of several thousand kilograms, and when combined with its speed and explosive force, even Faido was pushed back by the barrage.

However, Faido's recovery speed was also astonishing. His wounds closed instantly, leaving the Origin of Mutation no chance to turn those minor wounds into major ones.

From the rear, Han Wu was preparing his strongest attack. He gathered energy and turned it into a giant greatsword to unleash Steelcutter. Violent gales coiled around his greatsword, and he swung. The strike tore through Faido's tough scales and carved a gash thirty centimeters deep. Blood and flesh splattered as the raging wind shredded Faido's cells, suppressing his regeneration.

The Origin of Mutation focused its attacks on the same wound. With each intensified attack, the injury tore open repeatedly.

Faido's stamina slowly sapped away as his regeneration faltered. Without recovery, the damage would soon turn critical. Yet the Origin of Mutation's onslaught left him no time or focus to precisely control his cells for targeted healing. He relied on his powerful physique to withstand the blows and regenerate on its own.

That hope was futile. Under the Origin of Mutation and Han Wu's combined attacks, it was impossible.

At the same time, neither attacker could deliver the killing blow. All they could do was to force the wound open repeatedly in hopes that it would worsen beyond recovery. Their fight was destined to be one of attrition.

Meanwhile, the other battles unfolded differently.

Even though Zi Jin, Huang Shu, and Han Zai were powerful Heavenrender life forms, they couldn't fight against two enemies of the same rank simultaneously. On top of that, they had to stay alert for Steely's absurdly powerful Steelcutter and the Dark Locust's Self Detonation.

Still, the trio had their own trump cards, which made it difficult for the six Heavenrender life forms to bring them down quickly.

The final battle, between the Umbral Mouse and Shadow Demon, was swift. Even though the Umbral Mouse was a Heavenrender life form and the Shadow Demon a World life form, the difference in rank meant nothing in front of a natural predator's suppression.

The Umbral Mouse gnawed chunks of Shadow Demon's flesh while occasionally pilfering its items. Shadow Demon lashed out in desperation but couldn't land a single hit.

Five hours later, Shadow Demon finally collapsed to the ground due to grievous injuries. The Umbral Mouse pounced and tore into it, devouring flesh in huge bites until nothing remained. Due to the Darkness Ego, the Umbral Mouse could absorb all of Shadow Demon's energy. A tiny black Divine Ring appeared above its head and turned into an intricate crown.

"Burp." The Umbral Mouse let out a loud belch. "This is the first time I've stuffed myself like this. Following my master really was the right choice."

It then turned to look at Han Wu. He and the Origin of Mutation were still fighting Faido. Their battle was dragging far too long.

An idea struck the Umbral Mouse.

"Master, I'm here to help!" With a whoosh, it turned into a shadow and dove into Han Wu's own shadow.

This was a Skill it had gained after devouring Shadow Demon. Once inside, the Umbral Mouse formed an energy link with Han Wu and funneled a surge of Dark Energy to him through the connection.

Han Wu's Divine Ring changed, turning from four colors to five. The new color was black, formed from pure Dark Energy. It took up half of the Divine Ring, while the other four elements shared the other half.

Han Wu's energy absorption rate doubled instantly. He was also surprised to find that no backlash followed, even though he was overflowing with power. He had a feeling that the Umbral Mouse was the one bearing the backlash. That meant Han Wu had more freedom to do whatever he needed to do right now.

He converted all of his energy into Dark Energy, channeled it into his Demon King Transformation, and transformed into a completely black demonic figure that towered 10,000 meters tall.

This was the Demon King Transformation with the power of a World life form, but he didn't stop there. He then activated Black Dragon King Transformation and turned into a half-dragon.

With the two transformations stacked as one, his strength reached a new height. Three different forms of pressure erupted into the surrounding space: Dragon Fear, Dark Divine Authority, and his World aura. Even Heavenrender life forms had to exert great effort to avoid injury under that overwhelming pressure.

The crowd was stunned to the point where they forgot to breathe. They had assumed that the young Han Wu would amount to little on the battlefield, but he now stood before them a Black Dragon King that could devour an entire world.

The Black Dragon King form looked powerful, but Han Wu understood its limits. He had no more than three minutes. Everything would be over if he failed to defeat Faido within that window. For the sake of victory, he opened his maw and unleashed a pitch-black dragon breath, his most powerful attack.

Endless darkness engulfed Faido as the many aspects of Dark Energy erupted. Erosion, curses, pollution, blight, and every malignant trait that Han Wu had channeled surged forward at once.

Even Faido's tough beast form struggled to defend against all of them. The Dark Energy worsened his injuries, and his vital signs weakened. Yet he refused to surrender to the very end. He was a proud being who stood atop 10,000 beasts. How could he ever accept defeat?

In the end, Faido disappeared completely under the breath attack and turned into a stepping stone for Han Wu to attain the Asura Coliseum.

Silence swept through the Asura Coliseum when Faido's presence disappeared completely. Both the crowd and the staff had forgotten to breathe. Beast King Faido, the

being they respected and revered, had fallen. No one had ever believed such a thing possible, nor even dared to imagine it.

Even so, the truth lay before their eyes, leaving no room for doubt.

Han Wu undid his transformation and endured the crushing fatigue. He then growled at the referee, "Hey, announce the results now."

The referee stood listlessly at the center of the ring. His voice trembled as he announced, "The victor is... the Blood Coliseum!"

The words were quiet, yet they struck every ear like thunder.

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Chapter 558 - Muscular Man in a Sheer Dress

[1,026 words]

Chapter 558 - Muscular Man in a Sheer Dress

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As per the rules, the winner took everything. The Blood Coliseum now held full ownership of the Asura Coliseum.

After the crowd dispersed, Han Wu tiredly sat on the throne and waited for the Asura staff to deliver the financial report.

A long time passed before Steely arrived, gripping one of the staff members in his arms along with the huge stack of reports.

"Glorious God, a few of them refused to cooperate, so I executed them," Steely reported.

Han Wu nodded with satisfaction. As the new owner, he had to be stern with the staff and let them know how serious he was. "Give me the report."

The trembling staff member stepped forward. Terror flooded his face as he gingerly presented the documents to Han Wu.

As Han Wu reached out to take the report, the staff member's demeanor suddenly changed. From between the pages, he drew a God dagger as thin as a cicada's wing and lunged at Han Wu.

Among Han Wu's units, the Umbral Mouse was the fastest to react. Lacking any offensive abilities, it could only tackle the staff member that was trying to assassinate Han Wu.

The staff member crashed to the ground, and the other units quickly pinned him down.

Even while pinned, the staff member glared at Han Wu and shouted, "You liar! You can fool others, but not me! Lord Faido is still alive."

Steely rushed over and knelt before Han Wu. "I underestimated him and was deceived by his demeanor. Glorious God, please punish me for my mistake."

Han Wu shook his head and looked at the staff member. *This fellow is a really good actor. He would've won an Oscar in my original world. How did I fail to detect his bloodlust? His facade was flawless.*

Amelia pressed her Fulgurwood sword against the staff member's neck. "Glorious God, how should we deal with him?"

The man showed no fear and even shouted back, "Even if I die, there are still many who remain loyal to Lord Faido. You charlatan, you will die!"

Amelia burned with fury at the way the man humiliated Han Wu. In a flash of rage, she decapitated him, and he fell silent forever. Even in death, his eyes were still glaring at Han Wu as if he had already witnessed his demise.

Han Wu sighed. This outcome was unavoidable. Whenever leadership changed hands, some would cling to the former leader and refuse to acknowledge the new one. Determining loyalty with certainty was nearly impossible.

He made a ruthless decision: he would sacrifice everyone. It was better to eliminate the threat at its source than to risk future assassination attempts by sparing them.

Steely left to prepare for the ceremony. Han Wu carefully reviewed the report, which detailed the Asura Coliseum's assets, treasures, and ring types. He cross-checked the acquisition and research reports to confirm the accuracy of the financial records.

After a brief calculation, he realized that the Asura Coliseum's holdings were sufficient to offset the losses he incurred at the Blood Coliseum and still leave it with a profit. He felt much more relaxed as he finished reading.

He was about to continue with the report when voices reached his ears. He looked around and froze. A muscular man in a sheer dress had appeared out of nowhere.

The stranger's muscles bulged beneath the fabric, and his face was buried under a thick beard. Despite that, he twisted and squirmed in the dress with exaggerated, feminine gestures.

The contrast was startling enough to make Han Wu pause as his mind struggled to reconcile what he was seeing.

The units around him exchanged uneasy looks. The sudden appearance alone felt deeply unnatural.

Akanzor and Bart stepped forward at once, blocking the man from getting any closer to Han Wu.

"Who goes there? You are not allowed to get near our God!" Akanzor warned.

The muscular man ignored him. He flicked his hand, and Akanzor was blasted backward, slamming into a wall thirty meters away.

Bart loosed a volley of arrows at lightning speed, but the man easily grabbed and snapped them in half. Bart stared in disbelief. He was already an Earthsunder life form, and someone at the same rank should not have been able to do that so effortlessly.

The only possibility was that the man was a Heavenrender life form or above. Yet Bart didn't sense anything from him that suggested power beyond the Earthsunder rank.

Han Wu could tell that the man had some sort of Skill capable of concealing his presence so completely that no one could discern his true strength. Even Akanzor and Bart were unable to perceive it.

"That's enough. Bart, stand down," Han Wu instructed. "Who are you and why are you here?"

The man delicately raised his fingers and spoke in an effeminate tone. "I heard that Faido was defeated, so I came here to personally see which hero accomplished such a feat. To think the one responsible for Faido's death is so young and handsome. *Hohoho*. You are truly ravishing!"

The contrast between the man's voice and appearance only deepened Han Wu's discomfort. He forced himself to keep his expression steady.

“You’ve seen me. Now leave. The door is at the back,” Han Wu said, waving the man off. He wanted the unsettling presence gone as soon as possible.

Not killing the man for barging in uninvited was courteous enough in Han Wu’s opinion.

The burly man stomped his heavy feet and grumbled, “*Hmph!* I just arrived, and you are already chasing me away? Am I that unwelcome? Say that you hate me, and I’ll leave at once.”

“I hate you,” Han Wu spat without a second thought.

“I don’t believe you!” the burly man said coquettishly.

Han Wu turned to Amelia and barked, “Give me your sword so I can kill him!”

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Chapter 559 - Playing Hard to Get

[1,203 words]

Chapter 559 - Playing Hard to Get

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Han Wu pressed the Fulgurwood sword against the man’s neck and was about to stab him when the man hurriedly revealed his true intentions.

His name was Sai Ban, and he was a member of the Macho Troupe, which was not far from the Asura Coliseum. He claimed to have heard that the coliseum had gone bankrupt and came to see whether he could sell some favors and purchase some slaves.

Han Wu rejected him immediately.

“Why are you rejecting me? I can offer a great deal of money or treasures!” Sai Ban pleaded, his voice unnervingly effeminate.

Han Wu's irritation intensified. He had two reasons for refusing. First, the Asura staff were fanatically devoted to Faido. If he agreed to sell slaves, Sai Ban could buy away those loyal only to Faido. That possibility would become a ticking time bomb for Han Wu.

The second reason lay with Sai Ban himself. His exaggerated feminine mannerisms and coquettish voice felt neither natural nor coincidental to Han Wu. If anything, the mismatch between his heavily muscled frame and those exaggerated mannerisms seemed deliberate for a *lasting* impression. He suspected that the rest of the troupe were the same and that they must be relying on a Skill or some form of power to this effect.

The Asura staff were proud and unyielding. They would never submit to the kind of physical and psychological hardship imposed by the Macho Troupe.

Han Wu considered himself kind and didn't want them to suffer, so he chose the most merciful option: sacrificing them.

Soon, the staff were dragged to the center of the massive ring where the fight had taken place. There were millions of them, the weakest being a Heroic life form.

Han Wu could earn a fortune if he made use of them, but he had hardened his resolve to leave none alive, including the three heavily injured Heavenrender life forms.

Inside the ring, Zi Jin and the other two lay sprawled on the ground. All of their bones had been broken, and their organs were heavily injured. Still, they remained alive. As Heavenrender life forms, their potent Life Energy worked steadily to repair the damage. At that pace, it would take roughly ten more days for them to recover fully.

The largest of the three, Han Zai, continued to curse Han Wu despite his heavy injuries. "You maggots who crawled out of a ditch, Lord Faido would never die so easily. He's hiding somewhere to recover. Once he gets back, he will grind all of you into the ground!"

Zi Jin was the most clear-headed among them. He had seen Han Wu transform into a massive black dragon and unleash the powerful dragon breath against Faido. Even at the end, he had not seen Faido emerge from it. Near the final moments, however, Zi Jin had glimpsed a tiny black shadow escaping from the blast. He assumed that it belonged to one of Faido's close aides. Faido had nurtured Shadow Demon before, so it was possible that a second one had saved him.

By contrast, Huang Shu worried about what would come next. "Brother Zi, do you think they will kill us?"

Zi Jin dismissed the idea. "Impossible. We are Heavenrender life forms. Even certain major factions covet us. I can guarantee that no matter how much he hates us, he won't kill us. Instead, he will spend a fortune to recruit us."

Huang Shu looked at him with admiration. "Brother Zi, you are right. If he tries to recruit us, I will demand an exorbitant price and bleed him dry."

Han Zai refused. "No, I am loyal only to Lord Faido. I will not work for anyone else."

Zi Jin looked at him as if he were an idiot. Loyalty made sense while Faido was still alive, but now they needed to find another faction to earn money and grow stronger, even though they were all Heavenrender life forms.

The dragon breath had already beaten Faido, so loyalty served no purpose anymore. If Faido truly valued Han Zai, he would have taken him along during escape. Of course, there was the possibility that Faido was already dead. In that case, there was no way to determine how much Han Zai had ever mattered to Faido.

In the end, Zi Jin had nothing but disdain for Han Zai's loyalty.

At that moment, Han Wu rose from the throne and approached them.

Zi Jin quickly signaled the others. "He's coming. Everyone, get ready."

Huang Shu straightened his posture, while Han Zai continued to glare at Han Wu, as if he meant to kill him with his eyes alone.

Han Wu approached and tried to sense their presence. They were true Heavenrender life forms, yet their injuries had left them severely weakened. In order to maximize their potential, Han Wu produced numerous stones aligned with their respective attributes and fed them to the trio.

Huang Shu immediately understood what was happening and realized that Zi Jin was right. He assumed that Han Wu was trying to use the stones filled with pure energy to recruit them.

He thinks he can recruit us with these little things? I won't accept that. But... they smell delicious. I should eat some, Huang Shu thought.

Zi Jin put on a show of refusal, yet he quickly consumed those stones to restore his stamina. Han Zai ate them as well, all while continuing to shout curses at Han Wu.

Han Wu paid no attention to their loyalty. All that mattered was how much energy they would provide for Sacrifice.

After the stones took effect, the three recovered somewhat. Han Wu nodded, said nothing, and turned to leave.

Huang Shu turned to Zi Jin in confusion. Why would Han Wu leave without even recruiting them?

Zi Jin whispered, "He's playing hard to get. He gave us the carrot first so recruiting us later will be easier. We can't fall for his tricks."

Huang Shu thought Zi Jin was right and nodded. "Yes, we can't fall for his tricks. Next time, we have to squeeze as many resources out of him as possible."

Han Zai was still scolding and complaining that Han Wu had given him too little for him to recover.

Han Wu sat on the throne just as Sai Ban approached.

"Why did you ask me to stay and watch? Do you like me?" he asked in his effeminate voice.

Han Wu had to endure the throb of a growing headache and spat, "Stay and watch."

"Watch? Watch what? Do you... I'm not ready yet!" Sai Ban extended his arm to playfully punch Han Wu's shoulder.

Han Wu avoided it deftly and redirected Sai Ban's attention to the ring. "Watch closely."

"I'm ready. Let the proposal be grand and sweet!" Sai Ban shouted shyly.

Han Wu had to admit that Sai Ban was unnaturally narcissistic and imaginative to think that this was a proposal. He ignored him, fixed his gaze on the ring, and activated Sacrifice.

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[900 words]

Chapter 560 - Star Chart

Sacrifice was a power that had saved him from countless dead ends, yet he had used it more and more sparingly as his strength grew. Today, he resolved to invoke it again to eliminate any future assassination attempts by the people of the Asura Coliseum once and for all.

A massive array appeared and encompassed the entire ring.

Sai Ban assumed that it was a massive firework and watched with eager anticipation. However, the outcome was vastly different from his expectations.

The moment Sacrifice took effect, every single being enslaved by Han Wu had their Life Energy extracted. Not even the three powerful Heavenrender life forms were spared. Their Life Energy streamed into the array, and the familiar interface greeted Han Wu, presenting him with three selections.

[Option 1: Conqueror Cassia (World Life Form)]

[Option 2: Heaven Edge (Magic Sword) – Binds forever to the owner and can be enhanced infinitely.]

[Option 3: Star Chart – Contains the map of the ruined Chaotic Starfield Civilization. Automatically activates once inside the Chaotic Starfield.]

Han Wu's heart pounded as his eyes lingered on the first two options. Sacrificing three Heavenrender life forms had produced astonishing rewards!

The first option rewarded him with a World life form, but the second was even more tempting. It offered a weapon rarer than a World life form itself, one that could be enhanced without limit. This magic sword could overpower countless God weapons. For Han Wu, who regularly invaded other civilizations, it was a tool he could exploit to its fullest potential.

However, the moment he saw the third one, he abandoned the first two and chose it without hesitation.

Han Wu had to enter the Chaotic Starfield to find his host's parents, and the Star Chart would be of immense help. It was the final wish of both the host and the host's grandfather, and he needed to fulfill it at any cost.

After selecting the Star Chart, he tried to examine its contents. No matter what he did, the chart remained blank. Neither his eyes nor his senses could perceive anything. It looked no different from an ordinary piece of cloth, devoid of any apparent value. Even so, the description stated that the Star Chart recorded a map of the Chaotic Starfield.

Han Wu trusted Sacrifice and felt certain that a reward it granted could not be false. He put the Star Chart away.

Sai Ban had witnessed the entire Sacrifice process and was too terrified to even stand straight. His two attendants rushed to support him so he wouldn't fall to the ground.

Sai Ban's lips quivered with fear, certain that Han Wu would push him into the Sacrifice array in a burst of anger.

"Erm..."

If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave," Sai Ban blurted out.

Han Wu couldn't have wished for a better outcome. He watched Sai Ban flee with his attendants and exhaled. The intimidation of Sacrifice was truly powerful. He had been trying to drive Sai Ban away and had reached an impasse until he devised the plan to let him witness the entire ritual.

He could technically have killed Sai Ban and ended the harassment for good. However, Sai Ban hadn't crossed any moral lines, nor had he threatened Han Wu's life, so the latter didn't view Sai Ban as a threat.

Moreover, Sai Ban was powerful, with the enigmatic Macho Troupe standing behind him. Han Wu lacked sufficient information and couldn't justify killing Sai Ban. Now he hoped that Sacrifice's terror would be enough to make Sai Ban leave him alone.

Han Wu was considering his next steps when the Umbral Mouse quickly approached him. "Master, I have a present for you!"

Han Wu's interest was piqued. "What did you bring me?"

The Umbral Mouse looked around and confirmed that no one was nearby. Only then did it reveal what it got. "This is Shadow Demon's core. If you absorb it, it will increase the strength of your soul. As for these, they are Faido's Divine Ring and heart. Before the dragon breath ended, I rushed in to steal them because I feared they would be destroyed."

Han Wu looked at the Umbral Mouse with delight. After unleashing the dragon breath, he had searched for anything that Faido would have left behind. Unfortunately, that devastating attack had left nothing behind. He had assumed that his breath attack had been so powerful that it had obliterated all treasures.

Now he realized that the Umbral Mouse had plundered them. Thankfully, it had acted when it did, or nothing would've remained.

"Mousey! You've done a great job. Tell me what you want, and I will get it for you!"

The Umbral Mouse looked down shyly and whispered, "I want a more convenient vessel. I don't need it to be powerful. I just want to explore the world in it. I like the petite, soft bodies of beautiful young women."

Han Wu agreed. He could select a young woman from among the Epistians in his divine realm and guide her soul out. The empty shell would serve as the perfect vessel for the Umbral Mouse. As for the displaced soul, he could either place it within a golem or use Reincarnation to grant her a new life, complete with her memories, in a more powerful race.

In the end, Han Wu would never let his units down.

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Chapter 561 - Who Will Die With Me?

[1,004 words]

Chapter 561 - Who Will Die With Me?

The Blood Coliseum was operating as normal. Marks kept his eyes fixed on the monitor, which displayed matches happening in real time. Despite his attempts to focus, his mind wandered, worried about Han Wu.

Han Wu had brought the elites of the Sanguine Combatants with him to challenge the Asura Coliseum. While he was undeniably strong, that was still Faido's home turf. What if Faido had laid a trap? What would Han Wu do?

Marks regretted agreeing to Han Wu's plan to challenge the Asura Coliseum. With his potential, he would've only needed a few years of growth for a guaranteed victory—an undoubtedly preferable circumstance.

Just then, the sirens blared. Marks leaped up and rushed to the control console.

"Is the Asura Coliseum attacking us?" he asked the hidden scouts.

"A huge number of fighting rings are approaching us!" they replied.

Marks was stunned. Fighting rings were the symbol of the Asura Coliseum. For so many to appear near the Blood Coliseum could only mean they were being invaded. Han Wu had failed!

Though Han Wu had owned the Blood Coliseum for a short period of time, Marks and the other staff had already recognized him as the rightful heir.

Now, their new heir had likely been killed while trying to get revenge for the Blood Coliseum. Moreover, his murderer was approaching them. Everyone in the Blood Coliseum was rightfully furious.

Rage flooded his veins, but Marks kept his composure and mental clarity.

“Everyone, the Asura Coliseum is launching one final assault on us. We all know what we have to lose in this, so expect this battle to be fierce,” Marks said impassionately. “Just remember this: it doesn’t matter if we die and the Blood Coliseum is destroyed; what matters is our fighting spirit. We will fight as long as we live! Everyone, will you die with me today?”

His cold voice echoed across the coliseum, reaching the ears of every staff member and sparking a wave of righteous anger like a lit match in a pool of kerosene. Battle spirits soared as the staff all prepared to fight to their last breath.

Their enemy was invading. All they could do now was fight to the death, using their lives to mark the imperfect end of the Blood Coliseum.

Battle cries rang out from all corners of the coliseum.

“Fight!”

“To War!”

“Fight!”

Marks smiled. “Old sir and new boss, I will bring the entire Blood Coliseum to meet you!”

Everyone was stirred into a frenzy. The crowd was either chased away or placed in special observation seats in preparation for the upcoming battle.

The Blood Coliseum was prepared for everyone to witness their war against the Asura Coliseum!

Sanguine Combatants swarmed from their nests to battle. This would be a huge war involving billions of units! Those watching were in awe at the scale.

This was a spectacle that one could typically only see in a battle between God Kings, and many onlookers even called their family and friends to watch.

Marks and some of the management stood at the vanguard of the army. Although they weren’t proficient in battle, they were armed to the teeth and ready to fight to their last breath.

Meanwhile, a huge number of rings were swiftly approaching the Blood Coliseum. In the middle of the largest ring—the one infused with arrays of Dark Energy—rested Han Wu and his units.

Han Wu glanced admiringly at the rings floating behind him.

After checking the assets of the Asura Coliseum, he discovered that he had enough money and resources to construct a gate connecting the Blood Coliseum to the Asura Coliseum. The only caveat was that he would first need to bring the rings back while the gate was being created.

The high frequency of ring battles required staff members to manage them, but sending people back and forth without the infrastructure of a gate was simply too costly.

Han Wu was already thinking about Marks' reaction to the rings.

At that moment, the Heavenrender Sanguine Combatant sensed the presence of its race and quickly reported to Han Wu, "Master, it seems my people have already gathered together. I sense their combined presence in one spot."

Han Wu was ecstatic, certain that the Blood Coliseum staff were all waiting to welcome him back. *I can't believe Marks gathered all of the Sanguine Combatants just to welcome us home. Did he know I was coming back from the rings? What a smart man.*

As they approached the Blood Coliseum, Han Wu perched at the edge of the largest ring and looked out to see a huge ocean of blood floating in the air.

It was a magnificent view!

Upon hearing the praise his units were bestowing on Marks, Han Wu decided to call the man to commend him.

Back in the Blood Coliseum, Marks was about to give the order to attack when he received a call from his "dead" boss, Han Wu!

Marks was in shock. *Did someone take over his identity and authority? No, that can't be. Everyone in the Divine Civilization is unique. Only a civilization above them can impersonate them.*

Though confused, Marks suppressed his tumultuous emotions and accepted the call.

"Hello?"

"Marks! Good job," Han Wu praised. "I didn't think you would gather everyone just to welcome me back. I'm really touched."

Marks froze, mind racing as he realized his folly. *Fuck! I misunderstood the situation!*

The Blood Coliseum staff had assumed that Han Wu had departed on a hopelessly perilous mission and had expected him to ultimately be defeated. It would be a miracle if he escaped, much less came out on top.

However, contrary to their beliefs, Han Wu had done the impossible and returned victorious!

Marks glanced apprehensively over at his colleagues, filled with fighting spirit and ready to die for the Blood Coliseum.

They'll probably beat me to death once they learn the truth...

He tried to tell himself that everything would be alright in the end.

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[1,028 words]

Chapter 562 - The Death Tower

The rings entered the vicinity of the Blood Coliseum. Everybody was prepared to leap into action when Marks disclosed the truth.

As expected, everyone beat him up. Those with healing abilities were worried that not everyone would get the opportunity to vent their annoyance, so they made sure to heal Marks periodically for continuous battering.

In the end, Marks survived, though at the cost of his already big body swelling even larger from inflammation. Those unfamiliar with Marks would've likely assumed he was some kind of giant.

But this was only a small fiasco. The main event was Han Wu's return.

Cheers and whistles filled the air as Han Wu arrived with several hundred thousand rings in tow. Those rings were made from precious materials and were engraved with all sorts of arrays.

Each ring cost several hundred to thousands of Divine Essence. In other words, Han Wu had brought back an astronomical amount of Divine Essence. The staff responsible for collecting them into inventory were in shock.

One could only imagine the many years of effort it took for Faido to construct so many rings, and now they had all become part of the Blood Coliseum's wealth.

Joyous greetings welcomed Han Wu as he entered the Blood Coliseum. Catching sight of Marks, he frowned. "Who beat you up?"

"No one. I accidentally fell," Marks lied, trying in vain to hide his face.

Only a child would believe him. How could a Major God like him incur such injuries from a mere fall?

Upon learning of the situation from the other staff, Han Wu, suppressing his laughter, offered Marks a commiserating pat on the shoulder. "You're usually so clever, I'm surprised you made such a careless mistake. How badly were you beaten?"

Marks sighed. He never thought his subordinates could be this heavy-handed. While he could always heal himself, he felt he had no choice but to leave the bruises so as not to incite their anger, lest he get beaten up again.

The Blood Coliseum was in revelry, but the crowd was not. Dissatisfaction filled the air. What happened to the special war? Where were the clashes between billions of units? Many had already called their friends and family to watch the fight, only for nothing to happen in the end. Even the sight of several thousand people beating up a single person was extremely dull in comparison.

The staff of the Blood Coliseum was mulling over how to explain this to the crowd. One wrong word and they could tarnish the reputation of the Blood Coliseum. How could they divert their attention?

Marks had a brilliant idea and proposed it to Han Wu for approval. An impactful story would be needed if they wanted to successfully distract the audience. Fortunately, Han Wu had brought back many rings from the Asura Coliseum, allowing them to announce that the Blood Coliseum was opening a new type of match: one-on-one matches.

All they needed to do was copy the Asura Coliseum's rules. While not necessarily unique, it was enough to attract the crowd. After all, they were here to join matches, but few could grow stronger in group battles. One-on-one matches would give them an alternative for advancing.

Han Wu decided to expand on Marks' idea and innovate a brilliant program. It would merely require a slight alteration of the rules.

With that, he announced the great news to those still within the Blood Coliseum. From today onward, they would open up registration for one-on-one matches, suitable for those with only a few powerful units in their divine realm.

Satisfied, the crowd cheered in support. They were tired of group matches and were itching to try a new form of match.

Han Wu motioned for them to fall silent as he had one more piece of news. In addition to the single matchups, he was going to open up another new mode: the Death Tower.

Everyone's interest was piqued. Nobody knew what a Death Tower was. Some speculated that it was related to the God King of Death due to its name. If so, they were more than willing to test it out.

Han Wu explained the basic rules of the Death Tower. He was going to construct a tower that was formed from one hundred rings. Every floor would consist of a ring and a guardian corresponding to the attribute of the ring.

Challengers had to defeat the guardian to enter the next stage. If the challenger couldn't continue or was defeated, they would receive a reward based on the number of floors they had cleared.

The higher they climbed, the better the rewards. This news instantly drew the attention of the crowd. It was worth a try. After all, all they needed to do was clear the floors to get a reward.

Han Wu motioned for the staff to arrange the administration part for eager contestants while he went backstage. Accompanying him was a staff member with powers over space to help him build the tower.

With his guidance, the first version of the Death Tower was soon completed. One hundred rings were stacked into a tower. If the challenger was successful in defeating the respective floor's guardian, a gate connecting to the next stage would open.

The concept was simple, but more than enough to defuse the situation. They could always optimize it later. Han Wu assigned his own units as the guardians of each floor based on the corresponding attribute of the respective rings.

The Death Tower was soon ready for its first challengers.

Han Wu decided to allow a hundred registered participants to enter, collecting entrance fees based on the strength of the challenger. Some wanted to test it personally, while others sent one of their units in.

Soon, the first hundred challengers were making their way into the Death Tower, with Han Wu projecting their fight onto a hundred screens for the crowd's viewing pleasure.

The crowd glanced from screen to screen to find their favorite contestants. Some gambling addicts even started a bet on the last person standing.

The first Death Tower match was about to start!

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[977 words]

Chapter 563 - Flagship Project

On the third floor, a Heroic Iron Skin encountered a Mud Monster in a ring engraved with runes and arrays that boosted the earth attribute. Although the Iron Skin was powerful, it couldn't harm the Mud Monster at all. Meanwhile, the Mud Monster used its skill to sink the Iron Skin into a mud swamp and killed it through asphyxiation.

A water attribute Merman arrived at the ice attribute ring of the sixth floor. The guardian, a Frost Rhino, killed him instantly.

Meanwhile, a Dark Elf exhausted itself killing the ninth floor's guardian. When asked if it wanted to continue the challenge, it declined. A light enveloped its figure, and it appeared in front of the Death Tower, holding a crystal made from merging Dark Stones in its hand.

The crystal was refining the Dark Energy in its body. Holding onto it for prolonged periods would help it grow stronger. The master of the Dark Elf noticed the crystal and took it away to appraise it.

The master was surprised to discover that the crystal could improve both the absorption rate and purity of Dark Energy for his units! It was a powerful treasure that could accelerate the growth of its units!

Regrettably, the crystal was small and worked only for Heroic life forms and below. Even so, one couldn't discount its usefulness. The Dark Elf had obtained such a treasure despite only reaching the ninth floor.

One could only imagine the reward for the tenth, twentieth, fiftieth, or even the hundredth floor!

Nobody thought much of the Dark Elf's reward when they first saw it, but as information about the crystal spread, many Demigods and Gods from the Divine Civilization rushed to register for the Death Tower so they could send their units in.

The ninth floor's reward was already exceptional; the rewards for the higher floors would only be better. Unfortunately, the Death Tower was still newly established, and Han Wu

only allowed one hundred challengers in at any given time. Still, the crowd was willing to wait.

The number of contestants soon crossed 40,000, with Han Wu collecting 4,000 Divine Essence from the entry fees alone. The rewards he gave out were crystals made from merging different Energy Stones. While these were a dime a dozen to him, they were incredibly valuable for others.

However, this wasn't the only way the Death Tower was profitable. After the units died, the Blood Coliseum's unique array would turn their bodies into Core Fragments. The more powerful the units, the bigger the fragments.

This was the reason he called it the Death Tower. On the surface, he was merely providing an opportunity for challengers to participate in a death match, but in reality, he was benefiting from their deaths.

Although the profit per person wasn't much, it came in at a steady rate and would build up to a sizable amount over time.

Marks watched the match from among the audience to get a better feel of things as he looked at the screens. The crowds were watching for entertainment. He, on the other hand, was weighing the business potential.

This wasn't just about calculating the winning ratio for the challengers, but also assessing whether the Death Tower would truly improve the Blood Coliseum's coffers and reputation in the long run.

After consolidating and analyzing his findings, he came to the conclusion that the Death Tower would most likely become the second most popular match-up after the group matches.

In terms of finances, participants had to pay an entry fee to challenge the tower, and the rewards were easy to come by. Challengers would have to pass the eightieth floor before the Blood Coliseum started losing.

Moreover, both challengers and guardians were turned into core fragments after their deaths. The guardian's core fragment would cover part of their losses from its death, but a challenger's death was essentially free money.

There was also the Blood Coliseum's reputation to consider. Marks had managed the Blood Coliseum for many years and knew the impact of a life-or-death match.

Most participants were likely to advance to the next rank during their challenge, which made a good selling point for their Death Tower. Not to mention, the Blood Coliseum also gained when their guardians got stronger.

Challengers faced trials on every floor, meaning the guardians also went through numerous trials as they fought off challengers. In other words, the challengers were paying to train the coliseum's units. This was an unprecedented feat for any coliseum.

Han Wu's idea was actually much better than Marks expected. However, there were still several glaring downsides, the most obvious being that the tower could only accommodate a hundred challengers at once. They needed to purchase more rings and expand the tower's capacity.

Once that hurdle was conquered, he was confident the Death Tower would become a highlight of the Blood Coliseum.

Marks was pondering over other ways to optimize the operation when the crowd went wild.

"Look at screen ninety-seven! Someone's reached the ninetieth floor!"

Everyone turned to the screen in question. A life form wielding a blood-red long sword had just defeated the ninetieth guardian. He stepped into the portal and cleared the subsequent floors one after another.

The powerful life form soon reached the ninety-eighth floor with ease. Everyone's attention was fully on him. They didn't know who he was, but they were all cheering for him regardless.

"Good luck! Two more floors and you'll clear the entire tower!"

"I wonder what the reward is for clearing the tower."

"The ninety-seventh floor had an Earthsunder guardian! That's ridiculous!"

"Beat the hundredth floor if you're a man!"

...

The challenger was inside the tower and thus couldn't hear them. Still, he fought valiantly, swiftly conquering both the ninety-eighth and ninety-ninth floors.

The portal to the hundredth floor opened before him.

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[907 words]

Chapter 564 - Cool Composure

The challenger entered the hundredth floor, only to be met with a massive Black Dragon. More accurately, the guardian was the Heavenrender life form, Black Dragon King Alpheus.

Alpheus had always been talented and had since become the king of Black Dragons with the aid of high-quality materials. It had grown ten times larger after becoming the Black Dragon King and had the energy reserves to match. All of its skills had also been amplified.

It had been sleeping when the challenger entered the floor. Sensing the intruder, it opened one eye to peer at the tiny figure.

“You, minuscule life form, tell me your name,” Alpheus rumbled, projecting the haughtiness of a king.

The life form ignored it. Swinging his sword, he lunged forward.

Alpheus sent out a wave of darkness with just a single claw, sending the challenger ten steps backward.

“Minuscule life form, you’re too weak to take me on. Go back and train,” Alpheus mocked.

The life form couldn’t believe that a single attack had forced him back. Though slightly shaken, he kept his composure, channeling all his energy into his blood-red sword.

The sword grew to three meters long, and blood-red eyes appeared on the blade. The eyes darted around as if searching for prey.

“Cut!” the life form cried, attacking once more.

Alpheus took this strike more seriously. It raised its claws, grabbed the blade, and snapped it.

The life form was left in stunned disbelief. He was also a Heavenrender life form. How could Alpheus defeat him with such ease?

Alpheus chuckled. “I take back what I said. You’re no minuscule life form; you’re slightly stronger than that. But you still don’t have the right to challenge me yet.”

In truth, Alpheus wanted nothing more than to eat the life form, but Han Wu barred it from doing so. This life form was the first to reach the hundredth floor. If Alpheus killed him, no one would want to challenge the Death Tower anymore.

Han Wu had to ensure that there would always be challengers for the tower. Through the strands of faith, he warned Alpheus to suppress its appetite and not eat the living advertisement.

Alpheus was usually disobedient to others, but Han Wu was the one person it would obey. That was the reason it was persuading the life form to give up, for it couldn't guarantee his survival if they were to really fight.

However, the life form didn't take its suggestion to heart and continued to stab the broken blade into Alpheus's scales. Unfortunately, the blade had been useless while whole, let alone snapped, and it couldn't even crack the scales to pierce Alpheus.

Not wanting to unwittingly disobey Han Wu, Alpheus decided to go back to sleep. Before it did, it tried to dissuade the life form once more, "I'm heading back to bed. You can continue, just wake me up if you manage to crack one of my scales."

These disrespectful words left the life form discouraged. They were both Heavenrender life forms, so why was the gap between them so big?

The life form dropped his sword and knelt despondently on the ground, fighting spirit completely gone. Noticing this, Alpheus tried to cheer him up.

"Hey, you're weak, but there's still hope," Alpheus said. "With your strength, you could probably reach my level in 200 years."

The life form fell into a deeper depression and chose to leave the tower without a word. The Death Tower was calculating his reward when the life form suggested a different prize. He was willing to forfeit his reward to meet the creator of the Death Tower.

Han Wu immediately stopped the reward calculation. He was more than willing to meet this life form. After all, the Death Tower was still newly established. While it was already earning money, the budget for it was still tight, so every little chance to save helped.

Thus, the life form was escorted to meet Han Wu. The life form was shocked to find that the creator of the Death Tower was a young man. If the fight with Alpheus had left him dejected, this meeting left him feeling thoroughly miserable. Why did he choose to meet the creator rather than claim his reward?

"Are you alright?" Han Wu asked, noticing the life form's gloomy mood.

The life form quickly composed himself. "I'm alright. My name is Leng Te. Happy to meet you, creator of the Death Tower."

"I'm even happier to meet you." Han Wu chuckled, cheerful that he didn't need to give out the reward.

After that brief exchange, the pair fell quiet, and the situation turned awkward. Three entire minutes passed in painful silence.

Leng Te didn't know what to ask, and Han Wu had his reputation as a Major God to maintain, preventing him from showing his interest in Leng Te. In the end, Leng Te broke the silence first.

He asked many questions about Alpheus. Han Wu answered some but ignored the rest, instead suggesting that Leng Te ask those questions to Alpheus himself.

Unfortunately, Leng Te had already used his entry ticket. If he wanted to enter the Death Tower again, he would have to buy another. Leng Te checked the ticket machine to see the number of challengers in front of him.

There were 126,000 challengers in line!

Leng Te doubted he could ever meet Alpheus again in his lifetime.

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[1,176 words]

Chapter 565 - Benefactor Xu Hai

Leng Te bought his ticket and left. He had received enough information about Alpheus to prepare a battle plan for the next time he challenged the tower.

At that moment, an idea struck Han Wu, and he called out for Leng Te to wait. "Leng Te, I have a suggestion. I wonder if you would be willing to consider it."

Leng Te turned back, curiosity in his eyes.

Han Wu recalled that Alpheus had shattered Leng Te's weapon and continued, "I would like to invite you to become one of the ninety-ninth floor's guardians. As a reward, I will give you a powerful weapon."

Leng Te considered the offer. As of now, almost no one could reach the ninety-ninth floor, and it already had multiple guardians. It was a fairly easy job, and he would receive a new weapon in return.

Overall, the arrangement seemed reasonable. However, Leng Te needed constant battle to keep himself sharp, so he voiced his condition. "I want permission to challenge the Black Dragon King from time to time."

Han Wu agreed without hesitation. Ever since Alpheus became a Black Dragon King, he had spent days eating and sleeping. If this continued, he would turn into a Black Pig King instead. Han Wu had been searching for a way to force Alpheus to exercise, and Leng Te's request solved that problem perfectly.

Leng Te nodded in satisfaction and followed a staff member to the vault to choose his weapon.

At the same time, Han Wu announced that Leng Te had become one of the ninety-ninth floor's guardians. The news stunned the audience, and ticket sales exploded. After all, strong challengers could be recruited as guardians!

With the number of challenges rising, it was even more important for Han Wu to optimize the tower as soon as possible. However, this wasn't an immediate concern yet. His priority lay in promoting the tower. He could leave the optimization to Marks and the others.

Once Han Wu finished his work, he returned to the college. Between managing the Asura Coliseum's challenge and overseeing the Blood Coliseum's optimization, he hadn't returned to the college for a long time.

Considering his unique circumstances, the college gave him preferential treatment and allowed him to come and go as he pleased. Despite the many classes he had missed, all the lecturers spoke in his favor.

Some students felt that it was unfair and tried to report it, but their lecturer rebuked them. "If you were half as capable as Han Wu, we would give you the same freedom. You wouldn't even need to take tests, and we would still give you full marks."

Those students fell silent. Han Wu wasn't only a Major God but also the heir of the Blood Coliseum, the Holy Son of Death, and someone with good relations with the Darkness faction. His identity, power, and background far exceeded most lecturers in Imperial College, and yet he was only the second-year valedictorian. With him there, it would be difficult for another second-year student to rival his renown.

Still, his presence benefited the entire cohort. The second years received more resources than the other years because of him. The lecturers hoped that someone as talented as Han Wu would emerge. Even if it was just one, or someone with a fraction of his strength, that would be good enough.

Han Wu had no idea what had happened at the college. When he returned, he was surprised to find that the entire class had left for a major class. They would invade a fairly huge civilization. If they succeeded, the entire year would receive amazing rewards. Those who performed exceptionally would even receive a direct reward from the Will of the Divine Civilization.

Han Wu smiled. With Qin Shuang and the others involved, he wasn't worried about their safety. Since he had no classes to attend, he decided to check on Xu Hai instead. He was both his mentor and his benefactor, so he needed to visit him from time to time.

He arrived at his office, only to find it empty. A note was posted on the door: "In secluded training. Do not disturb unless there is an emergency."

Han Wu sighed. It appeared Xu Hai was trying to become a God King!

Han Wu had to accelerate the refinement of his Conversion and Duel Jurisdictions too.

Conversion required him to absorb Divine Egos, Divine Aspects, and other rare resources of varied attributes. He had already instructed the Blood Coliseum to search for such treasures for him.

As for the Duel Jurisdiction, he had inherited it from the Blood Coliseum's previous owner and it was already completed. However, in order to activate it, he needed to fight a lot.

After he challenged the Asura Coliseum, Duel had already reached an activation level of 12%. Further progress required even more combat. The more intense the fight, the greater the activation. He hoped to fully activate it before heading to the Chaotic Starfield.

With those plans in mind, Han Wu decided to return to the Blood Coliseum. At that moment, a wave of Divine Authority spread across the entire Imperial College. It was simultaneously warm yet resolute.

Han Wu focused his senses and quickly traced the source to his mentor. "Wait, has he ascended?"

Han Wu excitedly rushed toward the source of the Divine Authority. Students and lecturers felt it as well and quickly ran toward the scene too. They wanted to witness the ascension of a Major God to a God King, since it was a rare occurrence.

When he reached the site, Han Wu sensed a powerful force preventing him from approaching Xu Hai. He couldn't move closer than 500 meters away. Xu Hai had likely placed a barrier to prevent any interference during his ascension.

Han Wu stood outside quietly. Soon, the rest of the college arrived. Everyone acknowledged him upon seeing him. Even though Han Wu was only a second-year student, he was also the Blood Coliseum's owner, so they treated him like a God King.

Han Wu nodded in response, keeping his humility. This wasn't the time for formalities. Everyone was there to witness Xu Hai's ascension.

As Xu Hai's Divine Authority grew stronger, the skies above him changed. Dense clouds formed overhead, stretching to the horizon. This wasn't a lightning tribulation but the manifestation of the Will of the Divine Civilization.

Moments later, the clouds parted only above Xu Hai, leaving only him beneath the empty heavens. A beam of divine light descended from the sky directly onto Xu Hai. The sight left everyone stunned.

Under the divine light, Xu Hai's figure expanded until it grew several hundred thousand meters in height. It finally stopped at 300,000 meters. Then, under everyone's watchful eyes, his figure shrank just as rapidly.

This wasn't a sign of failure. He was refining the energy he had obtained.

It took him three entire days before he completed the refinement and returned to his normal size. He was a God King now!

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- Chapter 566 - Divine Name

[1,290 words]

Chapter 566 - Divine Name

The strange phenomena faded away, and Xu Hai stood there with no visible trace of a God King's might. He looked no different from a wise scholar or sage.

Han Wu was the first to congratulate him. "Congratulations for ascending to a God King!"

The others swiftly followed. "We greet the new God King!"

"The last time our college produced a God King was decades ago. The ascension of another God King is a great honor for our college."

"God King Xu Hai, may we ask which Divine Name you've received?"

At that question, many Major Gods perked up. They were also eager to hear the answer.

A God King's Divine Name was the source of their power. For example, the Blazing God King's Divine Name was tied to fire, and the greater fire he commanded, the more powerful he was.

There was also the White Mane God King whom Han Wu had offended last time. Despite his title, his Divine Name wasn't White Mane but Commerce. The reason was that he had founded the Supreme Merchant Group and conducted trade across other civilizations to increase his own strength.

Naturally, everyone was keen to learn Xu Hai's Divine Name.

Xu Hai smiled warmly before replying, "It's Wisdom."

"Wisdom! It's actually Wisdom!"

"Quick, let me check. When was the previous God King of Wisdom born... 30,000 years ago? And that God King was the leader of all God Kings!"

"To think that the God King of Wisdom would appear once more after 30,000 years. This is a blessing for the entire civilization."

Han Wu wasn't sure what Divine Names were, so he discreetly looked them up online. He learned that Divine Names were divided into categories and tiers. Those associated with different attributes and elements, such as fire and ice, were ranked slightly above average. More obscure ones, like Commerce, ranked slightly below average. The highest-ranking Divine Names were associated with Life, Death, Destruction, Creation, Light, Darkness, and War. Wisdom was also listed among the top tier.

Han Wu also discovered that the God King of Wisdom would awaken the Eyes of Wisdom, which could see through anything. A sudden realization struck him. Perhaps Xu Hai had chosen him as his student because of it. Still, how had Xu Hai managed to do so even while he was only a Major God?

Han Wu assumed that maybe that had just been a sign that Xu Hai's Eyes of Wisdom were already awakening.

After accepting congratulations and offering his thanks, God King Xu Hai approached Han Wu. "So, you finally had your fun adventuring outside?"

Han Wu smiled sheepishly. Whenever he caused trouble outside, Xu Hai was always the one who cleaned up the aftermath. Han Wu suspected that his lack of punishment for skipping so many days of classes came not only from his strength and status but also from Xu Hai quietly intervening on his behalf.

"Time to head back. I've gained many insights after ascending to a God King, and I can explain them to you," Xu Hai said.

The other Major Gods were envious. A lecture from a God King was a rare opportunity that everyone desired, but only Han Wu held that privilege right now.

Han Wu nodded. "I do have some questions that need your guidance."

Under everyone's watchful eyes, the two departed through teleportation.

Long after they vanished, one of the Major Gods suddenly realized what had happened. "Wait. Isn't there a barrier around the college that prevents anyone from teleporting in and out? How come the two of them could do so?"

"Bro, are you serious?" another replied. "He's a God King, and the God King of Wisdom to boot. What kind of barrier could possibly stop him?"

"I'm so jealous! The mentor is powerful, and the student is stupidly talented. This era belongs to Xu Hai."

"I can guarantee that he will be the next chancellor."

...

Meanwhile, Xu Hai and Han Wu returned to the former's office. Xu Hai waved his arm, and the entire office turned into a limitless pasture. A single stone table and two stone chairs materialized before Han Wu.

A warm breeze carried the scent of fresh grass. Han Wu felt much more relaxed here.

Xu Hai summoned a teapot and two tea cups out of nowhere. "Tell me everything you've experienced so far."

Han Wu quickly poured some tea for Xu Hai and recounted the events at the Blood Coliseum. Xu Hai listened in silence, sipping calmly, until Han Wu described killing Faido with the Origin of Mutation's help. He immediately spat out his tea.

Faido was a World life form, a being equal to a God King, and a young man had killed him just like that. It was embarrassing!

At the same time, it gave Xu Hai a new understanding of Han Wu's strength. Even though Han Wu was at the level of a Heavenrender life form, his true power could rival that of a World life form. In practical terms, Han Wu could contend with God Kings.

Xu Hai quickly dismissed the thought. Even if Han Wu possessed a World life form's strength, he could only fight against individuals like Faido. Against genuine God Kings, Han Wu would still need all his effort just to eliminate their units, let alone confront the God King itself.

Han Wu listened to his lecture carefully and asked about how to raise his strength to the World rank.

For Xu Hai, who had already ascended as the God King of Wisdom, the question was simple. He clearly laid out the path. The fastest method was to research the Divine Rings of World life forms, which contained the fundamental powers of the world. The deeper Han Wu's understanding became, the closer he would move toward becoming a World life form.

Xu Hai also explained that once someone from the Divine Civilization reached the World rank, they would generate a small world unique to themselves, known as a Microcosm. This Microcosm would then automatically merge with their divine realm. When that happened, the divine realm's stability would drastically increase, while the Microcosm would develop at an astonishing rate.

Han Wu was elated and hoped to reach the World rank soon. He was eager to see what would happen to his divine realm.

Han Wu took out the Divine Ring that Faido left behind to research it. The Umbral Mouse had plundered it before he vanished. Han Wu wanted to become a World life form as soon as possible, though he understood that cultivation wasn't something that happened overnight.

After hearing Han Wu describe his experiences, Xu Hai grew interested in the Death Tower and expressed a desire to inspect it himself.

Han Wu readily agreed. Using his authority as the owner of the Blood Coliseum, he transported both himself and Xu Hai back to the coliseum.

The Blood Coliseum had grown especially lively of late. With the recent introduction of one-on-one matches, many established contenders decided to try them out, having grown bored with the usual group bouts. Some even fought through several consecutive rounds in a single session.

Then there was the insanely popular Death Tower, which Han Wu had created. As of today, 346,000 challengers were waiting for their turn. Many were already impatient from all the waiting, and Marks was busy optimizing it. Unfortunately, optimization required time.

Xu Hai examined the Death Tower's structure and immediately identified its flaws. Since his most excellent student had created it, Xu Hai would not allow the tower to remain imperfect. He activated his God King power and enveloped the Death Tower in it. With the power of wisdom, a brand-new Death Tower started to take shape.

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[1,106 words]

Chapter 567 - Miracle

The power of wisdom was like a needle and thread as it modified and spun around the Death Tower. At Xu Hai's request, Han Wu sent additional rings into the tower.

While Xu Hai focused on the modifications, Han Wu noticed an unexpected change within his divine realm. A single tower that was similar to his Death Tower was slowly taking shape inside it. He also sensed its familiar aura and realized that it was a miniature version of the Death Tower itself!

After the external modification was finally complete, Xu Hai was exhausted. He had spent 90% of his energy just to modify it. Considering that this was a God King's power, one could tell the extent of the modification.

The outcome was amazing. Once everything stabilized, the Death Tower had turned into something brand new. It could now accommodate 10,000 rings of different attributes and could house several thousand life forms at once.

Xu Hai also used the power of wisdom to manufacture a powerful core for the Death Tower. This core functioned like a computer that could automatically calculate and predict which guardian best matched each ring to maximize its potential. At the same time, it could analyze the challenger's race and determine which attributes countered them.

With only minor adjustments, Han Wu could influence the outcome of any challenge. He could assist a challenger's success or ensure their failure. If he wished to stop someone, he could arrange for them to enter a floor with the element that countered them.

Han Wu was impressed by what Xu Hai had done to his Death Tower and sighed in admiration. *Such are the dark secrets of an industry.*

Han Wu also showed Xu Hai the miniature Death Tower within his divine realm. Xu Hai examined it with his Eyes of Wisdom and was surprised by his findings. The Death Tower of the Blood Coliseum was built by Han Wu, managed by Marks, and modified by Xu Hai. It was technically an artificial miracle. However, the Death Tower within Han Wu's divine realm had formed naturally and qualified as a true divine miracle!

It also differed in function. In the Blood Coliseum, Han Wu had to assign guardians to defend each floor. Within his divine realm, the Death Tower drew its guardians from other civilizations. Each floor housed one or more foreign experts. The guardians would

rotate over time, though no one knew when the change would occur or what kind of opponent would appear next.

Even so, the tower still concealed mysteries that even Xu Hai's Eyes of Wisdom couldn't decipher yet. He had awakened them only recently and required more time to master their power before he could perceive the truth behind everything.

Nevertheless, Han Wu was already thrilled by the information that Xu Hai had provided.

Naturally, Xu Hai knew what he wanted to do and waved his arm. "Go and enjoy it. Tell me everything you see inside once you come out."

"I will. Thank you, sir!" Han Wu smiled, returned to his divine realm, and rushed to the miniature Death Tower.

He pushed open the doors and entered the first floor, where a Heroic goblin elder awaited him. It had a long white beard and an aged frame.

The goblin elder saw Han Wu and shouted, "Thank you, goblin ancestors! I can fill myself up once more."

The goblin grabbed a wooden club and charged. Han Wu answered with a fireball, and the goblin elder struggled on the ground to extinguish it. Moments later, it burned to ash.

Han Wu cleared the floor, and the portal to the next one opened. The second portal was a watery ring, from which emerged a merman. It was also a Heroic life form, but it was stronger than the goblin elder.

The merman twirled its trident and murmured in a hazy voice, "You... Are you the one who will disrupt the Great Merman Sage Amanda's plan?"

Han Wu frowned. He had never heard of such a figure. He launched another fireball, and the merman burned instantly, reduced to a crisp that carried an oddly savory scent. Soon, he entered the third floor, then continued onward. He cleared each floor with a single move, but as he climbed upward, he felt that the battles were getting harder.

On the tenth floor, he faced both a Heroic and a Lord life form at the same time. From the tenth through the twentieth floor, his opponents escalated to High Lord and King life forms. The twenty-first through thirtieth floors were filled with Sage life forms, and on the thirty-first floor, he finally encountered an Earthsunder life form.

Facing an Earthsunder life form meant he could no longer fight so casually. He stood still and fought with a single hand. With the power of a Heavenrender life form, he could defeat Earthsunder life forms this way. He continued until he reached the fortieth floor, where he could be facing a powerful Earthsunder life form.

Han Wu judged that fighting one-handed would no longer suffice, so he decided to do something against his principles. He would fight with both hands. For a Heavenrender life form, resorting to two hands against an Earthsunder life form felt faintly humiliating, but caution took precedence. He stood on the fortieth floor and heard the gate behind him disappear.

“Are you my opponent this time?”

Han Wu couldn't tell who spoke, but the effeminate voice reached him clearly. *Why does it sound familiar?*

He approached the opponent and saw a burly man in sheer dress. Han Wu nearly fainted on the spot.

Sai Ban was surprised as well and cried out in a bell-like voice, “It's you! You handsome young man!”

“Don't get any closer!” Han Wu stopped him from approaching him. Even though Sai Ban had some method of concealing his true power, Han Wu could faintly tell that Sai Ban was a Heavenrender life form.

How did a Heavenrender life form end up in a floor that was meant for an Earthsunder life form? This is outright cheating! Han Wu thought.

“Aiya... I'm not even coveting you now,” Sai Ban said coyly.

Han Wu endured the pounding in his head and ordered, “Turn around. Don't let me see your face.”

“No, I won't!”

Han Wu scoffed and spread his palm. “Then I will Sacrifice you!”

Sai Ban immediately turned around. “Is this angle good?”

Han Wu felt much better, but what should he do next? Sai Ban was strong, and he feared that two hands alone would not be enough to defeat him. He was thinking about going all out.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[978 words]

Chapter 568 - Heaven Stair Challenge

Sai Ban surrendered before Han Wu could make a move. The Macho Troupe was situated close to the Blood Coliseum, so he naturally knew what had happened there. After learning that Han Wu had killed Faido, he held Han Wu in lifelong reverence. Once he confirmed Han Wu's identity, surrender became the obvious choice. The decision would ruin his reputation a little, but it beat death or a savage beating.

Han Wu was victorious, and a portal opened in front of him. He was about to ascend to the next floor when Sai Ban called out, "Who are you fighting for? Are you representing a God King?"

The question confused Han Wu. Since when was he representing a God King here? He needed an explanation.

Han Wu quickly asked, "What do you mean?"

It was Sai Ban's turn to be confused. Had he spoken out of turn? He hadn't, so Han Wu's reaction puzzled him.

"I'm asking who you're representing in the Heaven Stair Challenge," Sai Ban said.

Han Wu grew even more confused. "Heaven Stair Challenge?"

I entered the Death Tower within my divine realm. When did it turn into the Heaven Stair Challenge? he wondered.

Han Wu recounted everything, and Sai Ban quickly understood what had happened. Han Wu had somehow entered this place unknowingly. Sai Ban knew a lot about this place and decided to give him a proper explanation, but he set one condition. If Han Wu encountered others from the Macho Troupe, he would have to spare them. It was best to reduce unnecessary injuries.

Han Wu agreed, and Sai Ban told him everything. The Heaven Stair Challenge originated from another civilization. A World life form could send someone below the World rank to represent them in the challenge. If their representatives cleared certain floors, the World life form would receive a small gift. That reward came from a shared pool that the other World life forms had contributed with their own resources.

The rules were simple: one had to keep climbing. The higher the climb, the more points earned and the better the reward. The rules resembled those of Han Wu's Death Tower.

Even so, how had Han Wu ended up here? He still had no answer.

Sai Ban pursed his lips and offered a hypothesis. "Maybe you were in close proximity with a World life form recently?"

“A World life form?” Han Wu muttered.

The only one he had been close to was Xu Hai. Had he sent Han Wu there? That idea made no sense. If Xu Hai had intended to send Han Wu as his representative, he would've explained everything in advance. There was no reason to hide the truth.

Also, Xu Hai was his benefactor, so Han Wu didn't believe that he would do something like this. In the end, he concluded that when Xu Hai first modified the Death Tower, he had likely been too engrossed in the process and could have made an unintentional oversight, which led to this situation.

However, it was too late to do anything now. Since greater rewards awaited the higher Han Wu climbed, he chose to continue for Xu Hai's sake.

Han Wu entered the forty-first floor and finally reached the zone inhabited by Heavenrender life forms. The moment he stepped inside, a powerful and violent aura washed over him, with no attempt at concealment. The aura made the opponent's strength immediately clear, and Han Wu could tell at once that his opponent was weaker than Sai Ban.

Still, it was a Heavenrender life form, so he went all out. He pressed on and cleared three more floors in a row before fatigue finally set in. His enemies were of the same rank, which left no room for restraint. Thankfully, he prevailed.

Exhaustion settled in, and he knew he needed to rest. As this thought crossed his mind, the ring suddenly changed. The arena that was supposed to be engraved with arrays that boosted Earth Energy transformed without warning. Fire and Dark Energy replaced it.

Han Wu had turned from a challenger to a guardian. “I became the forty-fourth floor's guardian?”

It appeared that the Heaven Stair Challenge's rules were similar to his. As he rested, his strength steadily returned. By late evening, no challengers had appeared, so he continued with his challenges.

The forty-fifth floor contained a guardian capable of unleashing energy from every attribute. He was strong, and his destructive power was overwhelming. He would have won against other challengers, but unfortunately, Han Wu was his opponent.

Han Wu used Conversion and turned those energies into forces that countered him. The battle dragged on for half an hour before the guardian was finally out of energy. Han Wu turned the remaining energies into Dark Energy, compressed it into a massive arm, and blasted the guardian out of the ring.

Han Wu won once more. The same scenario repeated itself from the forty-sixth to the forty-ninth floor. He would've never enjoyed such easy victories if his opponents knew how to fight physically.

At last, he reached the fiftieth floor, which was supposed to be the Heaven Stair Challenge's final stage. The guardian there was an absurdly strong Heavenrender life form. Against someone like that, Han Wu used his trump card: Replicate. His Divine Ring manifested, and the four attributes within it rotated and absorbed the surrounding energy.

That alone was not enough. He activated Demon King Transformation and turned into his demon king form. His aura surged, already surpassing the Heavenrender life form before him.

Han Wu followed with Black Dragon King Transformation. He shifted into his mighty Black Dragon King form and charged a breath attack.

Confronted with Han Wu's overwhelming power, his opponent considered surrendering, but it was already too late. The breath attack erupted and killed it instantly. Han Wu had won!

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[1,265 words]

Chapter 569 - The Fifty-First Floor

Han Wu felt a twinge of boredom after his victory. Even though he wasn't standing at the peak of the Heavenrender life forms yet, his true strength still placed him among the ranks of a World life form.

Using World-rank power to defeat a Heavenrender life form was effortless. He had just defeated the fiftieth floor's guardian when another portal opened before him.

Han Wu was stunned. Sai Ban had told him that the Heaven Stair Challenge only allowed those below the World rank to participate. His previous opponent had been a Heavenrender life form on the verge of breaking through to World rank. Why was there another floor?

Curiosity stirred within him, so he stepped through the portal and appeared on a massive platform. From there, he could see the fifty floors of rings below. Numerous figures were moving within them, all participants in the Heaven Stair Challenge.

Han Wu looked up and saw numerous platforms stretching endlessly into the skies above. He couldn't tell how many there were.

Han Wu took a step toward the next platform. The moment his foot moved forward, a crushing pressure slammed down on him. It wasn't just pushing on his body but also his soul! The weight felt like an impossibly heavy object strapped across his back.

His consciousness wavered, and staying awake became a struggle. Just then, he heard movement nearby. From the edge of the platform, two five-meter-tall orcs charged toward him.

He could tell that the orcs were only Heroic life forms. Under normal circumstances, he could've easily killed them with a flick of his finger. Now, he couldn't even lift his arm.

The orcs tackled him head-on. Han Wu couldn't dodge and was blasted two meters backward, almost falling off the fifty-first floor's platform. As he skidded back, the pressure on him had disappeared completely.

The orcs noted that Han Wu had been forced back and didn't pursue him. Instead, they scoffed and entered the dense forest at the center of the platform.

Han Wu replayed what had happened. The moment he stepped toward the platform, an invisible pressure had immobilized him and drawn the orcs to attack him. Taking even a single step toward the center appeared to flip a switch.

In order to test his theory, he tentatively extended one foot forward. The instant it crossed the line, his foot slammed into the ground as if struck by a metal bat, while the rest of his body remained unaffected.

The orcs sensed the intrusion into their territory and appeared from the forest again. When they saw Han Wu's foot inside their territory, they charged to knock it away.

Han Wu grunted and struggled to pull his foot back. As soon as he succeeded, something changed. The orcs stopped immediately once they realized he was no longer within their territory. They abandoned the charge and left him alone.

Han Wu confirmed that his hypothesis was correct and contemplated his next steps. He needed to step forward, but once he did, he wouldn't be able to move. Worse still, the orcs would rush over and tackle him out of the area. There was little he could do under those constraints.

He considered killing the two orcs to ensure no one interfered. This time, he extended only one arm in front of him. As if sensing someone was in their territory, the orcs appeared again.

When they only saw an arm, they weren't too motivated to do anything. After some hesitation, one of them returned, while the other charged to push Han Wu's arm out of their territory.

Han Wu waited until the orc had reached top speed and was only half a meter away. He then retracted his arm and stepped aside. As he had expected, the orc tried to stop itself once there wasn't anything in its territory.

However, it was too late. Its momentum carried it forward, and it charged out of its territory. The moment it did, its frame expanded swiftly, turning from a five-meter-tall orc to a 5,000-meter-tall Orc Demon King!

Its once crude appearance twisted into that of a horrifying beast. Also, its rank shot from Heroic to Heavenrender! Han Wu stared in disbelief. He had never imagined that something like this would happen the moment the orc left its territory. He could hardly believe it was the same orc.

The Orc Demon King flew into a rage and wanted to kill Han Wu. Unfortunately for it, its massive frame worked against it. It was already at the edge of the platform, which spanned only two to three meters, and lost its footing. It fell through the rings below it until it crashed onto the forty-eighth floor.

The Orc Demon King entered a berserk state and started killing everything in sight. The Heavenrender life forms gathered there died within three bouts.

Han Wu watched from above, horror tightening his chest, while considering his chances of defeating it. It would take his full strength to do so. Anything less would end with his death, just like those on the forty-eighth floor.

What caused the Orc Demon King's sudden surge in power? Han Wu looked at the platform in front of him. He had a feeling that the space ahead was the key reason that the Orc Demon King could defeat life forms of the same rank so easily.

He had already drawn one away, but another remained. Worse, he couldn't determine how many orcs lurked in the forest. He decided to proceed cautiously, probing step by step.

Han Wu extended his arm into the space ahead. The orc sensed the danger and emerged from the forest. It appeared more intelligent than the first one and didn't attack. Instead, it cautiously approached to inspect Han Wu.

Han Wu was flabbergasted. *How am I supposed to push you down if you don't charge at me?*

He decided to provoke it. If he did, the orc would definitely try to tackle him.

The orc had just drawn close to Han Wu's hand when he retracted it. With no target, the orc turned to leave.

Han Wu promptly thrust his arm forward again. "I put my left hand in, and I pull my left hand out. I put my left hand in, and I pull my left hand out ..."

The orc turned back and forth as Han Wu repeated the motion. The orc looked on the verge of a seizure. This time, it was truly enraged. Its eyes burned red, and steam hissed from its nose.

In the next instant, it charged, faster than the previous orc. Han Wu quickly retracted his arm and sidestepped the tackle. As he had expected, the orc failed to stop in time and flew out of the platform. Carried by its momentum, it plunged even deeper and landed on the forty-fifth floor. As it did, it turned into a 6,000-meter-tall Orc Demon King wielding a huge cleaver.

Han Wu saw it chasing the floor's challenger and chuckled. "Good luck."

He was the reason the challengers below him were facing such a hard time, but he didn't care. To him, everything was perfectly acceptable. In competitions, there were two ways to get ahead. The first was to ensure one was superior to the rest, and the second was to sabotage the others. Han Wu had done both, which made defeat impossible.

After dealing with the two orcs, he carefully extended his arm, but nothing else emerged. Only then did he lower his guard and step forward to experience the powerful pressure once more.

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[1,190 words]

Chapter 570 - Clamorous

Under the intense pressure, Han Wu's entire body compressed, sweat pouring from his taut muscles. His consciousness wavered, and he could faint at any moment under the strain on his soul. Still, he endured. His instincts told him that something good would happen if he persisted.

He stood motionless for ten entire minutes before sensing a gradual improvement. He was slowly adapting to the new environment, and his soul was much brighter now. A pool of sweat had already formed beneath him. A bitter smile touched his lips, as this

was the first time he had been reduced to such a disheveled state since becoming a God.

Han Wu slowly raised his arm and used one of Life's Skills to release some power to soothe his muscles. His physical fatigue vanished at once, but the weariness of his spirit remained. Thankfully, his spirit was strong, especially after he absorbed the World Shadow Demon's core. Even if it were forced out of his body, it would be as strong as an Earthsunder life form.

Once movement became possible, he started doing certain exercises to accelerate his acclimation. He slowly lifted his leg centimeter by centimeter and found that even this simple motion demanded a great deal of time and energy. Even so, he endured.

After three hours, he could finally walk at a crawl, slower than an eighty-year-old man. After ten hours, his steps regained a normal pace. Two days later, he could run without difficulty, completing a series of acrobatic movements. By the fifth day, he had fully adapted to the new environment.

Despite the constant pressure, he could now fight normally. When he achieved this, another portal appeared in front of him. Han Wu understood that the Heaven Stair was asking him to go to the next platform. However, he ignored it and headed deeper into the forest.

For the trees to grow even under such intense pressure, they had to be unique. He rapped his knuckles against one of the trunks. Instead of the dull thud of wood, a crisp metallic ring echoed back.

Han Wu confirmed that the wood there was denser than most metals. If he used it to forge weapons, it would offer exceptional durability.

He started chopping down the trees with his hands and arms, then slowly chiseled the logs into the shape he desired. Soon, the huge forest was cleared, revealing a wooden hut at its center. The hut was dilapidated, and a rancid stench seeped from within.

Han Wu pinched his nose. He could tell that this was the two orcs' dwelling. Leaving without taking anything would violate his principles. He endured the stench and searched around until he found a cracked axe and a pot filled with leftover food.

The axe was most likely the tool the orcs used to cut down the trees. Though damaged, it felt comfortable in his grip. At the same time, he realized that it had to be forged from a metal harder than the surrounding wood to have cut through those trunks.

What if he used it to cut down enemies instead? The cracks along the axe's blade could tear through flesh even more easily than through logs. As for the pot, Han Wu was surprised to discover that it was fashioned from high-quality metal. It was definitely a

rare material that would fetch a high price, yet the two orcs had wasted it by turning it into a pot.

It was outrageous, so Han Wu confiscated it to punish them.

After he finished collecting those items, there wasn't much left inside the wooden hut, but he remained meticulous. Since he had taken everything inside, he started tearing down the hut to take the wood away. He chopped it apart with the axe and stored everything inside his divine realm, leaving only a pile of trash where the hut had once stood.

Once done, he entered the portal to the next floor. He had barely left when the two orcs climbed up from below. Upon entering their territory, they reverted to their five-meter forms, their appearances noticeably simpler now.

Exhausted from all the slaughter they had carried out, the two orcs only wanted to rest in their wooden hut. They were about to head back home when they realized the forest and their house were gone! All that remained was a pile of trash!

The two orcs erupted in furious howls that shook the air. Their horrible shrieks echoed across several floors.

At that moment, Han Wu stood on the fifty-second floor and caught the orcs' cries carried upward by the wind below. "What a clamorous wind today."

The fifty-second floor was special. Before him stretched a wall of water. He studied it with curiosity. Every level was different, and each one presented an unknown challenge.

Han Wu tentatively extended his arm and soon found what made this floor special. The moment his arm entered the water, a powerful sensation of drowning seized him. His strength drained away as though all the air in his body had been forcibly squeezed out. He couldn't breathe at all. He had only immersed an arm, and it felt as if he were drowning. His nose and mouth were still outside! Would he actually die if he submerged his entire body?

Han Wu was worried, but he continued to inch forward carefully. When he was half-submerged, the sensation of drowning nearly caused him to lose consciousness. He had to control his organs to rapidly absorb oxygen to stay alive.

As with the fifty-first floor, he needed time to get used to this floor.

...

Back in Han Wu's divine realm, Xu Hai studied the Death Tower with focused attention, awe filling his expression. With his Eyes of Wisdom, he saw a new floor being added to

the tower. At first, he assumed that it was a hallucination, but after counting it a few times, he confirmed that an additional level truly existed.

He sighed with relief. "Seems that Han Wu is doing well in there."

Suddenly, he felt a strange presence locking onto him. The presence came from nowhere.

"Who's there?" Xu Hai barked.

A small gate opened in the space, and a gift box tumbled out. The gate then closed.

Xu Hai was confused and wary as he used his Eyes of Wisdom to examine the box. To his surprise, it contained a complete Law and a note.

Laws were resources that God Kings and World life forms used to nurture their Microcosms. One usually only obtained a single Law by destroying a mid-sized civilization or greater.

After confirming that it was indeed a Law, Xu Hai read the note. "Esteemed World expert, your representative performed well during the Heaven Stair Challenge. We present this gift to encourage them to strive even harder."

Xu Hai quickly searched for more information about the Heaven Stair Challenge. After reading through the available records, he realized that Han Wu had somehow entered the Heaven Stair Challenge, and it was most likely his mistake.

"I never thought I would still be receiving something thanks to my student," he muttered.

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[1,130 words]

Chapter 571 - Fleecing

On the fifty-fifth floor, Han Wu was gripping a massive log and performing squats, surrounded by numerous Heroic Ratmen. Despite their rank, they were extremely fast, and it took Han Wu considerable time and effort to kill them all.

A strange energy permeated the fifty-fifth floor. As one moved through this space, that energy blended their muscles, strengthening them. This was the reason that Han Wu was performing squats while carrying a huge log.

Midway through his squats, a thought struck him. If training alone produced only a fixed level of improvement, why not multiply the effect? What would happen if he had his avatars train here at the same time?

He activated Avatar Creation, and numerous avatars appeared around him. Under the pressure of the floor, all of them were pinned to the ground and unable to move. Even so, their cells continued to function without pause.

Their breathing turned rapid. As their muscles became stronger, they managed to lift themselves enough to sit upright. From there, they started doing slow, deliberate exercises. Each avatar served as another vessel capable of absorbing the strange energy here.

Han Wu pushed things to the limit and turned the 126 Martial Castes into 126 additional avatars. With that, he maximized the absorption rate and began to grow stronger at an exponential pace.

When his avatars had absorbed enough energy to move freely in this area, he realized that they couldn't absorb any more. It felt as though each vessel had reached its absolute capacity.

Han Wu waited until all of them reached this state before recalling them. The accumulated energy surged back into him, and his own figure expanded until he stood thirty meters tall. In this condition, his speed, strength, and even stamina increased tens of times their former levels.

On the fifty-fifth floor, where the crushing pressure immobilized other creatures, he could fly around with ease.

At that moment, he realized that he had found a loophole through Avatar Creation. What would happen if he repeated the process and sent all of his avatars through floors fifty-one to fifty-four? What effects would it produce, and how strong would he become?

Han Wu was a man of action and dispatched his avatars to the previous four floors to test the idea. Meanwhile, the two most powerful avatars of his Divine Jurisdictions headed to the fifty-sixth floor.

...

Xu Hai had just returned to his divine realm when he sensed the same presence lock onto him again. It was time for another reward.

He was jovial because he had chosen the right person as his student. Han Wu hadn't even graduated yet, and he had already found ways to provide him with rare resources.

The gate opened like last time, but this time the result was very different. Hundreds of gift boxes burst forth simultaneously, almost knocking him unconscious.

Even after the gate closed, he was reeling from the shock. He looked at the pile of gift boxes at his feet and wondered whether the World life forms who had organized the Heaven Stair Challenge had made a mistake.

Maybe they are all empty? He activated his Eyes of Wisdom and inspected the boxes. All of them contained a complete Law! Meanwhile, the contents of the notes kept changing over time.

“Esteemed World expert, your representative has shown excellent results in the Heaven Stair Challenge. We sent you this gift to encourage them to work hard.”

“Esteemed World expert, your representative has shown incredible results in the Heaven Stair Challenge. We sent you this gift to encourage continued diligence.”

“Esteemed World expert, your representative has shown overwhelming results in the Heaven Stair Challenge. We sent you this gift to rein them in slightly.”

...

The twentieth note read, “Esteemed World expert, your representative is in a frenzy. Please stop him.”

...

The thirtieth note read, “Esteemed World expert, your representative... No, that young master. Please ask him to rest. Please.”

...

The 108th note read, “The Heaven Stair Challenge is about to be fleeced to nothingness by him. Take him away!”

...

The 172nd note read, “Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Heaven Stair Challenge has ended prematurely. Esteemed World expert, you and your representative are banned from all future participation and have been placed on the blacklist. The next Heaven Stair Challenge will be delayed for 1,000 years.”

Xu Hai felt his heart pound. What had Han Wu done inside the challenge to fleece so many Laws? In fact, the organizers had even pleaded for him to stop.

Han Wu drained the Heaven Stair Challenge so thoroughly that it had to end ahead of schedule, and the next one would be delayed for another 1,000 years.

What did he do? Xu Hai was still searching for an answer when Han Wu sent him a message.

“Sir, I got kicked out. The Heaven Stair Challenge’s organizers told me to get lost and then tossed me a medal. Could you help me check what this thing does?” Han Wu sounded panicked.

After Xu Hai obtained permission, he was transported into Han Wu’s divine realm. Shock washed over him when he saw Han Wu. The latter was a Heavenrender life form before he entered, so why was he now a Sage life form?

He quickly inspected Han Wu’s condition and confirmed that he hadn’t split into several avatars. This was his true body.

Han Wu quickly handed the medal to Xu Hai. “Sir, could you see what this thing does? I can’t decipher it at all.”

Xu Hai used the Eyes of Wisdom to check the medal, and an overwhelming torrent of information appeared before him.

“What the fuck?” Xu Hai blurted out.

“Sir, is it really that bad?” Han Wu assumed that the medal was so useless that it had driven Xu Hai to curse.

Xu Hai looked at him enviously. “No, you dolt. This is an amazing treasure!”

“A treasure?” Han Wu echoed. “I can’t even tell what that was.”

Xu Hai explained, “Only World life forms can use this. You can’t perceive all of its effects yet.”

“I see. What is it used for?”

Xu Hai turned serious. “Anchoring the world.”

“What does that mean?” Han Wu wasn’t a World life form, so the concept was unfamiliar to him.

Xu Hai elaborated patiently, “You use this after becoming a World life form and creating your own Microcosm. It renders your Microcosm invulnerable to external forces, and nothing outside can destroy it.”

“Then, with your divine realm’s special properties, once you merge the two, your divine realm will also become permanently anchored. Outside forces will no longer be able to destroy it. In other words, you now possess an incredibly tough Core.”

Han Wu immediately grasped the medal’s true value.

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[1,031 words]

Chapter 572 - Condensed Strength

How important was a divine realm to a God of the Divine Civilization? It ranked second only to their lives. With a medal that could anchor their divine realm, they would have a shelter that no external force could destroy. Such protection was nothing short of invincible!

Xu Hai wanted the medal badly because of how powerful it was. It was worth at least thirty complete Laws. Even so, he had his principles and wouldn’t act against his conscience. Moreover, the medal’s owner was his own student, so he wouldn’t take it.

“You can’t use it for now, so keep it safely within your divine realm.” He took the opportunity to offer a brief lecture as well. “Do not let anyone learn of it, or they may attack you...”

“Don’t worry, sir! I understand!” Han Wu nodded and stored the medal in his vault.

After casting one last lingering glance at the medal, Xu Hai turned back to Han Wu. “Now, tell me, what exactly did you do in the Heaven Stair Challenge? Why did they blacklist both of us?”

The Heaven Stair Challenge was widely known, with countless participants. Its organizers were World experts, or maybe even a rank higher than World.

Under normal circumstances, they wouldn’t do anything. So how had Han Wu managed to fleece them so thoroughly that he earned a permanent ban? Xu Hai could not hide his curiosity.

Han Wu explained, “I didn’t do anything special. I just sent my clones through the fifty-first floor once. I didn’t even get past the fifty-sixth floor before they kicked me out.”

To protect the secret of his avatars, he deliberately referred to them as clones. Having a Skill that generated clones was unique, but it wasn't so rare that no one else possessed one. Compared to an avatar, a clone was insignificant.

Xu Hai stroked his coarse beard and asked, "Never thought clones could participate in the Heaven Stair Challenge. How many clones did you make?"

"Not much, only 176," Han Wu replied matter-of-factly.

Xu Hai almost fainted as realization struck him. That explained why he had received so many gift boxes from Han Wu's participation! Under the Heaven Stair Challenge's rules, every time someone passed the fiftieth floor, they would receive a gift box containing a single Law as a reward. That was why hundreds of gift boxes had ended up in Xu Hai's hands.

"Well, if you encounter something like this again, you'd better not show off." Xu Hai warned. He then retrieved 150 gift boxes from his divine realm and handed them over. "Here, take these Laws. They should help you when you attempt to ascend to the World rank."

Han Wu didn't know what was inside the boxes, but he understood that resources used by World life forms were definitely precious.

"But sir, how can I accept so many valuable resources?"

Xu Hai flinched a little. *You brat. You were the one who fleeced them from the Heaven Stair Challenge.*

"You won them from the Heaven Stair Challenge, so just keep them. I doubt that the organizers will come looking for trouble with us. Probably not," Xu Hai said with forced firmness.

With that, Han Wu accepted those Laws.

Xu Hai then raised another concern. "What happened to your strength? Why has it dropped so much?"

Han Wu knew the reason. "It's because of the Heaven Stair Challenge. It somehow condensed my strength. Even though I emanate a Sage aura now, I'm actually stronger than I used to be."

Xu Hai sighed in relief. He had worried that the organizers had forcibly stripped Han Wu's power. If that had been the case, he would have sought compensation from them in person.

With everything settled, Xu Hai left.

At that moment, Han Wu noticed something had changed with the Death Tower in his divine realm. There were supposed to be one hundred floors, but five additional floors had appeared.

“Why are there five extra floors?” he murmured.

He sent his stronger units to investigate. Soon, Steely reported back, and Han Wu was surprised to find that these new floors closely resembled the fifty-first through fifty-fifth floors of the Heaven Stair Challenge that he had experienced, though the size was different.

Han Wu also noticed something even stranger. Steely’s aura had been suppressed to that of a Sage life form, just like his own. After some tests, he realized that Steely’s overall strength hadn’t diminished in the slightest. On the contrary, he had become stronger.

Han Wu attributed it to the Death Tower’s additional floors. Once a life form entered it, as long as it cleared the first 100 floors, each subsequent floor would compress its strength to a certain degree. Once the compression was completed, its rank would regress, but its actual power would remain intact and even increase.

The discovery was excellent news for Han Wu. He summoned all of his powerful units and told them to challenge the Death Tower.

At first, some of them objected. They saw no reason to do so. That was until they noticed Steely’s transformation, and they agreed to give it a try. All they needed to do was complete the cycle once, after which their ranks would undergo compression.

When they increased their strength once more, they would receive the reinforcement that came with ascension. The process felt like exploiting a loophole and gaining free rewards. Before long, many units within his divine realm were clamoring to enter the Death Tower.

...

In a faraway location, the Heaven Stair Challenge’s chief organizer howled, “What are you all doing? How could you give away 170 Laws for nothing? Those are Laws! You can’t afford even one of them after ten years of work!”

“Sir, please calm down,” someone said. “We’ve checked the records and confirmed that all of them were sent to the same address.”

“Where is it? Who received it? Find them for me!”

The controller replied, “The one who participated in the Heaven Stair Challenge is a God King. We have locked onto their aura, so we can track them.”

“Then go!” the chief organizer barked. “Bring them to me!”

“Yes, sir!”

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[1,057 words]

Chapter 573 - Thirteen Guards

That day, thirteen comets streaked past the sky and invaded the Divine Civilization.

“Boss, we’ve triangulated that God King’s location!”

The eldest guard replied, “Good. The manager provided us with a barrier that can hide our auras for three days. During that time, the God Kings and the Will of the Divine Civilization won’t detect us. We must capture that God King within three days!”

The seventh guard called out, “We are the Thirteen Guards of the Heaven Stair Association. A single God King will never escape us.”

The eldest guard replied, “The Divine Civilization may be one of the stronger civilizations out there, but it doesn’t have a lot of powerful life forms. They rely on their so-called core races to nurture themselves. We can go easy on this mission and think of this as a vacation.”

The rest of the guards agreed. Only the second eldest frowned.

The eldest guard asked, “What’s wrong? Did you notice anything wrong?”

The second eldest hailed from the Divine River Civilization, which surpassed the Divine Civilization in power. He also possessed an extremely rare sensory-type talent that allowed him to detect things that others couldn’t.

“I detected a faint scent,” he said quietly. “It set off warning bells in my genes.”

Shock rippled through the group.

The seventh guard, the most talkative among them all, blurted out, “There’s something that can terrify your genes? Aren’t your genes part of the second series of the Divine River Civilization? You have the Sharp Eyes genes, right? Only first-series genes should be able to threaten you.”

The sixth guard chimed in, "And there are hardly any first-series genes. You could count them with one hand even within the Divine River Civilization, much less the Divine Civilization. Second Brother, are you sure you sensed something?"

"I hope I'm mistaken," the second guard said listlessly. Even so, he knew that his senses rarely erred. He had already detected something within his sensory range that could threaten him.

The eldest reassured them, "Time to act. Let's enjoy our vacation, boys."

They took their positions and hurtled toward the designated coordinates. Before long, they reached the Imperial College's airspace.

A powerful barrier protected the college. It prevented anyone from sensing what was happening inside and possessed remarkable durability. If they wanted to invade it, they'd have to break the barrier.

However, to prevent the others from detecting the barrier's destruction, the Thirteen Guards needed to erect another barrier of their own. This replacement barrier would block everyone inside from sending out distress calls.

The task fell on the twelfth guard, who excelled in making barriers. He silently activated his ability, and his World power enveloped the college without a trace. No one noticed what was taking place.

"All set. My barrier will last three days and block all signals from inside. Nothing can be sent in or out. People outside can enter the place freely, but they cannot leave," the twelfth guard said.

"Good. Time to work!" The eldest guard chuckled and gestured for the ninth guard to act.

"I knew you would call on me." The chubby ninth guard moved into position. He drew a deep breath, and he expanded several times over. Dense layers of runes spread across his skin, stacked so thickly that no one could tell how many there were.

He gathered his energy onto his fist and drove it forward in a devastating punch at the Imperial College's barrier. The entire college quaked from the impact, yet the area outside the barrier remained perfectly calm.

Cracks spread rapidly from the point of impact, racing across the surface before the barrier shattered like glass.

The ninth guard shrank back to normal. "Done."

Naturally, everyone within the college felt the violent tremor. They quickly investigated and realized that a spherical barrier was blocking their senses. None of them could perceive anything beyond it. They searched for irregularities inside the barrier but found nothing. Somehow, the Thirteen Guards floating overhead were invisible to them.

“Act now!” the eldest guard ordered, and they all rushed toward their target’s coordinates.

Xu Hai had been focused on merging the Laws within his divine realm when a sudden irritation stirred in his mind. Something felt wrong. He extended his senses to investigate and quickly realized that the entire college was sealed in a spherical barrier. His senses couldn’t penetrate it! Even as the God King of Wisdom, he would need an entire day to disassemble it.

A sense of unease took hold. He was about to run out of his office when the door burst open and the Thirteen Guards stormed in.

Xu Hai was astonished because he had failed to sense them in the slightest. *Who are they, and how did they completely hide themselves from my senses?*

He squinted and studied them more closely, then understood. Each of the Thirteen Guards had some sort of aura-concealing barrier, rendering them undetectable.

“Who are you, and why are you here?” Xu Hai demanded.

The eldest guard offered no reply and attacked. He was swift and tried to capture Xu Hai, but the latter unleashed his World power. His Divine Authority surged outward like a tsunami.

Even so, the eldest guard was also a World life form. He brushed aside Xu Hai’s Divine Authority and caught his wrist. “Follow me if you don’t want to die!”

Xu Hai scoffed, and his Great Enlightenment Ring appeared behind him. His Divine Ring bore intricate patterns that traced the curves and grooves of a brain. The ring itself looked simple and elegant.

As it rotated, it converted Xu Hai’s mental power into lightning spears to attack the eldest guard.

The eldest guard tried to defend against it, but the spears pierced through his flesh. He quickly let go of Xu Hai and retreated to avoid the powerful attack.

The seventh guard stepped forward. “So you refuse to cooperate.”

A Divine Ring that resembled the eye of a storm appeared behind him. Wind Energy gathered in his palm and turned it into a deadly wind blade.

The other guards advanced as well, each revealing their Divine Rings. Except for the eldest guard, the presence of the other twelve Divine Rings shocked Xu Hai. He had never expected that they were all World life forms. How could he fight against them?

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Chapter 574 - Three as One: Primal Beast

[1,122 words]

Chapter 574 - Three as One: Primal Beast

Naturally, the sounds of battle attracted the attention of nearby students and lecturers. Many ran toward Xu Hai when they heard the commotion, but how many of them could withstand the thirteen World life forms' power?

No one inside the barrier could send out distress signals. Many couldn't even summon their units to fight in their stead. Just like that, they had lost at least half of their strength. They already stood no chance against World life forms, and without their units, they couldn't even hope to wear them down. Even the senior lecturers found themselves at a loss.

Naturally, Xu Hai understood this clearly. To reduce needless deaths, he shouted, "Everyone, stay back! Find a way to escape the barrier!"

The Thirteen Guards only scoffed. The twelfth guard hailed from the Barrier Civilization. He was already a World life form, and unless someone could strike his barrier's core or had strength several times greater than his own, escape was impossible. There was no other way of breaking the barrier. Earthsunder and Heavenrender life forms couldn't even dream of breaking it.

The third guard shouted, "We are only here for him. Do not interfere, and we will spare you."

The students and lecturers sighed in relief. Even though it was hard to see one of the lecturers getting abducted, it was much better than losing their lives.

"Those not involved, get lost!" the fourth guard shouted.

His voice rang out like a grand bell. Many first-year students collapsed, blood streaming from their noses. They weren't even Demigods, and before World life forms, they were no more than ants.

Many others, focused on saving themselves, slowly retreated. Some even tried to persuade those who were hesitating. "The God King of Wisdom already told us to leave. Why are you still standing there?"

In reality, they wanted more people to make the same choice they had. That way, if the college ever decided to scrutinize the incident, punishment would be unlikely as long as there were enough of them.

Still, some didn't retreat and instead braved the Thirteen Guards' pressure.

Xu Hai could identify them with ease. Among them stood the vice chancellor he had worked with for many years, lecturers and rivals in his field, some new lecturers, and students. He recognized some of the students: Xiang Meng, Xia Tian, Ye Ling, Qin Shuang, Jing Jing, Sun Qingnian, and Bao Xiren.

"*Oh ho?* There's still people who aren't afraid of death and dare to step forward!" The seventh guard scoffed. In his eyes, they were all idiots for opposing thirteen World life forms. They were nothing but imbeciles.

Feng Shiren had once tried to withhold the Exquisite Skill Gem from Han Wu. He was also one of the college's strongest, so he stepped forward and released his Heavenrender aura. "I am one of the vice chancellors of the Divine Civilization's Imperial College, Feng Shiren. I don't know why you are targeting Xu Hai, but I ask you to stop for the Imperial College's sake. We can resolve this through diplomacy. There is no need to injure someone over a misunderstanding."

Unfortunately, the Heavenrender power revered by all was meaningless before the Thirteen Guards. No one present could pose a threat to them. Within the Divine Civilization, only God Kings who carried a sliver of its Will could ever threaten them.

The youngest of the Thirteen Guards stepped forward. He raised his thumb up, then turned it downward. He even spat at Feng Shiren.

Feng Shiren knew that he had been insulted in front of everyone. How could he let that humiliation slide? If he failed to respond, then he might as well resign as vice chancellor and just retire.

He unleashed his strongest Skill, and his flaming palm turned into a burning sword tens of meters long. Intense heat surged outward, as if he was within a volcanic caldera.

The thirteenth guard stopped the attack with a single hand. Frost spread across his fingers as freezing air poured from his palm. In that instant, the burning sword froze solid, and Feng Shiren was turned into an ice sculpture as well.

The thirteenth guard hadn't even used his Divine Ring. He relied solely on physical power.

"You are nothing, and yet you can be a vice chancellor?" With a scoff, he fired an icicle to shatter Feng Shiren to pieces.

Ye Ling reacted at once and pulled the frozen Feng Shiren to safety. Xia Tian and Xiang Meng stepped forward and unleashed their strongest transformations, one becoming a colossal ape, the other a towering mammoth. Their auras rivaled those of an Earthsunder life form. After securing Feng Shiren, Ye Ling transformed into a giant bird and took position beside them.

"You guys are brave, but you are nothing but ants in front of me." He snorted and launched three icicles to kill them.

To his surprise, the trio suddenly merged into one, releasing a powerful aura. This was a Skill exclusive to them, forged through countless years of working together.

It was called Three as One: Primal Beast. A beast with a mammoth's proboscis, bird wings, and ape arms appeared. A primal, savage aura poured from it. Behind the creature hovered an incomplete Divine Ring. They had turned into an incomplete World life form! This was their full strength.

The thirteenth guard no longer looked down on them. Caution replaced his disdain. Even though they were an incomplete World life form, he still needed to treat them carefully.

He was about to activate his Divine Ring when the ninth guard stepped forward and placed his fat hands on him. The ninth guard studied the Primal Beast with curiosity, clearly intrigued by how their Skill worked.

"Leave this to me," he said. "Hey, this place is too small. Why don't we play outside?"

The Primal Beast leapt out of the building. The ninth guard pulled his pants up, expanded once more, and chased after it.

"Never thought the lazy Ninth Brother would find something that caught his interest," the seventh guard remarked. He scanned the crowd and noticed several beautiful women. "You, you, and you. How about having a 4P with me?"

His crude words infuriated Qin Shuang, Jing Jing, and Shi Shan.

“Don’t stop me! I will beat him myself!” Surprisingly, the first to react wasn’t any of them but iSun Qingnian. The reason was simple. Shi Shan, the infamous Blazing Warrior God, was his girlfriend. How could he allow someone to insult his girlfriend like that?

Shi Shan sighed and kicked him aside. “Go to the side and assist us.”

“Alright, darling!” Sun Qingnian hurried behind the three women, ready to assist them with his powers.

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[1,149 words]

Chapter 575 - Backup

Han Wu was panicking because he couldn’t get into contact with his mentor, Xu Hai. He tried contacting the rest of his friends, including Qin Shuang and Jing Jing, but none of them responded.

He instinctively sensed something was wrong. He tried calling Saliya and the other lecturers, but they were unresponsive too. He had an ominous feeling that something had gone wrong at Imperial College.

Imperial College was a cornerstone of the Divine Civilization, guarded by Xu Hai, the God King of Wisdom. For anyone weaker than him to invade it would be nothing short of suicide. That left only two possibilities. Either a God King of comparable strength was attacking, or a powerful faction had launched a coordinated assault.

Han Wu grasped the gravity of the situation within seconds. He knew that this crisis wouldn’t be simple. His first thought was to rush to the college and find what had happened, but he immediately dismissed it. If the enemies posed a threat even to Xu Hai and could endanger the entire college, charging in alone would mean certain death.

Calling for backup was the only viable option. Thus, he quickly sent a message to the two God Kings he was closest to: Death and Darkness.

Fortunately, neither of them was in seclusion, and they answered his call. He explained the situation, and they grew serious. They quickly sent their scouts stationed near the college to investigate.

Time passed without a word. It was as if their scouts had vanished into thin air. Even when the God Kings tried contacting them directly, no one answered.

The two God Kings realized that something was indeed wrong. Even though their relationship with Imperial College was not especially warm, the institution was still vital to them. Each year, it produced high-quality graduates whom they routinely recruited into their factions.

The two were more than willing to help the college in its time of need. After making their preparations, they set out to teleport to the college's vicinity. If the situation amounted to nothing more than a misunderstanding, so be it, but they preferred caution over regret.

When he learned that the two God Kings would intervene, Han Wu sighed in relief. Even so, he couldn't shake the sense that their presence alone would not be enough. He decided to accompany them too.

Using the Blood Coliseum's teleporter, he discovered that he couldn't directly teleport to the college. As such, he had to choose one near its vicinity. In just a few seconds, he found himself fifty kilometers from it.

He had just stepped out when the Origin of Mutation spoke to him through the strand of faith. "Vessel, I have caught the scent of a Supergene Soldier from the Divine River Civilization."

"Supergene Soldier? Divine River Civilization?" Han Wu echoed. "What are you talking about? This is the Divine Civilization, and we are extremely far away from them."

"It's true!" the Origin of Mutation insisted. "The Divine River Civilization created me before sealing me away. I hate them to my core, and I would never mistake their scent."

Now it was Han Wu's turn to be confused. The Origin of Mutation had no reason to deceive him, which meant one truly was nearby. When he considered the college's abnormal situation, Han Wu sensed a clear connection between the two.

"A Supergene Soldier has infiltrated the college and somehow restricted all incoming and outgoing signals...?" Han Wu murmured.

His eyes widened as realization struck. "Is the Divine River Civilization invading the Divine Civilization? If that's true, then Imperial College wouldn't be their only target."

While he tried to piece everything together as he flew toward the college, the Origin of Mutation chimed in, "The scent is faint, so I doubt there are many Supergene Soldiers. They also seem to have brought some sort of device to hide themselves."

Han Wu listened intently as he looked at the college from afar. Everything looked normal. Students were strolling at ease, and a few couples were laughing together while enjoying picnic dates.

However, the more peaceful the scene appeared, the more Han Wu sensed that something was deeply wrong. It was impossible for the college to be that peaceful.

Every student qualified to enroll there was a genius. What happened when countless geniuses gathered in one place? The answer was an incomprehensibly harsh competition. The students would either be busy invading other civilizations, researching, nurturing their units, or studying. Since when did they have time for a leisurely stroll?

Han Wu reached a grim conclusion: the college had fallen. That meant their opponent was unquestionably terrifying if they could take it down. He suddenly realized that Darkness and Death alone weren't enough. He needed to call for more backup.

Unfortunately, those two were the only God Kings with whom he shared good relations. He lacked close ties with the others, and some even held old grudges against him. Still, this was a dire situation. Any hesitation could lead to greater losses for the college. As such, he decided to send invitations to every single God King he knew. With his status as the Blood Coliseum's heir, he now stood on equal footing with them.

A response soon arrived from the newly ascended Blazing God King, who had bought the Magic Ring from Han Wu.

After learning that the college was most likely in trouble, Blaze immediately offered his help. He had ascended only recently and was working to build as many connections as possible. By doing so, he aimed to increase his reputation and recruit more members into his faction.

In contrast, the True Martial God King and the God King of Light rejected his invitation. To them, Han Wu was just a rude thief and didn't have the right to speak with them.

Meanwhile, the Commerce God King answered the call. After learning that Imperial College had likely been invaded, Commerce stated that the matter didn't concern him.

Han Wu was at a loss for words. It was true that Commerce and the college didn't have many connections, so his refusal was understandable. Unfortunately, the invasion could be worse than he expected, so he needed to get as much help as possible.

In the end, he made a promise. As long as Commerce came to the college to inspect the situation, he would pay him with a complete Law as compensation, whether a battle occurred or not.

The moment Commerce heard the offer, his interest was piqued. How could a God King fail to understand the rarity of Laws? Despite years as a merchant, he had managed to acquire only seventeen.

Now, all he needed to do was visit the college and obtain one for free. Why would he refuse an offer like that? He accepted Han Wu's condition at once and hurried to the college as fast as he could.

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[1,020 words]

Chapter 576 - Entering Imperial College

The four God Kings, Death, Darkness, Blaze, and Commerce, soon arrived. Their presence made Han Wu feel much more secure. He was about to touch the barrier and enter the college when a black shadow stopped him.

Darkness spoke first, his tone direct. "The space within the college has been sealed. We can't teleport inside directly, nor can we communicate with those within. It's also very likely that we will be unable to open our divine realm to summon our units once we enter. I suggest we summon our units now, just in case."

The others hadn't considered that possibility. Realizing the risk, they summoned their strongest units to aid them in battle.

Death was one of the oldest God Kings. His overall strength ranked highest among the four, and his units were the strongest. He summoned thirty-two units. Two of them were World life forms, while the rest were Heavensunder life forms.

The moment his units emerged, the Will of the Divine Civilization immediately detected them. However, upon sensing the Divine Points radiating from them, it imposed no restrictions.

Darkness was only slightly weaker compared to Death. He summoned two World life forms and twenty-five Heavenrender life forms.

Next came the Blazing God King, who had ascended only recently. His units were slightly weaker. He had no World life forms and only one Heavenrender life form, but he compensated with eighty Earthsunder life forms. They all originated from the Fire Ring that he had previously purchased from Han Wu. The ring continuously supplied him with energy, and with enough time, it would allow him to produce more powerful units.

Last was Commerce, the weakest of the four. He hesitated for some time before summoning five Earthsunder life forms.

The other three God Kings looked at him, and he spoke with dissatisfaction. "We are here to rescue Imperial College together. There's no need to compare ourselves to one another."

Han Wu thought, *It's true that there's no need to compare to one another, but why are you summoning only five Earthsunder life forms? How stingy can you be?*

Still, Commerce himself was a World life form, and his presence alone would help them a lot.

Then it was Han Wu's turn. He opened a gate to his divine realm, and a formation of powerful units walked out. The first to step through was a smiling young woman wearing an all-black dress. She was holding only a massive mouse that glistened with darkness.

She was the other World life form within Han Wu's divine realm, the Umbral Mouse. Her strength had advanced greatly, especially after consuming most of the energy from Shadow Demon, Faido's strongest underling.

Shadow Demon and the Umbral Mouse belonged to two closely connected races. Since Shadow Demon had already reached the World rank, the Umbral Mouse had only needed to refine the absorbed energy. Her power had risen rapidly, until she became Han Wu's second World life form.

Unfortunately, the Umbral Mouse was still the same. Even after gaining Shadow Demon's power, she still hadn't learned any attacking Skills. In a sense, she was an extreme specialist.

Following the Umbral Mouse was the Origin of Mutation, Han Wu's strongest unit and target for Replicate. After going through the Death Tower within the divine realm, it had gotten stronger, though it was exuding only the aura of a Sage life form.

The four God Kings grew interested when they sensed the Origin of Mutation's strange aura, but this wasn't the time to investigate.

Han Wu then summoned six Heavenrender life forms, surpassing even what Commerce had summoned. He was a newly ascended Major God, yet he already commanded Heavenrender and World life forms. By contrast, Commerce had been a God King for so many years and still lacked a proper unit. The contrast was embarrassing.

Commerce looked at Han Wu's units, then looked back at his five Earthsunder life forms with a trace of shame. Out of frustration, he commanded his units to approach the barrier surrounding the college.

The moment they came into contact with it, the barrier swallowed them. All connection to the outside world vanished. Commerce noted that the strands of faith were still there. He could faintly feel their presence, which meant they were alive.

The four God Kings examined the situation and quickly formed a rough understanding of the barrier.

Death spoke first. "It seems to be a barrier that only allows one-way entry."

"Can we break it?" Darkness asked.

"We can, but it will take time. Even with the four of us here, it would take at least half a day," Death replied.

Han Wu immediately saw the problem. That was far too long. By the time they broke through the barrier, many students and lecturers would likely already be dead. The earlier they entered, the more lives they could save.

"Your Highnesses, please stop wasting time and follow me into the college to investigate what has gone wrong," Han Wu urged.

The four God Kings froze and stared at him in confusion. Since their ascension, no one had ever pressed them to act faster. Han Wu was the first.

Death nodded. "In that case, we should stop wasting time and enter the barrier."

Darkness agreed. "No problem."

Blaze and Commerce were weaker than the other two God Kings, so they fell in behind them.

They stepped into the barrier and were met with utter chaos. Destruction consumed the college. Buildings lay in ruins, rubble filled the open grounds, and the air rang with the cries of students screaming for help.

"Help me! How could you be so shameless? You said you wouldn't hurt us if we stayed out of it!" a girl shouted as she fled.

Someone was chasing close behind her. That certain someone exuded a World aura.

"Third Brother made that promise. What does that have to do with me?" The fourth guard cackled and launched an attack that landed just behind the female student. "I am the fourth, and I love killing. I will kill anyone I see, and you won't escape me today!"

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[972 words]

Chapter 577 - Consecutive Killings

The fourth guard splayed his palm, and a strange wind arose in the air. Thousands of wind palms blocked the girl's escape paths. As they slowly closed in on her, she closed her eyes in despair, preparing for a painful death.

Nothing happened.

She hesitantly peeked an eye open. A dependable figure had blocked the palms and was destroying them with ease.

"Do you still have the strength?" Han Wu asked the girl, keeping his eyes fixed on the fourth guard. "Run southwest. It's safer there."

The girl nodded before rushing southwest.

Meanwhile, the fourth guard was eyeing Han Wu with glee. "Killing one strong person is far better than killing ten weaklings! Brat, you're worthy of being my prey!"

Anger welled up within Han Wu as he took in the destroyed college around him. They had ravaged his school! More concerning than the ruined building, however, was the well-being of his mentor and friends.

Although Han Wu couldn't discern the fourth guard's strength through presence alone, the floating Divine Ring was enough to show that he was a World life form. Only World life forms could fight another World life form.

"Who are you?" Han Wu questioned as he gathered his energy. "Why are you destroying the Imperial College?"

"I'll tell you once you're dead!" The fourth guard cackled, thrusting his palm forward numerous times, filling the space with palm illusions.

As the fourth guard was a World life form, Han Wu decided to go all out from the beginning. Channeling his energy into Replicate, he grew into a World life form, and the elemental Divine Ring appeared behind him.

This wasn't the end of it, as he then activated the Black Dragon King Transformation as well. Dense Dark Energy took over half of his Divine Ring and infused it with the power of Dragon Fear.

Dragon Fear alone was enough to shatter most of the palm illusions. A serious look came over the fourth guard's face as he too decided to go all out against the now World-life-form Han Wu.

The fourth guard's hands turned a jade-like color. The Divine Ring behind him mirrored that transformation, becoming akin to a jade ring that radiated soft light.

Born from the True Martial Civilization, the fourth guard didn't hesitate to use his strongest Skill, the Profound Jade Coffin Splitter! It was a Skill strong enough to injure even a World life form.

Han Wu retreated, simultaneously opening his dragon maw to unleash his destructive dragon breath. Even the Profound Jade Coffin Splitter couldn't block the powerful debuffs from the dragon breath, much less the four additional attributes infused into the attack as well.

Only a pair of jade-like hand bones and a Divine Ring remained after Han Wu ended his barrage. Unfortunately, the strength of his attack came at the cost of high energy consumption. Han Wu wouldn't be able to use the Black Dragon King Transformation for an entire hour.

Turning back to his human form, he collected the jade bones and the divine ring before placing them in a knapsack. He needed to rescue even more students.

At the same time, the other God Kings had encountered similar issues after separating.

However, unlike Han Wu, they were having a far easier time defeating their enemies.

They had encountered the eleventh guard, who hailed from the Malevolent Civilization. The guard prepared to kill the four God Kings and their units with a cursed technique, but before he could act, Death struck first.

"Kill yourself," Death ordered, pointing at the eleventh guard.

The eleventh guard uncontrollably choked himself with his own hands while unleashing all of the curses he knew onto himself. In the end, he died in terrified bewilderment—a meaningless death.

With that, Death recalled his command.

As the God King of Death, he held dominion over the purest form of Death. Only those stronger than him, or with willpower that exceeded his, could ever hope to survive under the Proclamation of Death, much less escape it.

Both Blaze and Commerce were stunned. While they had known about the massive gap in power between them and Death, they had never expected it to be that wide, especially for Blaze.

Blaze was roughly as strong as the eleventh guard, and a fight between them would've been a true coin toss when it came to victory. After witnessing Death kill the eleventh

guard with a single utterance, Blaze realized that his strength was better framed as equally weak instead. After all, if he were to fight Death, he would likely die instantly as well.

What Blaze didn't know was the caveats that Death kept secret about his powers.

In truth, Death had spent a third of his energy killing the eleventh guard, and he decided right then to reduce the number of times he fought alone in the future to preserve his strength. The two World life forms that he had summoned would protect him from any ambushes.

Darkness used his powers to check the eleventh guard's corpse. After confirming that there wasn't any trap, he brought out his Darkness Jurisdiction.

The Darkness Jurisdiction was extremely versatile and could be used to attack, curse, and summon Dark Beings or Dark Undead.

Dark Energy flowed into the corpse. Its eyelids fluttered open, and it stood up in an uncannily disjointed manner.

The God King of Darkness had made the eleventh guard into a Dark Undead. Part of its powers from before its death had been preserved, and it also retained its rank as a World life form. A twisted Divine Ring formed from darkness and bleak gray appeared behind it. It was truly unnatural to look at.

"Go and kill your companions," Darkness commanded.

The Dark Undead sprang into action, charging toward where its previous companions had last been seen.

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[1,057 words]

Chapter 578 - Genetic Suppression

The area surrounding the God King of Wisdom, Xu Hai, was destroyed, but he still valiantly endured the barrage of attacks from the World life forms before him. During this, he also activated his Great Enlightenment Ring to continuously evolve and improve his Skills.

His barrier had thus become exceptionally durable after numerous advancements. It could even stall against the attacks from the World life forms for a significant duration of time, allowing him to save many students and teachers in the process.

Even so, the Thirteen Guards were in no hurry as their barrier around the college allowed them to hide their presence for three days.

They comfortably allowed the fight to turn into a battle of attrition, waiting patiently for Xu Hai to exhaust his energy before they attacked. Once Xu Hai's barrier fell, they could attack and kill anyone they wanted.

Their victory was all but guaranteed.

Then, catching a whiff of a familiar scent, the second guard frowned. His hindbrain instinctively sounded the alarm as he realized the source of the scent was fast approaching.

A figure that resembled Han Wu—except with six arms, wings, and a tail—came into view.

The second guard's head swam, mind turning to jelly as he felt the suppression of the Origin of Mutation affecting his genes.

As he had detected the Origin of Mutation, so too had it sensed him. The Divine River Civilization was profound, and those originating from there would sometimes find their genes resonating with one another.

When two life forms with fundamentally different genes were close together, their genes would become energized, drastically increasing their fighting prowess.

However, the situation with the Origin of Mutation was unique as it was born to be the bane of all genes. When it was that close to the gene for Eagle Eyes, all it felt was the insatiable desire to consume it.

"I've found you!" the Origin of Mutation exclaimed, salivating from the moment it laid eyes on the second guard.

Xu Hai recognized the Origin of Mutation and knew that Han Wu was undoubtedly close by as well. Han Wu was a boy capable of conjuring miracles. The college could actually be saved.

The second guard was sweating profusely, despair filling him to the bones at the genetic suppression from the Origin of Mutation.

"Elder brother, third brother, fifth brother, kill him for me!" he cried out.

The eldest guard turned and finally saw the Origin of Mutation. At first, he assumed a Sage life form had accidentally wandered into the battlefield of World life forms, but upon closer inspection, he realized that the Origin of Mutation was actually like them!

Shock filled the eldest guard. He had only ever seen inner members of the Heaven Stair Association condense the power of a World life form into a Sage life form.

“Second brother, calm down. You can probably feel that this creature has managed to condense its strength. If we capture it alive, we can interrogate how it managed such a feat. Don’t you agree?”

The second guard didn’t agree at all. Every fiber of his being, down to his cells, was shivering from terror. Based on the intensity of its suppression, the second guard had a dreadful suspicion that the genes within the Origin of Mutation were most likely from the first series—perhaps even beyond that, from the Supergene series instead.

Although only one stage separated the first and second series, the gap between their strengths was humongous. The suppression from the Origin of Mutation had left him able to use a mere 30% of his powers.

“No, kill him now, or all of us will die!” the second guard shouted hysterically.

The other guards trusted the second guard and knew from his uncharacteristic behavior that it was truly serious.

Unfortunately for them, Xu Hai didn’t allow them to act against the Origin of Mutation. He didn’t know why the Origin of Mutation had such a grudge with them, but he didn’t need to. All that mattered was that the Origin of Mutation would be pummeled to death if he didn’t help it.

Activating his powers, he quickly shielded it with a barrier, silently vowing to protect it for the sake of Han Wu.

However, the Origin of Mutation had other plans that didn’t involve cowering behind a barrier. The Gene Soldiers of the Divine River Civilization made for nutritious meals, and it wasn’t about to miss this opportunity.

While everyone was focused on the Origin of Mutation, the Umbral Mouse had secretly infiltrated Xu Hai’s barrier. Its skill in plundering and escaping had made the sneaky intrusion a piece of cake.

“Master’s mentor, I’m here to help!” Umbral Mouse said telepathically to Xu Hai, hiding in his shadow.

Xu Hai was surprised, having not detected its infiltration at all. Even so, he couldn’t help but look down on it slightly, skeptical of how much help a mouse could provide.

This opinion was swiftly retracted when he felt the power of Umbral Mouse coursing through his body via his shadow.

The Umbral Mouse was actually of great help after all! Not only was his energy consumption reduced by half, but all of his outgoing Skills were amplified too. The Umbral Mouse was undeniably a powerful dark attribute support. Its help enabled Xu Hai to retaliate when the opportunity arose.

Meanwhile, the Origin of Mutation was being attacked from all directions.

The Origin of Mutation's genes were strong, but its physical body was weak. Moreover, it didn't excel in combat, and it soon found itself hard-pressed to defend against the attacks of so many World life forms.

"Come here, child!" Xu Hai called, releasing several chains made from black lightning to stop the Thirteen Guards from attacking the Origin of Mutation.

Despite this, the Origin of Mutation didn't enter Xu Hai's barrier, opting to instead pounce onto the tenth guard and devour him alive.

Its sharp teeth and powerful jaw could crush even steel into bite-sized pieces. The tenth guard exerted all his strength to shake the Origin of Mutation off his body, but it mattered little. The Origin of Mutation had already gotten a taste of blood in its mouth.

Chuckling, it activated its ability, Gene Lock.

Its body drastically transformed, and the tenth guard's powers manifested in its body.

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[1,130 words]

Chapter 579 - Ultimate Terror

Its transformation left all the guards in shock. It took exceptional effort for World life forms to kill one another, especially when their strengths were roughly equal, and they didn't have attributes that countered one another. Even with allies, one would have to spend a lot of energy to kill a World life form.

The Origin of Mutation's Gene Lock turned that norm on its head. Obtaining part of the tenth guard's powers had allowed it to grow stronger, and the guard could feel that the pressure emanating from it had intensified.

Worse still, none of them knew if there was a limit to how many times it could do so. There was always the possibility that it could do it infinitely.

“Everyone, be careful! Don’t let it touch you!” the eldest guard immediately shouted, glaring at the Origin of Mutation.

His earlier plans to capture it alive and interrogate it on its method of condensing its power had been thrown out the window. Killing it had become the top priority.

The Origin of Mutation felt the changes in its genes. The tenth guard hailed from the Dream Demon Civilization and could turn into his demon form to amplify his strength.

My vessel destroyed the Dream Demon Civilization. For me to encounter a World life form from there must be fate, the Origin of Mutation thought. In that case, I should savor this opportunity to kill him. I shall forever sever any hope of the Dream Demon Civilization recovering.

With that, it activated its new Skill, Demonification. Its body grew as black fur sprouted all over it. Its body turned long and lean, and its limbs turned into eight feet that sprawled across the floor.

This was the original race of the tenth guard, Huodou.

After transforming, the Origin of Mutation acted quickly. Fire sprang forth from nothing in its wake. These flames could harm even World life forms.

This wasn’t an ability that the Origin of Mutation had specifically acquired, but an innate passive of the Huodou race.

Flames unfurled along the ground as it passed. Rather than generating said fire, it was more appropriate to say that its body had become a conduit for the flames themselves!

The other guards were having a difficult time fighting against it. Even the tenth guard, having transformed into his original demon form, could only temporarily suppress it while allowing the other guards to attack during gaps. Unfortunately, the tenth guard’s demon form only had four feet to the Origin of Mutation’s eight, making the latter much faster than the original.

While the Origin of Mutation occupied the guards, Xu Hai was preparing for a massive attack.

With Umbral Mouse’s support, he activated the Great Enlightenment Ring to continuously improve his Skills. One of his basic Skills, the humble fireball, had become powerful enough to punch through the defenses of a World life form after going through 180 iterations.

Holding the flames, he searched for a target.

The eldest guard was fast and nimble, making him a difficult target. The second guard had sensitive senses and could avoid the attack easily if he sensed it coming. The third guard seemed deceptively easy to fight against, but his rank as the third brought that perception into question.

After studying the group for some time, Xu Hai's eyes landed on the twelfth guard.

The twelfth guard was responsible for erecting the barrier outside the college and had expended much of his strength in the process. Thus, he had been taking it easy during battles to recuperate.

Xu Hai couldn't discern the twelfth guard's strength with his Eyes of Wisdom because of the barrier surrounding the school, but he could tell that the twelfth guard was tired. That was enough for Xu Hai to hurl the fireball at him.

The fireball didn't hit the twelfth guard directly. Proficient in using barriers, the guard had automatically summoned one to protect himself from unseen danger.

The barrier had appeared in the blink of an eye, but it wasn't particularly durable, meaning he didn't manage to defend against the full force of the fireball. Some of the flames seared through his barrier and landed on his arm.

This fire was infused with the characteristic of burning through its target and thus couldn't be extinguished. The twelfth guard desperately tried to use barriers to stop the fire from spreading up his arm to no avail. In the end, he had no choice but to sever his entire arm with a barrier.

Seeing this, the Origin of Mutation immediately leaped over with its eight legs to devour the severed arm. Xu Hai swiftly extinguished the flames to prevent them from harming the Origin of Mutation.

The new genes allowed the Origin of Mutation to break through the limits of Gene Lock and activate it for a second time. Its Divine Ring turned even more sinister after absorbing the powers of the twelfth guard.

Four elements took up half of the ring, the power of the Spirit Demon took up a quarter, and the power of the twelfth guard's barrier took up the remaining quarter.

Any regular person would perish under this random assortment of powers and genes. The Origin of Mutation, however, was different: it had Life Creation.

Using Life Creation, it continuously changed its race to accommodate the conflicting genes, even going so far as to mutate them into new and stable ones.

When the second guard noticed these changes, his eyes widened in realization.

“You’re the first series gene, the Origin of Mutation! The destroyer of all genes, and the end of the Divine River Civilization—the ultimate terror!” he cried out, body shaking from uncontrollable terror.

This was the reason his genes were trembling with fear. The Origin of Mutation was the natural predator of all Gene Warriors!

The Origin of Mutation’s memories had been sealed and were limited to when the Divine River Civilization had created it. Thus, it didn’t know what he was talking about.

All it knew was that it wanted revenge. It wanted the entire Divine River Civilization to pay.

It pounced onto the second guard. The other guards tried to stop it, but barriers swiftly blocked them. They only stalled them for 0.3 seconds, but that was more than enough time for a World life form to do many things.

The Origin of Mutation latched onto the second guard with its powerful jaws.

The second guard’s body became numb, as if injected with a paralyzing agent. All his genes stopped working. Then, under the power of Controlled Mutation, they started breaking down.

While the Eagle Eyes gene was strong, it couldn't reconstruct itself like the Origin of Mutation. The collapse of one’s genes meant death for a Gene Warrior.

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[1,245 words]

Chapter 580 - It’s All Over

The light disappeared from the eyes of the second guard, perishing from the dissolution of his genes. The other guards were already thinking of retreating when they saw the second guard die.

Even the eldest guard, the strongest, realized that he was at a disadvantage against the twice-powered-up Origin of Mutation. The Origin of Mutation was simply too bizarre and unpredictable for him to pinpoint its weakness.

In fact, it didn't matter whether he figured out its weak point, as the Origin of Mutation could always just mutate to eliminate or change it. The Origin of Mutation was constantly evolving, slowly becoming the perfect life form.

It wasn't just the Origin of Mutation either. Even the previously cornered Xu Hai was now attacking back. His Great Enlightenment Ring was constantly evolving his Skills to amplify their damage. Even a weak Skill could become powerful enough to harm even a World life form with enough iterations.

The eldest guard had thought this mission would be a breeze, but was quickly confronted with the reality that it would be more difficult to complete than expected.

At that moment, he noticed a person approaching them. It was the eleventh guard! The eldest guard sighed in relief. The eleventh guard came from the Malevolent Civilization and could use curses to kill his target. He was the best candidate to stop the Origin of Mutation!

"Eleventh brother, you came back just in time. Use your curse to kill that bastard!" called the eldest guard.

The eleventh guard wordlessly ran toward them.

Perplexed, the eldest guard urged once more, "Use your curse to kill it quickly!"

The eleventh guard raised his head to reveal pitch-black eyes that were devoid of life and stabbed the eldest guard with a shiv imbued with a curse.

This sudden betrayal caught the eldest guard unaware, and he didn't manage to avoid the blow. The shiv sank an inch into his chest. The infused curse surged through his body and veins.

Black curse runes slowly crawled up his body. The eldest guard had to use all his powers to suppress the curse and prevent it from spreading further. If not, he would've died from the curse, even despite being a World life form.

The other guards noticed something amiss and kept their distance from the eleventh guard. They soon realized that the eleventh guard had actually perished, becoming a puppet under someone else's control.

They had failed to realize this earlier because of their barrier, which hid their presence. It had unexpectedly worked against them!

"Quick! Retreat!" called the eldest guard.

At the moment, he was using 70% of his power to suppress the volatile curse, leaving him at a severe disadvantage in battle. He never expected that the tiny Imperial College could kill some of them here!

“Do you really think you can escape?” asked a domineering voice.

The God Kings appeared alongside their powerful units. Their mighty presence almost ripped through the barrier.

Xu Hai relaxed. The sight of the other God Kings lifted a heavy burden off his shoulders.

“Do you think you can stop us from leaving?” The eighth guard scoffed, still oblivious to the reality of their situation. Even if they were equally matched, he believed they could escape.

Death chuckled and pointed at him. “Kneel and kowtow until you die.”

The eighth guard lost control of his body. Dropping to his knees, he repeatedly smashed his head on the ground, even using some of his powers to turn the floor hard so he couldn't break it. He kowtowed so fast he left afterimages in the air.

“What did you do to me?! What's going on? Let me go...” the eighth guard wailed, still kowtowing.

His head hit the ground like the steady rhythm of drums. Every impact struck fear into the hearts of the other guards.

After one minute, the eighth guard's head exploded like a rotten watermelon. His brain and cerebrospinal fluid were scattered everywhere.

Death gazed at the scene with a casual air, but secretly, he had expended yet another third of his power. He only had a third left, enough to kill one more World life form with his Proclamation. If the fight didn't end by then, he would have to fight hands-on.

Both Blaze and Commerce felt their hearts jolt from fear. They had assumed that the gap between God Kings was small, but it appeared that Death could kill the two of them with ease if he so wished. The two could die before they even comprehended what was happening. It was a terrifying thought.

This intimidation from Death also worked on the Thirteen Guards.

The eighth guard's death was both bizarre and terrifying. In their eyes, it was far scarier than the eleventh guard's curse. One needed a medium to kill someone with a curse. Meanwhile, Death had only uttered six words to kill a World life form. This simply didn't happen within the realm of World life forms.

But the surprises from the Divine Civilization didn't stop there. Everyone watched as a shadow extended from Darkness and entered the eighth guard's corpse. Under the power of Darkness, the corpse shuffled itself upright.

The Divine Ring behind the corpse activated. Another World Dark Undead had been born.

The eldest guard looked between the corpse of the eighth guard and the eleventh guard with dawning realization.

Their enemies had increased. They had lost their chance of victory. None of them dared to run since Death had proved that he could kill them with his words alone. They could either surrender or die. It was over.

At the same time, two more battles were happening elsewhere on the college grounds.

The Xia Tian trio faced the ninth guard. The three had used Three as One: Primal Beast, relying on their powerful physical body to fight against the ninth guard's stacked layers of Runic Lexicons.

It was a close battle, with either side having the potential to emerge victorious.

Unfortunately, the Primal Beast lost more energy. Though the Skill fused the powers of three Gods, it was still a little lacking.

After a long match, the Primal Beast was defeated. Xia Tian and the other two fell to the ground, exhausted to the point of not even being able to stand. Still unaware of the loss his fellow guards were faced with, the ninth guard openly reveled in his success.

"I like you three. If you recognize me as your master, I won't kill you," he proposed, extending them an olive branch.

The trio exchanged glances. It was rare for someone of such power to take disciples, but they still had principles.

"We won't do anything that betrays the Divine Civilization. Forget it," Xia Tian answered on behalf of the trio.

"You have guts!" The ninth guard grinned. "I like it. In that case, die."

Runic Lexicons covered his fist. Raising it, he punched forward. The wind from the attack was enough to kill anyone beneath the Sage rank.

The trio closed their eyes against the incoming death blow when they suddenly felt the wind stop. Cautiously peeking, they saw that a powerful figure had shielded them from the blow.

“Brother Meng, you alright?” Han Wu’s voice floated into their ears.

Replicate had granted Han Wu six powerful Adamantine arms, which he used to block the massive fist.

The trio stared in awe. This sight would forever be engraved into their minds.

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[1,163 words]

Chapter 581 - Divine Civilization’s Judgment

The ninth guard sensed Han Wu’s strength and flew into a rage at the thought that a Sage life form would dare interfere with him. He struck with lethal intent.

The Runic Lexicons covering him flared with blinding light, and his strength surged severalfold. Still, he failed to push Han Wu by even a single step.

“Impossible! This cannot be. How could a Sage life form possess such strength?” the ninth guard muttered incredulously. He reached out again, probing Han Wu’s strength.

This time, he realized something was wrong. Han Wu exuded Sage aura, but he had a Divine Ring.

A terrifying realization struck the ninth guard. *He is a World life form!*

He hailed from the Heaven Stair Association and understood its inner workings well. He knew of a certain special site, accessible only to inner members, that could condense one’s accumulated power and allow far greater advancement. Han Wu displayed the unmistakable signs of someone who belonged to those inner ranks.

The ninth guard howled, “You! What is your relationship with the Heaven Stair Association? I have never seen you before!”

A disturbing thought surfaced in his mind. *Is this mission truly about capturing the thief who exploited a loophole and stole hundreds of Laws from the Heaven Stair Association through the administrator? Or is this a trap set by the inner members, who fear how powerful we have become?*

The moment the idea formed, he assumed the worst. This was a trap, one designed by the inner members to eliminate them. The realization chilled him to the bone. He

recalled how relaxed the eldest guard had seemed during their infiltration of the Divine Civilization, and unease settled deep within him.

Did Eldest Brother work with the inner members to kill all of us so he could join them later? It's very likely. He had told us many times that he wished to join them to cultivate.

The ninth guard grew increasingly confused and started to doubt everything. When he saw a dog pass by, he even suspected it of being an assassin sent by the inner members to kill him! His fighting spirit collapsed completely.

Han Wu had defended against his attack and was about to counter when the ninth guard escaped. Han Wu tried chasing after him, but concern stopped him. The other guards could attack the exhausted trio behind him at any moment.

The trio had helped him many times before, and he respected them. If they died here today, he would never forgive himself. Hence, he abandoned the pursuit, gathered the trio, and went to search for the rest of his friends.

Before long, he sensed Qin Shuang, Jing Jing, and Sun Qingnian. He also detected the aura of an unfamiliar person from the Divine Civilization. After confirming the direction, he rushed toward them.

When he arrived, the surrounding area had been reduced to ashes by the battle's shockwaves. Qin Shuang and Sun Qingnian were covered in wounds. Jing Jing appeared uninjured, but her spiritual presence was faint. She had suffered serious injuries too. Before them stood an unfamiliar woman, her figure bathed in fire as the illusion of a phoenix hovered behind her. At her feet lay the seventh guard, teetering on the brink of death.

Han Wu frowned in confusion. He knew his friends well. Even if they broke past their limit, they could only contend against a Heavenrender life form at best. Only a Skill like the senior trio's Three as One: Primal Beast could allow three Heavenrender life forms to fight against a World life form.

If his three friends hadn't defeated the seventh guard, then someone else had. He looked at the woman cloaked in the phoenix illusion. She was stunning and radiated the valor unique to a warrior.

At last, Han Wu remembered who she was. She was the lecturer that Sun Qingnian had seduced! He had never imagined she would be that strong.

Shi Shan met his gaze and immediately sensed that Han Wu was stronger than her. As a warrior, the realization stirred her fighting spirit, and she wanted to test herself against him in battle. Unfortunately, she could no longer endure the strain. She felt somewhat frustrated.

“Han Wu, wait for me to revive. I will challenge you then.” Her figure then started to crumble into ash. When the ashes settled, only a pail-sized phoenix egg remained.

Sun Qingnian rushed forward and carefully wrapped the egg in his clothes.

Qin Shuang and Jing Jing looked at Sun Qingnian with sympathy. None of them could defeat a World life form on their own, so Shi Shan had used her Skill to temporarily increase her strength to the World rank. In exchange, she would have to restart her entire cultivation. Thankfully, she would retain her memories and Skills, so recovery would depend only on time and resources.

After confirming that his friends were safe, Han Wu finally relaxed. Before they could exchange more than a few words, the ground suddenly trembled. Han Wu looked up and saw the ninth guard pummeling the barrier covering Imperial College with his massive fists.

The relentless blows, combined with the Runic Lexicons, left cracks in the barrier until it finally shattered. The ninth guard seized the chance to flee.

The five God Kings below stayed behind to watch over the surrendered guards and didn't pursue him.

With the barrier destroyed, the restriction around Imperial College disappeared. Various gates opened across the grounds as many students and lecturers returned. When they saw the destruction of Imperial College, pain filled their hearts.

They had fought and invaded countless civilizations without pause to secure resources and protect Imperial College, yet it now lay in ruins. Only the intervention of a few God Kings had limited the destruction. Otherwise, the outcome would have been worse.

The incident produced an incredibly negative impact. Even though the attack occurred at Imperial College, its consequences spread across the Divine Civilization. Many other colleges and factions of comparable standing examined their own vulnerabilities.

They asked themselves a grim question. Could they survive an infiltration by thirteen World life forms, just as Imperial College had faced? The answer was no.

As a result, they reinforced their bases and even hired powerful figures or units to prevent a similar tragedy from unfolding in their own domains.

At the same time, the incident was escalated to those who governed the Divine Civilization. Through the victims and God Kings' testimonies, they confirmed that the Divine Civilization wasn't the perpetrator. The Thirteen Guards of the Heaven Stair Association had launched a deliberate invasion.

The Divine Civilization would not let this slide. All of the God Kings convened to determine their response, and 90% voted in favor of retaliation.

Since the Heaven Stair Association didn't take the Divine Civilization seriously, then they would do it in their stead and deal with them permanently. When it came to invasion, the Divine Civilization had never once feared others.

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Chapter 582 - Backdoor to the Heaven Stair Civilization

[969 words]

Chapter 582 - Backdoor to the Heaven Stair Civilization

Three days later, Han Wu received the news.

The God Kings had communicated with the Will of the Divine Civilization, and consensus had been reached. They would invade the Heaven Stair Civilization. Every adult of the Divine Civilization received encouragement to join the campaign.

This was the beginning of a full-scale war between two powerful civilizations. The first step involved constructing a dedicated gate. This step was critical because one small error could destroy the gate, and such a failure would likely trap their allies in the enemy civilization and lead to their deaths.

The Divine Civilization selected several powerful God Kings to serve as the vanguard.

When Han Wu saw the news, a realization struck him. Within his divine realm stood the Death Tower, a structure born from Xu Hai's powers. After Xu Hai ascended to God King and helped Han Wu modify the other Death Tower in the Blood Coliseum, his abilities had somehow given rise to this one as well.

For some reason, the Death Tower within his divine realm had connected to the Heaven Stair Civilization. *Wait, does that mean I could use the Death Tower to transport all of us to the Heaven Stair Civilization?*

Han Wu quickly sought Xu Hai to verify his speculation. The latter believed that it was plausible. Han Wu had already exploited a loophole and obtained hundreds of Laws

from the Heaven Stair Challenge. Even so, they needed to verify this through some testing.

With Han Wu's permission, Xu Hai entered his divine realm to conduct the test himself. Once inside the Death Tower, he unleashed his World power and broke through the first 100 floors easily.

He soon stepped onto the 101st floor, which matched Han Wu's description. When he stepped deeper, a crushing force pressed upon his body and soul, leaving him powerless to resist it.

Xu Hai relied on his willpower to endure it. After ten days, he adapted and could move around normally. The forest on that floor had fully recovered, and the scenery was beautiful. He gathered materials and constructed a small gate. Once completed, he exited the tower and sought the help of other God Kings to test it out.

Several powerful God Kings passed through the small gate. However, for some reason, they didn't arrive on the 101st floor. Instead, the coordinates and gates redirected them to the fifty-first floor instead. They had entered the Heaven Stair Civilization directly and skipped the previous fifty floors in one go.

This discovery revealed a hidden backdoor that allowed direct access to enemy territory. The God Kings felt a surge of excitement. With the backdoor in place, they could invade this place easily.

At that moment, a huge group of orcs burst from the forest. Through their senses, they perceived each orc as a Heroic life form, yet their true strength fell short of that level.

Due to the condensation of their power and the floor's suppression, one of the God Kings got injured.

They quickly withdrew through the gate to find a better solution. They needed a way to establish a stable foothold. Five days later, they returned with large quantities of materials and entered the 101st floor of Han Wu's Death Tower.

The area was calm, and no orcs were in sight. Scattered fragments of a shattered gate lay on the ground, clear proof that they had once been there and had come under attack. To test the situation further, they used the materials they had brought to construct a castle. The structure was small but sturdy. Even a World life form would need a long time to tear it down.

After constructing the castle on the 101st floor, they exited the place and reentered through the gate, using coordinates prepared in advance deep within the castle. This time, they arrived again on the fifty-first floor.

The environment was the same, and the pressure affecting them felt the same too. However, this time, they had a sturdy castle protecting them. The orcs attacked again, but the God Kings stood atop the castle walls and struck from afar. In the end, they emerged victorious, establishing a foothold within the Heaven Stair Civilization.

This was the first of many steps toward a full invasion. Once the position was stabilized, they started sending additional forces to the fifty-first floor.

Everyone dispatched there had to withstand the pressure and adapt to it before they could move freely. Such an environment didn't favor the weak. Most would likely be crushed by the pressure the moment they set foot on the floor.

However, those who endured it discovered that their strength increased and their ranks condensed. Still, the gains from a single floor remained limited. To reach Han Wu's World-rank condensation, one had to pass through five floors.

Their immediate objective was to create more gates on the lower floors to improve the invasion's efficiency.

Soon, gates stood on every floor from the first to the fiftieth. Everyone from the Divine Civilization could use those gates to deploy their units. With that, the war between the two powerful civilizations officially started.

Han Wu, as a student from Imperial College, also received the notice from the college to invade the Heaven Stair Civilization.

Naturally, rewards accompanied the campaign. This invasion followed a merit system, where they could earn points by killing life forms from the Heaven Stair Civilization or collecting rare resources. Those points could be exchanged for a wide range of items, including treasures from the Heaven Stair Civilization and the Divine Civilization.

Excitement spread quickly, since this system offered an excellent opportunity to accumulate resources.

Han Wu joined the others and entered the Heaven Stair Civilization through the Divine Civilization's public gates to see how they differed from his Death Tower.

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Chapter 583 - Guard, as in Security Guard

[1,169 words]

Chapter 583 - Guard, as in Security Guard

Using the gate, Han Wu arrived on the Heaven Stair Civilization's first floor. As he stepped out, he felt a faint pressure affecting him. The force was so weak that he could ignore it.

However, for Divine Beings and weaker Demigods, that pressure made movement difficult. Any delay in movement or reaction during battle would most likely result in death.

Han Wu smiled and walked away from the gate. A large crowd was standing outside the area, many of them Divine Beings.

He studied their youth and inexperience and recalled his own days as a Divine Being. At that time, he had endured constant bullying. Now, he stood as the strongest student in Imperial College and the Blood Coliseum's owner. He had come a long way.

Han Wu sighed and continued forward. Beyond the gate, the area had already turned into a battlefield, with skirmishes erupting everywhere.

From a personal perspective, the scene felt cruel. From the perspective of a God or an entire civilization, it was simply the natural order. Civilizations invaded one another, killing or being killed. The rule was simple and brutal. Only the strong had the right to live with dignity.

He continued walking until he was tens of kilometers from the gate. The farther he went, the fewer members of the Divine Civilization he saw, while more and more life forms from the Heaven Stair Civilization appeared.

Sensing his foreign aura, they attacked. However, Han Wu was far too powerful for them to pose any threat. He didn't need to fight personally and summoned some ordinary units to wipe them out. Even that was unnecessary. With his Divine Authorities alone, he could have killed them all.

When they died, their corpses turned into light and disappeared. This was a form of energy recycling. Through it, the Heaven Stair Civilization could utilize the energy to nurture more life forms and accelerate their growth.

Han Wu was very wary of this Law. Even though some of the total energy was lost when a life form died, his own units were also affected by the same Law. If they fell in battle, they would turn into wisps of energy and nurture the Heaven Stair Civilization.

That meant he would be strengthening his enemies. Worse still, without corpses, his units had nothing to consume and evolve. They would just be staring at an empty plate.

Moreover, due to this Law, his strategy of mass-summoning undead units was useless here. There were no corpses to raise!

Han Wu concluded that not a single undead could exist in the Heaven Stair Civilization's vicinity. His infamous mass-skeleton warfare style had no place there.

As he calculated whether the Divine Civilization could recover its losses from invading the Heaven Stair Civilization, he noticed that one of his Elite life forms reached the Unique rank during battle.

That discovery revealed the value of participating in the war between civilizations. His units were advancing at remarkable speed. The surrounding pressure was forcing large amounts of ambient energy into their bodies, especially during battles. Under such conditions, advancing to the next rank became far easier.

Unfortunately, the pressure on the first floor was insufficient. It benefited Common and Elite life forms, but was useless for Unique ones. Hence, Han Wu decided to ascend to higher floors.

Each floor teemed with numerous native life forms. On the fifth floor, he even encountered an outer member of the Heaven Stair Association.

That outer member hailed from the Zombie Civilization and had two powerful abilities. His overall strength approached the Lord rank, but against Han Wu, his strength amounted to nothing.

At present, both he and the Divine Civilization possessed limited knowledge of the mysterious Heaven Stair Association, confined to the infamous Heaven Stair Challenge and the Thirteen Guards.

Therefore, Han Wu didn't kill him. Instead, he captured him and with some *persuasion*, he extracted valuable information.

First, the Heaven Stair Association was divided into inner and outer members. The inner members resided above the fiftieth floor and consisted entirely of elites that had demonstrated extraordinary abilities during the Heaven Stair Challenge.

The outer members occupied the fiftieth floor and below, with their headquarters located on the fiftieth floor. Two departments were located there. The first was the security guard department, which maintained public safety from the first to the fiftieth floor. The second was the production department, which collected all the resources generated in the lower half of the Heaven Stair Civilization and submitted them to the inner members.

The outer members were further divided into five ranks: executive, section chief, division chief, bureau chief, and director. Each rank corresponded to a specific range of floors. The executives could only stay on the tenth floor and below, section chiefs up to

the twentieth floor, the division chiefs up to the thirtieth, bureau chiefs up to the fortieth, and directors on the fiftieth.

Han Wu also learned from the executive that the security guard department's directors were known as the Thirteen Guards.

The revelation stunned him. He had never imagined that the *guards* referred to ordinary security personnel. The information unnerved him. *To think that even the security guards of the outer members here at the Heaven Stair Civilization could disrupt the Imperial College's peace. How strong must the inner members be?*

He had assumed that the Divine Civilization was standing near the peak of all civilizations, yet it was evident that they still had a long way ahead. If the Heaven Stair Civilization realized how much precious information the executive had revealed, the punishment would have been severe.

Han Wu was merciful and killed him to spare him that fate. He then uploaded the information he had obtained to the Divine Civilization's dedicated forum.

After confirming its authenticity, Han Wu received 300 million points. His eyes lit up with delight. The reward was modest since he could just summon billions of his units to earn billions of points, but it did give him a new way to earn more points.

If a single executive was worth 300 million points, then a section chief would likely be worth 3 billion, a division chief 30 billion, a bureau chief 300 billion, and the directors most likely 3 trillion each.

He checked the list of rewards to see what he could exchange for 3 trillion points.

[Rank 8 God equipment]

[Rank 8 Sacred Object]

[Rank 8 Building]

[Heavenrender life form]

[Juvenile World life form]

...

Han Wu gazed at the treasures that seemed to beckon him. Since the security department's thirteen directors had either died, been captured, or escaped, he set his eyes on the production department's directors.

He didn't know how many there were, but he was certain the number was small. Each of them was a walking piece of Rank 8 God equipment, and he couldn't let them escape. He quickly ran back to the gate and sent himself to the fiftieth floor. No matter what, he had to capture a director!

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,283 words]

Chapter 584 - Director Jia Gui

On the fiftieth floor, the Heaven Stair Association's outer members had gathered for a meeting. Attendance was mandatory for all directors. After the collapse of the Thirteen Guards, only twelve directors from the production department were in the meeting room. They were also known by another title, the Twelve Gilded, a name tied to money.

The meeting started under the direction of the eldest, MacArthur. "The Divine Civilization has officially waged war against the Heaven Stair Civilization. They have established gates from the first to the fiftieth floor."

As he spoke, his pipe rested in his mouth. He looked intimidating, and the other eleven directors feigned interest. In reality, they were calculating which resources to steal for themselves today.

The Twelfth Gilded, Director Jia Gui, was also thinking about that until MacArthur addressed him. "Director Jia Gui, you hail from the Divine Civilization. Surely, you should know how we can defeat them."

All eyes turned toward him. Jia Gui found himself at a loss for words.

"Director MacArthur, you know my history better than anyone," he said at last. "While I hail from the Divine Civilization, my Core was crushed when I was young. I was subsequently exiled as a cripple. It's all thanks to the Heaven Stair Civilization that I reached my current position."

As he spoke, Jia Gui grew agitated, eager to demonstrate his loyalty. "Even if I once belonged to the Divine Civilization, I much prefer the Heaven Stair Civilization, where the air is sweet. This is now my forever home—"

MacArthur cut him off, "Since you love the Heaven Stair Civilization so much, then it's time to contribute. Many invaders from the Divine Civilization have appeared on the fiftieth floor. You will go and exterminate them. With your World powers, I'm sure that it should be easy."

MacArthur's tone was imperious, leaving no room for rebuttal.

Jia Gui felt trapped. After all, his strength was inflated, built on a massive consumption of resources rather than real growth. In truth, he had almost no combat experience. He didn't dare face anyone from the Divine Civilization, individuals who invaded other civilizations on a daily basis.

However, if he didn't agree to MacArthur's request, the latter would seize the opportunity to shift the blame onto him and would likely convince the others to strip Jia Gui of his position.

No matter what, Jia Gui was still a director and controlled a large share of resources within his sector. Someone would almost certainly covet his position and do anything to get it.

Left with no alternative, Jia Gui agreed. "I swear that I will complete it."

The other directors nodded. Their only concern was to continue siphoning the resources for themselves, and they were more than happy to let someone else handle the troublesome work.

After leaving the meeting room and returning to his sector, Jia Gui exploded in rage, smashing a lot of items in his house. "They bully me whether the Thirteen Guards are here or not. If that's the case, what use are the guards? No, I need to find a way out of this."

That same day, Jia Gui set out with his loyal men toward the battlefield under the pretense of counterattacking. For the sake of his safety, he instructed his men to station themselves fifty kilometers from the frontline, leaving ample room to retreat and regroup.

Using various abilities, they observed the invaders from the Divine Civilization slaughtering the native life forms of the fiftieth floor.

One of Jia Gui's men burned with eagerness and wanted to rush out.

Jia Gui quickly pushed him down and snapped, "Are you crazy? Don't you see that they are killing machines? Do you have a death wish?"

His underling was confused. "But I thought our mission was to go to war with those from the Divine Civilization?"

"War?" Jia Gui scoffed. "Have you lost your mind? They are from the Divine Civilization and our dear friends. Don't forget your identity. You were once one of them. Your Core was destroyed only because you were ambushed during an invasion. Before that, the Divine Civilization didn't treat you badly, right?"

“Then what are we supposed to do?” the underling complained. “You know MacArthur. He’s just dumping all the work on us!”

Jia Gui considered this for a moment. “He did ask us to fight, but he never said how. Listen carefully. Fire our attacks upward. Just make it look like we are doing something.”

His underlings all agreed. “Director Jia, you really are amazing. Never thought you would come up with something like this.”

Jia Gui didn’t know whether to cry or laugh. Was this really a compliment?

Still, with the frontline fifty kilometers away from them, they unleashed their attacks straight into the sky.

The invaders noticed the distant surges of energy at once. Brilliant explosions of different elements bloomed overhead like fireworks, dazzling and strangely beautiful.

The display baffled the invaders.

“Hey, I don’t think we’ve invaded that place, right?”

“I don’t know. Is there some kind of a celebration? Look, that’s a firework.”

“Are they looking down on us? Brothers, attack! Crush them within an hour. I want to see who’s looking down on us!”

The battle intensified, but Jia Gui retreated continuously while launching attacks into the sky. He kept maintaining the distance throughout, never allowing the enemy to close in.

The other directors were observing from afar but couldn’t tell what was happening. All they could sense were only violent elemental reverberations and assumed that the battle was fierce. None of them could imagine that Jia Gui hadn’t even encountered a single opponent all day. That illusion held until someone rushed past the frontlines and rushed straight toward him.

Jia Gui felt the opponent’s aura and quickly ordered his underlings to retreat. He intended to continue his guerrilla tactics, but Han Wu was faster.

Jia Gui’s underlings all sensed that Han Wu and his units were only at the Sage rank and got excited.

“Director Jia, look closely! We don’t need to run. I can defeat him myself!” one of them claimed.

Something felt wrong to Jia Gui, but he couldn’t identify it. He warned his underling, “Alright, be careful. Don’t hurt our own people.”

The underling nodded. "Don't worry, I will go easy."

He then appeared in front of Han Wu and spoke arrogantly. "Brat, listen carefully. We are from the same civilization, so head back. I will pretend I never saw you."

Han Wu frowned as he studied the man. He couldn't sense any Divine Points from him. "We are compatriots?"

"Brat, why are you staring at me? I will teach you to respect your seniors who have been invading outside for years!" He lunged forward, his power stirring the sky.

In the next second, Steely pinned him to the ground, pressing two greatswords against his neck. One careless movement would mean instant death.

Seeing this, Jia Gui quickly approached them. "Wait, don't kill him! We are from the Divine Civilization. We are compatriots, on the same side!"

Han Wu caught the cunning in Jia Gui's eyes and felt no trust at all. "Cut him down!"

Steely moved to strike, but Jia Gui pleaded once more, "Wait, don't cut him! I have proof. I know Li Xiulian. We were classmates. Do you recognize Li Xiulian? He's a God King now."

Han Wu was stunned. He recognized the name. It was the Commerce God King's real name. If so, the two before him could truly be from the Divine Civilization.

"Capture him!" Han Wu couldn't confirm the truth, so he decided to take them alive. He would have Commerce verify it.

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[1,033 words]

Chapter 585 - Upgraded Spiritual Contract

Just to be safe, Han Wu didn't bring Director Jia Gui and his underlings into the base where the gate was, calling the Commerce God King out instead.

Jia Gui's nodding compliance was excessive to the point of being uncharacteristic for a World life form. When Commerce arrived two hours later, he immediately recognized his long-lost classmate.

"Jia Gui, you're alive?"

“Li Xiulian, you haven’t kicked the bucket yet either; how could I die first?” Jia Gui replied, stutter disappearing as he tried to hug Commerce.

Commerce frowned. “Don’t call me that. Call me the Commerce God King.”

“Of course, Li Xiulian!” Jia Gui agreed, blatantly ignoring the request.

Even with Commerce verifying his identity, Director Jia Gui was still barred from the base. Regardless of his background with the Divine Civilization, the fact that his Core had been destroyed and he was left to wander around remained unchanged.

The Heaven Stair Civilization was the reason he had survived to this day. Knowing this, even Commerce couldn’t ascertain Jia Gui’s true loyalties. Thus, to be safe, he wasn’t allowed to enter the base.

Jia Gui didn’t mind this at all. In fact, he started reporting about the inner workings of the Heaven Stair Civilization without prompting. As an outer member and director, he was naturally well-informed and answered every question without hesitation.

Those from the Divine Civilizations were thrilled to learn this inside knowledge. If true, then the entirety of the Heaven Stair Civilization’s outer member sectors were exposed. All they would need to do was target specific areas to invade and capture all fifty floors of the outer area.

However, therein lay the problem: no one could tell if he was speaking the truth. What if this was a trap to lure in a huge group of invaders to their death?

Director Jia was a smart man and was aware of their concerns. So, he volunteered to sign a Spiritual Contract. If he were lying, his soul would be destroyed. This bold offer swayed the hearts of many into believing him. Even the Commerce God King was convinced.

Han Wu was also affected, but as an experienced invader, he felt that just signing a Spiritual Contract was inadequate. Pulling out an upgraded version of the contract from his bag, he placed it in front of Jia Gui.

Several master Epistians with powerful Mystic Arts had augmented this upgraded contract, making it several times more powerful than a regular one. A regular Spiritual Contract could be voided with special items or methods. This upgraded version, on the other hand, would require a hundred times more resources to completely negate it.

Increasing the cost of negating the contract also increased the effects of the contract. When Jia Gui felt the power of this upgraded contract, he became hesitant. He never thought that Han Wu would actually ask him to sign one.

Jia Gui’s uncertainty snapped Commerce out of his stupor. He had been hypnotized!

Stomping to his feet, he seized Jia Gui by the neck. "I thought of you as a classmate, but you clearly thought of me as an idiot! It seems that you've betrayed the Divine Civilization after all, so you have no reason to live on!"

"Wait, most of it was the truth!" Jia Gui panted, using all his strength to escape his grip. "I only lied in some parts to protect my own assets. Please believe me!"

"I will not!" Commerce activated his Divine Ring, which appeared behind him. A huge string of numbers representing his assets appeared above his head. The numbers started to fall, and his strength rapidly increased in response.

Jia Gui also unveiled his Divine Ring. It was almost invisible and was shaped like the mouth of a loudspeaker. As he spoke, his Divine Ring contracted and expanded rhythmically to form sound waves.

The denizens of the Divine Civilization and their units felt their minds turn hazy as the sound waves rippled over them. An unshakeable belief in Jia Gui's words took root within them, and they started persuading Commerce to stop.

Han Wu quickly activated Replicate and revealed his four-element Divine Ring to counter the effect of Jia Gui's.

Based on this, Han Wu could roughly guess that Jia Gui's Divine Ring worked by hypnotizing targets. The sound waves appeared to make people more susceptible to his words. While his Divine Ring didn't seem to have any offensive abilities, this was an undeniably powerful effect when used against the masses.

Han Wu also had some thoughts on Commerce's Divine Ring. It appeared related to trade, with assets being exchanged for power. The thirty-digit number above his head represented his assets. Han Wu didn't know the denomination it represented, but he was confident it wasn't Divine Essence.

If it were, Commerce could have long purchased the entire Divine Civilization in its entirety and wouldn't need to head to other civilizations to trade. Still, Commerce's power had immense potential. Theoretically, if he could grow his resources and assets exponentially, his power would scale exponentially as well.

Commerce landed a powerful blow, pinning Jia Gui to the ground. One more hit, and he would crush Jia Gui's skull.

Jia Gui repeatedly shouted denials of his betrayal between bloody coughs. At the last minute, he desperately cried that he would swear on Xiao Fang's name.

Commerce didn't land the finishing blow. His fist remained suspended halfway.

Han Wu's ears perked up. *Who's Xiao Fang?* he wondered.

Disappointingly, the two didn't say anything more on the subject.

After confirming that Jia Gui was swearing on Xiao Fang's name, Commerce dragged him back to the negotiation table, where he then signed the upgraded Spiritual Contract.

In the end, Jia Gui had barely managed to obtain the trust of Commerce. His information was swiftly uploaded to their encrypted internet.

Information about all the Heaven Stair Civilization's outer members and units had been leaked.

With this knowledge, the Divine Civilization could stop their guerrilla warfare tactics and go straight for the kill. In just one day, all the gates connecting the Divine Civilization to the Heaven Stair Civilization had a new coordinate: the headquarters of the outer members.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,033 words]

Chapter 586 - World Divine Ring

All fifty gates built on the respective floors attacked the headquarters of the outer members at the same time. An army of units swarmed through the gates.

The outer members had been relaxing and were caught off guard. The executives, section chiefs, and the rest couldn't fight off the invasion alone. Having no other choice, MacArthur called the other directors to join him in wiping out the invaders.

They charged into the fray, but more and more units poured out from the gates. There were even some World life forms to occupy the directors, preventing them from aiding the other units or influencing the battlefield.

The units attacked and destroyed everything in sight. This was an unprecedented crisis for the entire outer members. It was the invasion of the Divine Civilization. They couldn't face this on their own.

"All members, heed my command," MacArthur bellowed between puffs of his smoke pipe. "Request backup from other civilizations to stop the invasion of the Divine Civilization!"

The Heaven Stair Challenge had made their civilization famous. Many other civilizations had also benefited greatly from the challenge. Thus, when they heard the Heaven Stair

Civilization was in trouble, they didn't even bother to check the identity of the invaders before lending their aid.

They swiftly regretted this the moment they were transported over. This was a battle of hundreds of trillions of units! It was far beyond the scale they had expected.

When they tried to return, they discovered that MacArthur had intentionally set the gate to be a one-way gate. They couldn't go back!

The outer life forms had been tricked into participating in a war. Hundreds of millions of units perished every second. The Law of the Heaven Stair Civilization turned their corpses into energy to nurture the others.

A single Law Tree absorbed a huge portion of this energy, and a fruit filled with Law swiftly matured. Once matured, a complete Law could be extracted from the fruit.

Complete Laws were a precious resource for the outer members. They could receive a fairly good reward for submitting it to the inner members. Unfortunately, MacArthur didn't have the time to check the fruit. He had his hands full figuring out how to deal with this threat.

If he succeeded, he would gain a merit that no other outer member had accomplished to date. There was a good chance the inner members would accept him as a result.

If he failed, he would be destroyed alongside the other outer members. In fact, that would actually be a favorable outcome, as there were punishments worse than death for the inner members.

Meanwhile, Han Wu had also transported himself to the headquarters of the outer members. His units attacked enemies they could find to earn him points.

Han Wu could sense the intense powers of Death and War here. As he had the Death and War Aspect, these energies were essentially fine meals ready to be eaten. There was no need to hesitate!

He formed the Death Avatar and War Avatar to pull in all of the energy within a hundred km radius. A tornado of energy formed, with them in the eye. They grew at a rapid pace as they absorbed the energy.

In three minutes, the two avatars reached the Earthsunder rank, and after ten, they reached the Heavenrender rank. At the one-hour mark, the faint form of a Divine Ring appeared behind them.

However, Han Wu still wasn't satisfied. He wanted to push himself further. Creating the Conversion Avatar, he positioned it behind the War Avatar and Death Avatar to absorb and convert the extra energy, which was then fed back to Han Wu.

Han Wu then created more avatars to absorb their corresponding energies. He wanted all of his avatars to be on the edge of becoming World life forms.

Steely and the other powerful units guarded the avatars from ambush.

The war lasted three days. Han Wu spent its entirety absorbing energy. By the time the energies of War and Death subsided, Han Wu's avatars had all reached the edge of a World life form. Moreover, this was keeping in mind that they had previously been condensed once in the Heaven Stair Challenge already.

It was time to return! Hundreds of avatars returned to his body, and he became whole again. Their absorbed energies—hundreds of times stronger than a Heavenrender life form—converged into one body.

Han Wu didn't even feel the bottleneck, surging effortlessly into the World rank. A Microcosm was born in his body and merged with his divine realm.

The powers of the Microcosm were higher than his divine realm. Normally, a World life form from the Divine Civilization would require the blessing of the Will of the Divine Civilization as they ascended to help merge the two.

But Han Wu didn't need that. The immense energy in his body was more than enough. It took him less than an hour to merge his divine realm and the Microcosm into one.

His divine realm changed after merging. It had transformed from a continent to a planet. Unexpectedly, it had actually shrunk a little, though the overall power had increased.

With this, Han Wu would no longer need to worry about storing powerful items like Angel Elixirs anymore. The heightened power of his divine realm also meant his units could grow faster.

There was even a higher chance for him to gain rarer mutations of his units. As he finished merging his divine realm with the Microcosm, his Divine Ring appeared behind his back.

He could sense that his Divine Ring was vastly different from the norm. Others' Divine Rings typically had only one trait: accelerating their energy absorption rate, amplifying certain aspects of their powers, or having some unique effect.

However, Han Wu's Divine Ring had all three. It could accelerate the rate of his energy absorption by a hundredfold, amplify some of his abilities and skills by 500%, and also appeared to have a unique effect, the details of which he would have to look into later.

He also learned the name of his Divine Ring: the World Ring! It encompassed everything in this world!

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[1,098 words]

Chapter 587 - Hello, and Goodbye

MacArthur sensed his allies slowly dying. His body trembled from fear as the smoke pipe fell from his mouth for the first time. Neither the native life forms nor the allies from the other civilizations could stop the invasion of the Divine Civilization.

They were destined to lose this battle. His only remaining hope was to request aid from the inner members. The only caveat was that requesting help would inevitably lead to a punishment worse than death. Even so, he preferred punishment over the prospect of dying. His fear of death trumped any punishment the inner members would inflict upon him. Not to mention, he had to survive if he wanted revenge in the future. He had to live on!

“Divine Civilization, I’ll come back one day!” MacArthur growled, dialing the number connecting to the inner members. After three long minutes, somebody finally picked up.

The administrator of the inner members asked with a disinterested tone, “What is it?”

MacArthur hastily replied, “I’m MacArthur, and I request the aid of the inner members. The Divine Civilization is on the verge of destroying the outer members!”

Even when informed of this dire situation, the administrator was in no hurry to arrange for aid. In fact, he even scolded MacArthur, “Are you all idiots? The Divine Civilization is insignificant. Why can’t you even deal with them? You lot should just die. Do you think you deserve the aid of the noble inner members? You’re all a waste of energy. At least if you fight to the death, your bodies could become energy and nurture the Heaven Stair Civilization. That’s the best contribution you could make for us!”

Even though MacArthur was the highest commander of the outer members, he dared not say a peep against the administrator. The last thing he wanted was to offend an inner member.

“Don’t even think of having us save you guys. If you can’t defend against them, you can just die. There are plenty of people who want to serve our civilization.”

With that, the administrator prepared to hang up.

“Wait, don’t hang up!” MacArthur hurriedly said. “I’m MacArthur, the only son of inner member Arthur MacArthur!”

This was his final hope. As expected, the administrator immediately changed his tune. "If you're the son of an inner member, then that's a different story altogether. Tonight, at midnight sharp, I will open the gate of the fifty-first floor a sliver. You may enter at that time. Remember, I will save you and only you. I don't care about the rest."

"Alright, thank you!" Relief washed over MacArthur at the knowledge that he would survive. All he had to do was follow the administrator's orders.

There was still a long time until midnight. Many units from both sides had died from the war, and things had died down a little, but the Divine Civilization was still continuously sending in units like expendable pawns.

"That damned Divine Civilization! One day, I'll kill them all!"

In contrast to his impassioned words, MacArthur sent a signal to recall the surviving elites to his side to protect him. The elites were all still alive, but they were fatigued and wounded from the long battle. He eyed the elites with disdain but said nothing. This wasn't the time to be picky.

The war slowly intensified as more outer members were killed. Some of the directors were killed as well.

MacArthur paced in the room restlessly. Even though he was a World life form, he was weak like Jia Gui. He would lose to the Divine Civilization if he were to fight for real.

Time slowly passed with him pacing all the while. When there was one more hour until midnight, he ordered, "Follow me and attack! Our target is the gate of the fifty-first floor!"

The elites were confused.

"But isn't the gate to the fifty-first floor behind us?" one asked. "Are you trying to tell us to retreat?"

MacArthur shouted angrily, "Retreat isn't a word in my books! We aren't retreating; we're simply attacking backward!"

The elites dared not retort due to their inferior rank and could only obey his command. As they departed, the remaining units of the Divine Civilization charged toward them.

He ordered part of the elites to stop them while he and a few others continued onward. They reached the gate with only a minute to spare. The prospect of leaving the warzone and being safe amongst the inner members sent a wave of gleeful relief washing over him.

Unfortunately, the units of the Divine Civilization had chased after them. Several World rank units rushed forward to capture MacArthur, but he kicked the elites into their path as sacrifices to stall for time.

“It’s almost time. Please open the gate. I want to live! I want to go home!” MacArthur urged under his breath.

As if responding to his words, the gate to the fifty-first floor rumbled ajar. A ray of light shone through the gap like a sliver of salvation.

MacArthur’s face lit up, and he rushed toward the opening as if fearing it would shut at any moment. The gap widened until it could fit a single person.

As he was about to enter, he noticed someone coming out to block him.

“It’s me, MacArthur! I want to enter!” He didn’t hesitate to identify himself.

“MacArthur?” responded an unfamiliar voice.

It didn’t sound like the administrator at all!

MacArthur studied the youth blocking him. The youth was holding onto a severed head.

“That’s...” MacArthur took two wary steps back, eyeing the youth with distrustful eyes. “You’re not an inner member. Who are you? Why are you here?”

The youth smiled. “Hello, I’m Han Wu, a Major God of the Divine Civilization. As for why I’m here, I received a mission to open the gate connecting to the fifty-first floor.”

With that, Han Wu tossed the severed head, which had yet to disappear to the energy recycling Law, to MacArthur.

“MacArthur, right? Hello, and goodbye.”

Han Wu revealed his World Ring. Engravings of dragon scales appeared on the rotating ring, and two small wings sprouted from its sides. This form was called the Great Dragon Ring and was the first effect he had learned from his Divine Ring after becoming a World life form.

As his Divine Ring changed, so too did Han Wu’s body. Black scales covered his body, his hands curled into claws, and dragon wings stretched out behind him. He also gained Dragon Fear, which allowed him to intimidate most life forms like a Great Dragon.

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[1,188 words]

Chapter 588 - Consuming Divine Rings

This wasn't the power of a regular World life form. Han Wu's strength was possibly even beyond that of an experienced World life form!

MacArthur fell to his knees in despair at the realization. The gate to the fifty-first floor was ajar before him, yet still far beyond his reach.

"I am MacArthur, I am—"

Han Wu tore his throat off. "Yes, yes. You are MacArthur, and you can die now."

MacArthur's cooling body fell to the ground. Energy escaped from his disappearing body to slowly nurture the fiftieth floor. Once his corpse was gone, Han Wu collected the Divine Ring that had been left behind.

It was tragic for a World life form to not even have the opportunity to use their Divine Ring before perishing. Han Wu was about to toss the Divine Ring into his divine realm when he felt a strange pulse coming from his own Divine Ring.

He wasn't sure what it was. After being transported to the fifty-first floor through the Death Tower in his divine realm, he had killed the administrator of the inner members. His Divine Ring had pulsed when he picked up the Divine Ring of the administrator as well.

Does my Divine Ring need something from these other Divine Rings? Han Wu wondered, tentatively placing MacArthur's Divine Ring close to his.

The two were attracted to each other like magnets. Han Wu didn't stop them. As the two Divine Rings touched, they started to merge until eventually, his Divine Ring consumed MacArthur's. At the same time, he sensed that his Divine Ring had gained the ability to transform into MacArthur's Divine Ring.

Han Wu tried the new ability out. Once his Divine Ring had turned into MacArthur's, he carefully studied its power and soon came to the realization that MacArthur's Divine Ring was a sham!

Its effect was to amplify his authority and pressure. It didn't have any attack or supporting Skills. It was a Divine Ring solely used to trick others!

Han Wu now understood why MacArthur didn't use his Divine Ring even when he was confronted with death: his Divine Ring was useless!

Admittedly, that was not quite true. The effectiveness of a Divine Ring depended on its owner. For example, Han Wu could combine his Divine Authority with the effects of the Divine Ring to boost the former's power.

The success of this trial run prompted Han Wu to test it out again. Retrieving the Divine Ring of the administrator, he placed it next to his own, allowing it to absorb it like it had MacArthur's.

Han Wu received another form called the Pressure Ring. It could release a regulatable pressure that affected both body and soul. Han Wu was somewhat puzzled when he felt the effects of this Divine Ring.

Is this the origin of the pressure on the fifty-first floor and above? If so, then this Divine Ring is extremely powerful. But how could such a powerful Divine Ring fall into the hands of someone so normal?

This was the first time Han Wu had pondered the hierarchy of the Heaven Stair Civilization, and it left him thoroughly perplexed.

How are the inner members chosen? Is it based on who can endure the pressure of the fifty-first floor?

Just then, many invaders of the Divine Civilizations arrived alongside their units. The sight of Han Wu raised their hackles, and it wasn't until they detected his presence as a Major God that they realized they were allies.

"The gate to the fifty-first floor has been opened. You may enter, but be careful of the pressure inside," Han Wu warned.

"I've experienced it before. There's nothing to be wary about." One of them scoffed, brimming with overconfidence as he unhesitatingly crossed into the fifty-first floor.

Tremendous pressure pressed down onto him, flattening his body to the ground. He couldn't even lift his finger. When the others saw this, they instinctively turned to Han Wu.

Han Wu shrugged. "I warned him."

Ignoring their gazes, he stepped over the person's body before casually heading into the depths of the fifty-first floor.

The others gulped. The pressure didn't seem to affect Han Wu at all! He was too strong!

"Do you know who that is? Is he a God King?" one person asked.

“He’s not a God King, but his strength is equivalent to one. I’ve seen him fight once, and it was very exhilarating...”

“Who is he?”

“He’s Han Wu, the second year valedictorian of the Imperial College. He’s also the owner of the Blood Coliseum!”

“He’s a second year? Are you sure? Is my college a sham?”

“Don’t compare yourself to others. You’ll probably die from high blood pressure.”

Han Wu paid no mind to their gossip, heading deeper until he finally reached the depths of the fifty-first floor.

The God Kings had already slain most of the orcs, but there were still some stragglers hiding in the darker corners of the floor, and Han Wu’s job was to deal with them. He gave his units free rein while he leisurely sat on a stone and browsed the items he could exchange for with the points he had.

He soon came across a new item called the Law Tree. It could absorb energy to grow mature Laws. There were fifty of them, with each costing 10 trillion points. A regular invader wouldn’t be able to exchange one, as they likely wouldn’t even have 100 million points.

Enduring the pressure of the Heaven Stair Civilization and killing the native life forms here weren’t as simple as one expected. However, unlike the others, Han Wu had the benefit of being the greatest contributor to the plan of invading the Heaven Stair Civilization.

Even disregarding the rewards he would get for planning the assault, the fact that he had captured Jia Gui alive, killed MacArthur, and slain the inner member administrator was more than enough for him to earn 10 trillion points.

He had also left units across all fifty floors to endlessly slaughter the native life there. Naturally, accumulating 10 trillion points was a breeze for him. He exchanged the points for a single Law Tree, which he planted in his divine realm.

The Law Tree slowly embedded itself into his divine realm as it received and absorbed the surrounding energy. Han Wu had no idea when it would bear fruit, but he was in no hurry as he still had a backlog of 150 Laws in his vault.

He looked forward to how strong he would become after absorbing all of them. There was only one issue: he had no idea what the next few power levels were.

If he wanted to ascend beyond the World rank, he would need to find a teacher. Of the possible candidates, the God King of Death seemed like the best option as his next mentor.

The incident at the Imperial College had given him the impression that Death was almost certainly above World rank. Moreover, Han Wu held the title of the Holy Son of Death. It wouldn't be too much to ask for guidance, right?

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[1,140 words]

Chapter 589 - World Rank's Tiers

Han Wu tried calling Death, but there was no signal in the Heaven Stair Civilization. With no other option, he began climbing each level to find him.

He had once climbed as high as the fifty-sixth level. That wasn't his limit, but it was the point where the Heaven Stair Association stopped and forcibly expelled him last time. This time, however, without the challenge's limitations, he could continue climbing.

With his current strength, even this level posed little difficulty. He advanced at a steady pace and soon reached the fifty-second level. Only a handful of life forms could reach that level. Most were strong God Kings or powerful World life forms.

Han Wu didn't recognize them, but he still approached them. After a brief exchange, he learned that Death had already climbed higher. Han Wu had no choice but to continue climbing.

As he moved deeper into the upper levels, horrified and shocked gazes followed him. The God Kings glanced at each other, doubt creeping into their expressions as they questioned who the real God King was. They were still adapting to the fifty-second level's environment, yet Han Wu could walk as if nothing had changed. The contrast was mind-blowing.

Han Wu paid them no attention and pressed on until he reached the fifty-sixth level, where he finally found Death. The latter was still acclimating to the environment here. Even while enduring this level's pressure, he continued to emit the aura of a World life form.

The sight stunned Han Wu. In the past, he had condensed his Heavenrender aura into the Sage rank. Death had undergone the same six layers of condensation, yet his aura was still at the World rank. Han Wu couldn't gauge his true strength.

Death sensed Han Wu's presence and was equally surprised. He had clearly perceived Han Wu's newfound strength. "You've reached this level as well?"

"I only managed it through luck," Han Wu replied.

Luck? Death smiled bitterly. He could tell that Han Wu had already merged his Microcosm with his divine realm. Most God Kings needed years to reach this stage, but Han Wu had achieved it in mere days.

More importantly, Han Wu wasn't even a God King yet. Even Death himself couldn't have done this when he was younger. He felt that he had grown old and couldn't keep pace with the younger generation.

"*Haha...* It seems that the world still belongs to you youngsters." Even as he spoke, Death already understood why Han Wu had come to seek him out. "Since you've reached the World rank, there are a few things I need to discuss with you."

Han Wu turned his full attention to Death's explanation.

"The highest life forms that the Divine Civilization can produce are God Kings. Once someone ascends, the Will of the Divine Civilization will help them grow into a World life form. Every God King you encounter will at least be a World life form. However, the World rank isn't the limit of the body. In truth, it's a brand new start," Death said.

He then showed his Microcosm, or rather, his divine realm. Through layers of miasma, Han Wu saw an endless host of undead within it. They did more than merely exist. They lived, had intelligence, and could study and eat.

They did not consume ordinary food like other life forms. Instead, they fed on hardened bones and Spirit Stones. The bones strengthened their skeletal frames, while the Spirit Stones enhanced their intelligence. Some undead who still retained flesh and blood consumed fresh meat as a supplement. They had even developed martial skills and spells tailored specifically to the undead.

Han Wu was astounded. After all, the undead had formed a brand new civilization under the God King of Death. If not for Death revealing his divine realm, Han Wu would've assumed that this was a complete civilization.

Death withdrew his divine realm and continued, "The World rank is only the beginning, and it has its own tiers. First comes the Microcosm, then the Subcosm, followed by Mesocosm, and finally the Macrocosm. Those are the differentiations of the World rank."

Han Wu was intrigued. "Lord Death, what tier have you reached?"

Death squinted, and Han Wu felt a chill traveling up his spine. While they were from the same civilization, certain boundaries still existed. Asking about another's strength was a breach of etiquette.

Luckily, Death appeared to pay no heed. He waved a hand, and another universe appeared in front of Han Wu. Numerous planets filled the void, and the largest one was naturally Death's divine realm.

Han Wu studied it and estimated that it contained at least millions of planets.

Death explained, "The Microcosm is only the beginning. Once you possess 1,000 Microcosms, you will advance to the Subcosm tier. With 1,000 Subcosms, you will reach the Mesocosm tier. Subsequently, 1,000 Mesocosms elevate you to the Macrocosm tier. The strongest being in the Divine Civilization possesses 3,000 Macrocosms."

As he spoke of that being, Death's eyes shone with excitement and yearning.

"Three thousand Macrocosms! How many Microcosms is that?" Han Wu was shocked and momentarily at a loss. At present, he possessed only a single Microcosm and had no idea how long it would take for him to reach such a level.

"We Gods live extremely long lives. Before the grand Divine Civilization, you are merely a hatchling in need of protection," Death said. "But I believe that you will soon grow into an eagle capable of traveling across countless civilizations."

Han Wu steadied himself and asked, "Lord Death, how can I ascend and become stronger?"

Death explained, "The simplest method is to continue accumulating energy to form Microcosms aligned with your divine realm, but this approach takes the longest. Another method is to nurture World units within your divine realm. Once they awaken their own Microcosm, it will count as yours. The final method is to plunder other World life forms' Microcosms. It's the fastest and most dangerous."

Han Wu was confused. He had killed several World life forms before, but he had never seen any of them drop a Microcosm.

Death chuckled. "To plunder a Microcosm, not only must you have the same or similar attribute, but you must also use a special technique. I can teach it to you."

"Thank you, Lord Death."

Death waved a hand. "You are my Holy Son, so it's only natural that I guide you. Unfortunately, I've been occupied lately and didn't have the time to check on you. Still, it's not too late.

“This technique is called Stellar Plunder. You must commit it to memory. It carries a 50% chance of successfully plundering your enemies’ Microcosms.”

Han Wu nodded. Death then touched Han Wu’s forehead, and a vivid sequence of images replayed continuously within Han Wu’s mind.

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Chapter 590 - Flesh is Weak but Steel is Eternal

[1,148 words]

Chapter 590 - Flesh is Weak but Steel is Eternal

The sequence of images contained the 739 movements needed to execute Stellar Plunder. Each movement came with a detailed explanation from an expert. To execute the technique and plunder another’s Microcosms, Han Wu had to perform all 739 movements within a second. Even then, success was not guaranteed. The chance was only 50%.

Han Wu found the technique somewhat inefficient, but he had little choice. If he failed to master it now, gathering Microcosms through energy accumulation or by nurturing his units would take an unacceptably long time. With no alternative, he started practicing.

He carefully emulated each movement. On his first attempt, it took him three hours and twenty-eight minutes to replicate the full sequence. At that pace, he wouldn’t even be able to absorb so much as a strand of hair, much less their Microcosm.

Han Wu practiced repeatedly to improve his muscle memory. Five days later, he could complete the sequence within one minute. Even though he had reduced the activation speed by more than 200 times, the outcome was still the same. He still couldn’t complete the entire sequence within one second. If he couldn’t, plundering another’s Microcosm would be impossible.

With no other option, he pressed on. Despite his efforts, he couldn’t overcome the barrier for now. The failure weighed on him. He had invested a great deal of time, yet he still couldn’t achieve his goal.

Death was somewhat at a loss too. He knew Han Wu excelled in combat, but he never expected him to fail to meet the requirements for using Stellar Plunder.

In the end, Death had no choice but to admit defeat. He acknowledged that everyone had strengths and weaknesses. No one was perfect.

Han Wu had nothing more to learn from Death, and continuing upward was too dangerous for the time being. He had only just reached the World rank, and the difficulty could overwhelm him. Instead of forcing his advance, he would wait for the other God Kings to clear the higher levels and follow after them. His next objective was to learn and master Stellar Plunder. Without it, he would have to abandon gaining more Microcosms if he encountered other World life forms in the future.

Han Wu returned to the college and saw that most of the facilities had been rebuilt, though the dead students and lecturers couldn't be revived. A thin veil of sorrow hung over the entire campus.

At present, the college had many vacant lecturer positions. To ensure that the student quality didn't decline, the administration had started recruiting prospective lecturers from across the Divine Civilization.

Many responded to the call and submitted applications. Even though they were open for recruitment, the requirements were still strict. At a minimum, the applicants had to be at least Gods with powerful units or have substantial teaching experience. Those with special Skills could receive slight concessions. Many Gods and even Major Gods applied, drawn by the generous benefits and the prestige attached to the position.

As Han Wu walked through the college grounds, his thoughts focused on how to increase his movement speed to execute Stellar Plunder. Lost in thought, he didn't pay any attention to his surroundings and collided with a woman.

Instead of her face pressing into his chest, his struck hers. The woman was very tall. Han Wu was close to two meters tall, yet his head barely reached her chest.

She apologized. "*Aiya*, sorry there, little handsome fella. I was thinking about something and didn't watch where I was going. Are you hurt?"

Han Wu touched his head and felt no pain. Instead, he felt something soft. The realization nearly made him gasp, because he had landed his face somewhere he shouldn't.

"I'm... I'm fine," Han Wu replied, then looked up at her.

Her clothing looked distinctive, the sort of style common to another region. She wore a modest top that revealed nothing, paired with a skirt cut high along the side. Her caramel-toned legs were exposed, exuding strength and toughness. Two revolvers rested in holsters, their surfaces shining with a brilliant sheen. He could tell that they were high-quality weapons.

“As long as you are fine, handsome young man. I’m a bit in a hurry for an interview, so toodles.” With that, she strode off at a brisk pace.

Han Wu shook his head, put the encounter out of his mind, and headed back to rest.

On the second day, he attended class, which he rarely did. With most students mobilized to invade the Heaven Stair Civilization, there weren’t a lot of students here. Many of them were busy earning points to gain resources.

Han Wu took his seat, his thoughts still circling the problem of how to quickly unleash Stellar Plunder.

Just then, a tall figure entered the classroom and greeted the few remaining students warmly. “Hello, everyone. I’m Kerry, your new lecturer for mechanical engineering. I am also the deputy head of the Imperial College’s Mechanical Engineering department.”

Han Wu heard the familiar voice and looked up. It appeared the Imperial College was very small. He never expected the long-legged beauty he had collided with the day before would turn out to be his new lecturer, and not just that, but the Mechanical Engineering Department’s deputy head. That position alone suggested real ability.

Kerry didn’t cut corners just because there were a few students. On the contrary, she spoke with enthusiasm and passion about her experience in mechanical engineering. She believed that flesh was weak and steel was eternal. In her view, machines were more sensitive and complex than human flesh, which allowed them to perform actions that flesh couldn’t.

Han Wu’s eyes lit up the moment he heard that. *Kerry is right! Flesh is weak, but steel is eternal!*

A machine could usually complete tasks that physical strength struggled to achieve. If he couldn’t complete the Stellar Plunder’s sequence within one second, then he could build a machine to assist him.

Excitement surged through him. He finally found a new path toward his problem. Unfortunately, his knowledge of mechanical engineering was close to nonexistent, which meant he couldn’t do it alone. He needed Kerry’s help.

After the class ended, he quickly approached her before she left. “Ms. Kerry, please wait a moment.”

Kerry recognized him. “Hey there, handsome. We meet again. You are a second-year too?”

“I am Han Wu, a second-year student,” he said. “Ms. Kerry, I have a problem. I need to create an auxiliary machine that can help me complete certain sets of movements within

one second. Unfortunately, I'm inexperienced in mechanical engineering, so I need your help."

Kerry looked him over and teased him lightly. "My private classes are very expensive. You should be ready to see your wallet emptied."

Han Wu was relieved that she didn't reject him outright. "That's fine. I'm rich."

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[1,131 words]

Chapter 591 - Nanite Mythril

Han Wu invited Kerry to his divine realm.

Although Kerry could sense that his divine realm was unique, she couldn't pinpoint what made it different.

Han Wu brought over a large table, positioning two chairs on opposite ends for them to sit.

Seeing this earnest action, a wave of embarrassment washed over Kerry. She had assumed that Han Wu was flirting with her and had proposed a private class to ask her out. Unexpectedly, he actually wanted her to teach.

Kerry coughed to mask her shame. "Han Wu, I first need to ascertain how much you know about mechanical engineering. Have you ever learned or built anything mechanical?"

Han Wu shook his head. "I never learned mechanical engineering before, but I do have experience in building golems."

With that, he summoned the ten Cockroaches, Heroic golems that he had made in the past. Despite being classed as Heroic life forms, their high resilience and endurance actually positioned them closer to Lord life forms.

Kerry examined them carefully, but after some tests, she concluded that they weren't machines. In her eyes, constructing a golem was nothing but pseudoscience.

"It seems you don't even have the basics. We can start from there," Kerry said, feeling an oncoming headache. Shaking her head as if casting away her negative thoughts, she wholeheartedly put her mind into teaching Han Wu the basics.

Time slowly passed in Han Wu's divine realm. It took her three entire months to finish teaching Han Wu the basic principles of mechanical engineering. Regardless of Han Wu's brilliance in academics, even he couldn't digest all that information at once.

While he could only construct mechanical toys like wind-up cars at his skill level, the most important thing was that he had grasped the basics. First, creating a machine or something mechanical required him to be extremely uncompromising in his chosen material and energy source. In particular, machine cores involved a huge amount of high-purity rare metals.

The type and quality of materials used determined the upper limits of the machine. Kerry had grumbled many times about how she wanted to infuse psychic energy into her bullets, only to discover that it would require an exceptionally rare and expensive metal called Prismatic Titanium. Worse still, natural Prismatic Titanium was not usually pure enough for her purposes. Even if they were used to make the core, she still wouldn't be able to infuse the amount of psychic energy she wanted.

Han Wu was overjoyed when he first heard this. After all, this was a problem he could easily solve with the Refiner. Nonetheless, as he wasn't that close to her yet, he didn't mention it.

After grasping the basics, he told her that he needed a machine or device to assist him in completing a set of motions within a single second.

Kerry assured him that it was a piece of cake. She had once made an automaton that could execute a set of actions encrypted into the executable chip. After recording the actions as commands in a chip, she could then insert it into an automaton to execute.

When Han Wu mentioned that he needed to record 739 separate instances of complicated actions into the chip, however, she became less certain. Even so, they decided to try it out. She first recorded all 739 actions into a chip made from basic materials before inserting it into a machine that resembled Han Wu.

The automaton started executing the recorded actions, but the speed needed to complete all 739 actions meant the chip burned out within 0.3 seconds. Still, the failure didn't stop them, and the pair optimized the design for the second test.

Another three months passed. Their 321st experiment had failed. While the automation could complete the actions within a single second, the chip would burn out immediately after.

Kerry removed the chip to run some diagnostics. In the end, she learned that the material of the chip had some severe limitations and simply couldn't withstand the stress. They needed better materials.

She ran through the materials she knew of, crossing off the ill-suited ones until she was left with three that could withstand the stress of executing all 739 movements within a second.

The first material was Ink Gold, a versatile metal with good conductivity for all energy. It could reduce the instances of energy overload on the chip. A chip made from this material would last at least a hundred uses.

The second was Setero Rebar, an extremely durable metal. Although less conductive than Ink Gold, it was also more durable. The chip could be used at least 5000 times or more, but it came at a cost. It would heat up greatly while executing commands, and the bearer would have no choice but to endure it.

The third was the perfect material they needed, Nanite Mythril. Its conductivity was top-notch, and it could repair itself like a living object. If they used it to manufacture the chip, the chip would essentially last forever and wouldn't have any side effects.

Nanite Mythril was ideal, but it was also the rarest of the three. It wasn't something that could be bought with money alone. Even Kerry, with her vast knowledge of materials from a large variety of civilizations, only knew of one place where it could be found: the Lawless Civilization.

The Lawless Civilization was an enclosed space with scrambled signals. Elemental energy also could not permeate there. Nevertheless, that was the only place Nanite Mythril could be found.

"Should we use Ink Gold? We could buy it through the Imperial College's online market, but it's still quite expensive at 100 Divine Essence per gram," Kerry suggested.

Han Wu could afford it, but he sought perfection. Both Ink Gold and Setero Rebar had side effects, and he planned to use Stellar Plunder often in the future. In his eyes, it wasn't worth the money saved.

"Ms. Kerry, I want to try making the chip with Nanite Mythril."

Kerry's eyes widened in surprise. As an experienced mechanical engineer, she naturally knew that Nanite Mythril was their best bet. However, they would have to risk their lives in the Lawless Civilization to obtain it—something Kerry made sure to explain to him.

"Don't worry, I don't fear the danger," Han Wu replied.

Kerry nodded eagerly. "In that case, let's get ready to depart. *Oh*, but my private tutoring lessons are expensive, and the fee will increase severalfold if we need to go on a mission to source materials."

“This should be enough, right?” Han Wu chuckled, passing her a card with 1000 Divine Essence.

She smiled when she saw the amount of Divine Essence in the card. “Handsome lil’ boy, let me take you on a tour of the Lawless Civilization.”

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[1,163 words]

Chapter 592 - Lawless Civilization

Kerry submitted her application for annual leave. When her supervisor, Feng Shiren, heard her request, he almost slammed his desk in anger.

He grumbled that youngsters these days were too finicky. She had just been hired a few days ago and was already applying for a long leave. Did she think they hired her for fun?

As he was about to give her a warning and reject her application, Kerry hastily explained that she was heading to the Lawless Civilization with a student named Han Wu.

Feng Shiren’s anger abruptly dissipated, attitude turning almost gleeful. “*Oh*, you’re heading out with Han Wu? Sure! Teaching students is a core part of being a lecturer. Here, we’ll give you 100 Divine Essence so you can go and purchase the necessary items for the excursion.”

Kerry took the card containing 100 Divine Essence and left the office feeling bewildered. Regardless, her time off had been approved.

Han Wu had also independently prepared for the excursion. As the place they were headed to was a sealed civilization with scrambled signals and a lack of elemental energy, he decided to bring Akanzor and Bart with him.

The two Earthsunder life forms stood at the peak of their grade. They had once been humans, but after using the Angel Elixir, they became angels, though their many pairs of wings technically marked them as mutated ones. Nevertheless, they made for formidable guards.

The condensation of their powers in the Heaven Stair Civilization had also made them significantly stronger than their peers. Thus, Han Wu was confident enough in their strength to bring them with him.

For ease of travel, Han Wu ordered the Epistians in his divine realm to cast a mystic art that turned their wings invisible. With their wings hidden, the two looked like two handsome young men.

Han Wu and the pair waited at the meeting point. Kerry soon appeared with an entourage of four automatons as her guards. Perhaps it was for aesthetics, or simply a matter of personal interest, but all four of her automatons were modeled after gorgeous ladies with white jade-like skin, long legs, and alluring faces.

While Han Wu was casting glances at her guards, she did the same with him. The condensation of powers in the Heaven Stair Civilization meant that Bart and Akanzor had the presence of Sage life forms. Kerry couldn't help but admire Han Wu for having Sage life forms at his age.

"Han Wu, your units are very strong," she praised.

At the same time, Han Wu had gauged the strength of Kerry's automatons at roughly Earthsunder rank. It wasn't bad for a Major God like Kerry, but in Han Wu's eyes, it was merely average.

Still, he decided not to burst her bubble. "Ms. Kerry, your automatons are powerful too."

"My Black Rose Squad is indeed powerful." Kerry laughed cheerfully. "I'll blow your mind when we have to fight later."

Han Wu nodded. The sealed space of the Lawless Civilization meant they couldn't teleport directly in. Unfortunately, there was no ticket to transport them there either. They had to go through several stations, make numerous transfers, and even make a two-day trek to reach the outskirts of the civilization.

The Lawless Civilization was enclosed in an incomparably tough barrier that even World life forms couldn't destroy. As Han Wu examined the barrier, he had a feeling that someone at the Subcosm rank could break it.

However, World life forms were already considered overlords within the range of known civilizations, let alone someone at the Subcosm rank. Han Wu only knew of one person at that rank: the God King of Death.

They couldn't enter directly. Fortunately, Kerry already had a plan. She brought him along the perimeter of the barrier until they found a narrow slit. Then, pulling a letter from her backpack, she tossed it inside the slit.

When Han Wu asked her what was inside, she grinned cheekily. "It's a secret!"

The slit soon widened slightly to reveal a pair of eyes. The person inside eyed Kerry and Han Wu carefully. After confirming that the number of people was correct, they instructed, "Step back a little."

Han Wu did so. The sound of mechanical locks unlocking and the hiss of escaping steam filled the air. Suddenly, a small gate opened up where the slit had been, revealing a corridor so narrow they would have to go single file.

Kerry patted Han Wu's shoulder. "Come on. Time to head in."

Han Wu nodded and followed her lead, with Bart and Akanzor trailing after. Behind the gate stood a fat old man with a mechanical leg and eye.

The man looked them over as they passed, nodding at Kerry's two revolvers and four automatons. He then examined the unarmed Han Wu, the bow-wielding Bart, and the greatsword sheathed at Akanzor's side. Shaking his head, he quietly scoffed. The three of them wouldn't survive past the third day here.

"Get in. Let's hope you guys get to leave this place alive," the old man grumbled. They then started walking deeper until they reached the Lawless Civilization proper. Han Wu inspected the surroundings as they walked the streets.

The buildings on both sides of the street were short and dilapidated. Their designs were vaguely reminiscent of modern-day Syria. Marks of damage and destruction around the area seemed to indicate frequent fights.

The people wore rags, but strangely, almost all of them had at least one or two mechanical objects. Han Wu's clean clothes were visibly out of place among them, and he could already sense the glares of several strangers boring into him.

Kerry and her automatons, on the other hand, didn't appear to be attracting much attention at all. He had a feeling that he was being looked down upon for not having anything mechanical on him.

Do they think of the bow, arrow, and greatsword as mere accessories? he mused.

At least ten people were targeting him within a hundred-meter radius. They were treating him, Bart, and Akanzor like sheep among wolves.

A man hiding in the corner of the street lunged out. He raised his mechanical arm equipped with a 20mm gun barrel at Han Wu and fired a massive bullet. "Kill him and take his items!"

That single gunshot triggered a cascade of actions. The others that had been targeting the trio started shooting as well.

Bart and Akanzor were furious. “You dare show disrespect to our God? You shall die!”

Akanzor swung his greatsword to block the incoming bullets while Bart fired off numerous arrows to kill the shooters.

Han Wu approached the man with the mechanical gun arm, gripping his neck and raising him high in the air. “Does that mean your things are mine if I kill you? Interesting rule.”

Tightening his grip, he snapped the man’s neck. Just to be safe, he even tore the head off before tossing it away. The man was undeniably dead.

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[1,075 words]

Chapter 593 - Restricted Zone

The gunfire didn’t stop even after the first man died. After all, fights were common in the Lawless Civilization. The only resource the denizens of this place had in abundance was bullets.

“Quick, hide behind the Black Rose Squad!” Kerry shouted.

Bart and Akanzor ignored her commands until Han Wu told them to do so. The four automatons of the Black Rose Squad were forged from special alloys that made them impervious to bullets and were equipped with powerful weapons.

However, in Kerry’s eyes, there was no reason to continue the fight. Once the trio was shielded behind her Black Rose Squad, she ordered a retreat. All four automatons activated their thrusters.

Flames spewed from beneath their feet, and each automaton held onto one person in their swift escape from the chaotic street. The only things left behind were broken mechanical limbs and bullet casings, which only made the street look even more seedy than before.

Kerry ordered her automatons to land behind a small hill. None of them had been injured in the fight, but Han Wu and his guards finally grasped the bold attitudes of the locals. They had shot without warning!

“Han Wu, you now understand the situation in the Lawless Civilization. We’re still only at the outskirts, but the deeper we go, the trickier it’ll become. There’s still time to retreat if you want.”

Han Wu shook his head. “No, I want to delve deeper.”

“Alright.” Kerry shrugged. “But to prevent more accidents, you’ll need to hold something mechanical.”

An automaton took out several small devices from its backpack.

“These are spoils from the bodies just now,” Kerry said. “Choose as many as you want.”

Han Wu sifted through the random machinery. There was a revolver without bullets, a broken stopwatch, and something that looked like a matchbox. Han Wu took the matchbox and opened it up.

Kerry quickly slapped the matchbox away. It exploded in the distance.

“That’s a mini bomb with a rating of E. It’s not powerful, but it’s very convenient to carry around,” she explained.

Han Wu nodded. The situation in this civilization was more complicated than he had expected. After the mishap with the explosive, Han Wu requested Kerry to pick out anything not too dangerous for him to wear.

Kerry went through the pile and gave him four objects. The ratings of mechanical objects were equivalent to the rank of a life form. Objects rated G were equivalent to Common life forms, F to Elite, E to Unique, D to Heroic, C to Lord, B to High Lord, A to King, S to Sage, SS to Earthsunder, SSS to Heavenrender, and finally X to World.

The four mechanical devices also had ratings assigned to them. The revolver was rated D and could fire off energy bullets. The energy source was shaped into the grip and could convert the friction from holding it into energy to form the bullets. It could also store six bullets at a time.

Han Wu thought it was weak.

The broken stopwatch was also rated D, and was actually a time bomb. It would explode three seconds after he pressed the dial. The explosion was average at best.

There was also a monocle with a cog frame. It was rated E and could be used like a telescope. Rotating the cog frame allowed the wearer to adjust the distance.

Finally, there was a pair of D-rated jet boots. It consumed energy to force air downward from the sole to either increase one’s jump power or achieve short-distance flight.

These four devices were useless to Han Wu, but without them, he would undoubtedly get shot at again.

Akanzor and Bart also wore several mechanical devices to blend in. Unfortunately, their weapons of choice stood out as they weren't mechanical in nature, so they had to temporarily hide them in the internal storage of the automatons.

With that settled, they headed toward the closest town they could find—a much richer place compared to the border town they were in before.

Han Wu took in the proper houses and passing mechanical vessels.

Currency was an important resource in every civilization. Fortunately, Kerry was well-versed enough to quickly locate a recycling center. The place operated like a pawnshop, buying low and selling high for profit.

Kerry tossed the leftover devices from earlier onto the table for the boss to choose.

“You have six mini bombs with a D rating. I can't tell if they can explode or not. I'll give you 15 Enercoins for them at most.

“Four-wheeled shoes with an E rating. *Ew*, this one still smells of feet from the previous owner. Take it back. I don't buy trash here.

“Hold on. Pretty lady, your revolver looks good. Do you want to sell it? I'll pay you handsomely for it.”

After some negotiations, Han Wu and Kerry obtained 329 Enercoins as their initial capital. This was enough money for them to secure two rooms at the local lodgings as well as meals for two days.

But this wasn't enough. They would undoubtedly need more Enercoins if they wanted information. Luckily, Kerry had some experience in navigating the Lawless Civilization and had a plan in mind. After resting for a night, they bought some food and left town.

Excessive mechanization had once led to a terrible plague in this civilization. This plague transformed a life form's flesh into metal and gears. Although they managed to fight off the plague after hundreds of years, there were still seven special restricted zones in the Lawless Civilization that no life form could survive in.

It was said that each restricted zone held a sentient automaton God that could endlessly produce all manner of automatons and devices. While this was only hearsay, the seven restricted zones themselves did actually exist. Moreover, each zone contained a veritable army of automatons. Kerry's idea was to head to the closest one and hunt those automatons for parts to sell for money.

Han Wu agreed to her proposal. It took them a day to reach the closest restricted zone. The name of this particular zone was the Steel Forest.

A thick metal wall circled the outer perimeter of this zone. Its purpose was twofold: to prevent life forms from entering and the automatons inside from escaping. Still, this didn't stop people from entering to obtain automaton parts for money.

Han Wu and his small team were going hunting.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[937 words]

Chapter 594 - Energy Parts

Han Wu and Kerry were about to enter the Steel Forest through the wall gate when guards blocked them. A total of twenty guns and the four cannons on the gate were pointed at them. One wrong move and they would shoot Han Wu and the others to dust.

After talking to them, Han Wu and Kerry learned that there was an entrance fee for the Steel Forest. Dealing with automatons in restricted zones benefited the Lawless Civilization. Han Wu thought it excessive that they had to pay a fee.

Unfortunately, they didn't have enough Enercoins on them, so they had to sell off whatever they had on hand. Han Wu, Bart, and Akanzor even sold the mechanical pieces they had equipped just to pay the fee.

Nevertheless, they managed to scrounge up enough to enter the Steel Forest. The lack of mechanical parts meant little to the trio, and they weren't afraid at all. Once inside, Akanzor and Bart retrieved their weapons from within Kerry's automatons.

Kerry gripped her two revolvers, keeping a watchful eye on their surroundings while her four automatons also equipped their weapons. Each had a unique weapon: a rifle, a Gatling, a grenade launcher, and a rocket launcher, respectively.

Only Han Wu remained unarmed. As a World life form, his physical flesh could naturally withstand bullets, so he wasn't really worried.

Kerry noticed that he hadn't equipped anything. Assuming that he had failed to sufficiently prepare before coming, she carefully shielded him behind her to prevent him from getting dragged into battles. If Han Wu knew her thoughts, he would've told her it was unnecessary and even torn apart an automaton with his bare hands to prove his point.

Han Wu spread his senses around to look for enemies as they carefully moved forward. The Steel Forest was trickier than he expected. There was something special here that limited his senses to only a hundred-meter radius.

It seemed restricted zones weren't that simple after all.

Looking around, he noticed that even the trees had been mechanized. Their trunks were solid metal, with branches of hollow metal pipes and leaves of steel sheets. The name Steel Forest was apt.

There were also automatons living within the trees.

They became agitated the moment they detected Han Wu's team. Han Wu sensed a squirrel-shaped automaton charging toward them long before Kerry even detected it.

The automaton squirrel had been boring holes into a tree with its gnashing mechanical teeth, effortlessly tearing 20mm steel plates into pieces. Metal scraps lay in piles around the tree.

"Careful, up north," Han Wu warned.

Kerry quickly swiveled around to see an automaton squirrel leaping from a tree. She swiftly shot off half of the squirrel's head, revealing crackling wires within. Surprisingly, even with half its head missing, the squirrel still got up to attack again.

"Time to show you something powerful then," Kerry mumbled, body flashing as she infused a purple energy into her revolver. "Death Blow!"

Raising her revolver, she shot the squirrel's head once again, this time blowing it off completely. The force of the Skill shook the squirrel's body until it shattered into metallic pieces.

Several shining parts from the disassembled body of the squirrel floated into the air. Kerry then waved her hand and swept those parts into her pockets.

"What are those shiny things?" Han Wu asked curiously.

"These are a special product of the Lawless Civilization called Energy Parts," Kerry explained. "They're mechanical parts formed from solidified energy. They're extremely durable and can be used as regular mechanical parts. Their special effect of exhausting extra energy to improve their performance also comes in handy during critical moments."

How strong would an automaton constructed purely from Energy Parts be? Han Wu quietly wondered.

Sensing the direction of his thoughts, Kerry added, “Automatons made entirely from Energy Parts are extremely valuable. Not only do they have better weapons, but they also have effects that regular automatons do not.”

Han Wu’s interest was piqued. “What kinds of effects?”

“They can equip multiple chips! Automatons can equip chips, just like us. However, regular automatons can only equip one, while an automaton made entirely from Energy Parts can equip multiple.”

Even from that brief explanation, Han Wu could tell how powerful an automaton with multiple chips could be. Having another chip meant an additional function. That alone made them better than their peers of the same rating.

“What are we waiting for? Let’s collect as many Energy Parts as we can to construct one!” Han Wu exclaimed eagerly.

Kerry nodded, using her four automatons to destroy anything they could find. Fear stemmed from insufficient firepower, and armed as they were, they could take down enemy automatons with ease. None could endure the bombardment for more than three minutes.

As they killed more automatons, Han Wu suddenly realized that the atmosphere around them was different. Something had changed.

The others, including the Heavenrender-ranked Kerry, didn’t detect anything amiss. In fact, they were confused as to why Han Wu had stopped moving forward.

“Ms. Kerry, something’s wrong.”

Kerry glanced around and found nothing that roused her suspicions. “What’s wrong? Everything seems normal to me.”

The moment she said that, horrifying screeches echoed from the steel trees around them. The steel trees were moving!

Wiry metal roots tore themselves out of the ground, wrapping around the trunks to form legs. The steel leaves of the trees spun like the blades of chainsaws, shredding everything they came into contact with.

The massive steel trees lumbered closer on their heavy feet, attacking Han Wu’s group with their chainsaw leaves!

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[916 words]

Chapter 595 - Look at Me

This situation was Kerry's worst fear. She froze in place, even forgetting to give orders to her automatons.

"What are you waiting for?!" Han Wu yelled. "Run!"

Snapping out of her daze, Kerry hastily ordered her automatons to carry them out of the restricted zone. At the same time, a blaring siren sounded.

"Seal off the area! The Steel Forest is going berserk!" cried the guards on the walls.

A mechanical voice whirred as it executed the order to seal off the restricted zone. Massive steel plates extended upward from the walls, curving into an enormous dome that enclosed the entire space.

The only gate out of the restricted zone was also closed. The hunters trapped inside the restricted zone could only hope to find a safe place to wait out this disaster or die trying.

Han Wu's group reached the gate, only to find it shut. It was ten meters thick and weighed tens of thousands of tons. Even Han Wu couldn't forcefully raise the gate with his strength.

There was no escape through the skies either, as the massive dome had sealed off the entire space. The Steel Forest had been cast into darkness. Only ominous pairs of patrolling red eyes lit up the pitch-black space. These were the eyes of the steel trees, searching for prey.

Han Wu's group kept as close to the walls as they could. In the darkness, Han Wu could feel Kerry trembling. Even a Heavenrender life form like her was powerless against the army of berserk steel trees.

Her strength lay in dispatching enemies of her own size. Her guns were useless against the towering steel trees.

"Don't worry, Ms. Kerry, we'll be fine." Han Wu consoled her.

Kerry said nothing, though whether out of fear or listlessness, Han Wu wasn't sure. It didn't matter how well they hid, as it seemed inevitable that they would eventually be found. Tens of millions of smaller automatons scurried around the massive trees, searching for any non-automaton life forms. Discovery meant a swift greeting with death.

Unfortunately, Han Wu's team had four biological life forms, and the automatons equipped with infrared vision quickly found them. An army of automatons charged toward them.

Akanzor and Bart rushed forward. Although the civilization restricted elemental energy, Akanzor could still use his swordsmanship to showcase the strength of a peak Earthsunder life form.

Bart was the same. However, his limited arrows meant he had no choice but to use his dexterity to destroy the automatons with his two hunting knives. The pair did their best to stop the automatons from attacking their God.

The sound of the clash snapped Kerry out of her despair, and she hastily ordered her Black Rose Squad to assist them. Bullets and explosions devastated the terrain around them, temporarily holding off the stampede of automatons.

Even so, Kerry knew her Black Rose Squad wouldn't last for long. They would eventually run out of energy. They simply weren't equipped to sustain this type of intensive barrage for extended periods. Once their energy ran out, they would be destroyed, and all of them would die. Kerry blamed herself for their situation.

"Sorry, Han Wu. I shouldn't have brought you here. Do you hate me for condemning you to this fate?" she asked bitterly.

"*Huh?* What're you talking about, Ms. Kerry? Nevermind that." Han Wu waved off her apology. "Focus on surviving. Right before those trees went berserk, I sensed something strange. I tried extending my senses as far as I could and found the reason they went berserk. I found the Machine God!"

Han Wu's excitement starkly contrasted with Kerry's confusion.

How did Han Wu sense that? she wondered. *I'm the lecturer here, and I didn't detect anything abnormal just now.*

Mistaking Kerry's bafflement for surprise, Han Wu earnestly explained, "The Machine God likely won't be awake for long. We might not be able to find it again if we don't defeat it now."

Han Wu then pulled Kerry toward the berserk steel trees.

"Stop going forward!" Kerry resisted. "We'll die if we go that way."

Han Wu merely laughed. "Ms. Kerry, it seems you still don't know what I'm capable of. I don't blame you, but at least let me show you what I can do."

Releasing her, he rushed toward the army of automatons and steel trees before them. There were over ten thousand of them, but Han Wu wasn't intimidated in the slightest.

A Divine Ring floated behind him. Mighty Dragon Fear cloaked the surrounding area as he changed its form into the Great Dragon Ring.

Kerry's jaw dropped. Her student, whom she had thought was weaker than her, had turned into a World life form! Divine Rings were an undeniable symbol of that!

Han Wu crashed into the steel trees in his Black Dragon King form. The combination of his tough body and the Great Dragon Ring made him virtually unstoppable. He shoved tree after tree down to the ground and tore them apart with his claws.

A trail of Energy Parts was left in his wake. A single green chip even floated out from one of the trees. But Han Wu had no time to loot any of it.

Turning to Kerry, he called, "Collect those Energy Parts for me."

With that, he ran toward where he had previously sensed the Machine God.

It took a moment for Kerry to collect herself. "Oh my goodness. My student is a World life form!"

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Chapter 596 - Machine God Left Arm

[1,225 words]

Chapter 596 - Machine God Left Arm

In his Black Dragon King form, Han Wu charged forward without fear and destroyed every automaton he encountered. Numerous glimmering Energy Parts drifted through the air, suspended as if waiting to be claimed.

Han Wu soon reached the location he had sensed earlier. There, he saw a massive core wrapped in innumerable steel cables that functioned like roots. The core was pulsating like a heart, every beat sending commands through the cables and into the steel trees.

The trees received the orders to block Han Wu. At the same time, countless automatons jumped down from the steel trees and overwhelmed Han Wu with suicidal attacks. Even when he shattered their frames, they could still overload their cores and detonate to stop him.

The relentless explosions made it impossible for Han Wu to approach the core. For the first time, he found himself hating kamikaze warfare. It had once been his primary method of attack through his units, and now he was on the receiving end.

He quickly sought out a solution to stop the explosions. He turned to his Peace Aspect and activated Tranquil Domain. Everything within the domain grew calm and subdued. The automatons lost their ability to self-destruct, allowing Han Wu to bypass them and advance directly toward the core.

The massive core beat rapidly as Han Wu studied it with keen interest. He had a feeling that this was the Machine God described in the rumors that surrounded the restricted zones. It manipulated the steel trees to absorb energy directly from the air and transformed nearby biological life forms into mechanical ones. As long as one didn't destroy it, the restricted zone known as Steel Forest would continue to exist.

"I wonder what kind of reward I'd get if I destroy you now." Han Wu licked his lips, which made him look even fiercer in his Black Dragon King form. He raised his claws and attacked the core.

The core shuddered, and the ground beneath Han Wu quaked. The steel trees ran toward the core, as if they had received a certain signal to chase him away.

Han Wu knew that he had hurt the core. The Machine God was afraid.

"This isn't over!" he shouted.

The Divine Ring behind him changed into the Pressure Ring. In this form, his Black Dragon King form's strength weakened, but he gained the power to control pressure. That force enveloped the area and crushed the steel trees to the ground. The pressure was so powerful that cracks spread through their trunks.

Han Wu seized this chance and infused pressure into his claws, making them a billion times heavier. Thankfully, he could endure such force. Otherwise, his claws would have been pinned to the ground too.

He drove his heavy dragon claws into the core. Without the effects of Dragon Fear, he relied solely on physical strength. Even so, the pressure magnified the power of the strike.

A huge boom followed. The ground quaked again, and the core cracked open.

A horrifying shriek echoed through his mind before fading away. The steel trees collapsed like puppets with their strings cut and reverted to their original forms.

With the core shattered, the source that transmitted commands to the steel trees stopped functioning, and the Steel Forest regained its peace.

Han Wu deactivated his Divine Ring and panted. He had used both his Great Dragon and Pressure Rings in quick succession. The strain drained much of his strength, though the gains were well worth the cost.

Something ethereal flew out from the core. It resembled some form of fire. Han Wu reached out to touch it. The flames burned his hand and spread up his left arm. He panicked and tried to put it out, but the fire dissipated just as suddenly as it had appeared.

He examined his left arm and was surprised when an interface appeared before him.

[Machine God Left Arm: EX rating. Effects unknown]

“What the heck? What is an EX rating? Why did my arm turn into a mechanical device?” Han Wu exclaimed.

He waved his left arm and found nothing amiss. He then activated Black Dragon King Transformation to check for changes. The rest of his body transformed as usual into the muscular Black Dragon form. Only his left arm became metallic, ending in sharp metal claws. In this form, it resembled the limb of a mechanical dinosaur.

He canceled his transformation, and his left arm returned to normal too. He pinched his arm and was relieved to find that he could still feel pain.

“I have no idea what this is. I should look for Ms. Kerry and ask her about it,” he muttered.

Meanwhile, items continued to drift out of the core. Other than the strange fire, an inky green chip and a blueprint appeared. Han Wu couldn't tell what the chip contained. When he tried touching it with his left arm, a chip slot opened in his left palm.

“Is it trying to tell me to insert the chip?” he mumbled and inserted the chip into the slot.

A stream of unfamiliar data surged in his mind. He couldn't fully comprehend it, but its function became clear. It was called Cable Form and could transform his left arm into strands of tough cables. He could use them as ropes, insert them into other machines to hijack them, or siphon energy. It was a versatile chip with powerful effects.

Han Wu was still a novice in mechanical engineering, so he decided to wait for Kerry before delving deeper into the research.

Then there was the blueprint. This one, he could understand. It detailed the construction method of a support automaton with an X rating, equivalent to a World life form!

The name alone stirred his excitement: BD-04 Luxun. BD stood for Big Dipper, and Han Wu knew that it referred to a constellation of seven stars. Luxun was the name of one of those stars.

Does that mean there are other automatons named after the remaining stars in the other restricted zones? How powerful must something be to bear the name of a star? he wondered.

Anticipation welled up in him. The blueprint came from the legendary Machine God, and an automaton with an X rating wouldn't be weak at all.

He carefully stored the items, then waved his arm at the surrounding Energy Parts. An enormous tide of Energy Parts surged toward him. However, there were simply too many of them. With space cut off in the Lawless Civilization, he couldn't take them all.

At that moment, Kerry brought her Black Rose Squad along with Akanzor and Bart to rendezvous with him. They had collected many Energy Parts along the way, though their haul still amounted to less than a quarter of the Energy Parts beside Han Wu.

Kerry was astonished by how strong a World life form was. There were countless Energy Parts here, but they couldn't bring everything with them. Leaving them behind felt like an intolerable waste.

Kerry decided to use them on the spot by constructing automatons. This approach would consume part of the stockpile and solve the transportation problem.

Han Wu took this chance to show her BD-04 Luxun's blueprint. She carefully inspected it and finally confirmed that the available Energy Parts were sufficient to build it immediately.

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[1,001 words]

Chapter 597 - BD-04 Luxun

On the second day, the dome above the Steel Forest finally disengaged, and light finally revealed the broken Steel Forest. The guards stationed along the wall surveyed the scene and saw that everything lay in ruins.

The position of all the steel trees had changed. The paths that they had scouted, and even the terrain itself had changed.

As the guards worried that the hunters would have to remap the entire area, one of them noticed an empty space deep within the forest. He stared in disbelief and had to rub his eyes before shouting, "Look! Someone survived there!"

The others rushed over and followed his pointing finger. They saw an entire area within the Steel Forest that was devoid of steel trees. They raised pairs of mechanical binoculars to get a closer look.

Through the lenses, they confirmed the presence of survivors, along with a massive pile of Energy Parts beside them. One of them was a female mechanic, clearly assembling an automaton. The construct was roughly the size of an aquarium, and because it was completely made from Energy Parts, its frame was crystalline and transparent, more like a work of art than a machine.

As the woman set the final part, the automaton flashed brightly and started to change, shrinking until it reached the size of a human head.

Han Wu watched the shrunken automaton curiously. After being activated, the automaton whirred to life and gave instructions. "Please bind your biometrics, including fingerprints, blood, and genes."

Han Wu knew that the X-rated BD-04 Luxun was a success.

"Han Wu, quickly bind your biometrics," Kerry urged.

Han Wu nodded and placed his finger into a tiny insertion slot on the automaton. A brief sting followed as BD-04 Luxun collected his fingerprint and blood sample. With that step complete, the automaton officially activated.

Han Wu inspected it, and a data interface appeared before him.

[BD-04 Luxun]

[Rating: X]

[Function: Energy Gathering]

[Additional Functions: Multi-chips (0/20. Can equip chips up to Level 10)]

"Energy gathering?" Han Wu was confused. He wasn't sure how useful it was. To test it, he issued the command to activate Energy Gathering.

The display on BD-04 Luxun showed a recharging icon as it absorbed the energy in the air and stored it inside its frame.

Kerry watched the process intently and grew increasingly excited by the function. As a mechanic, her biggest concern was not preparing enough energy sources. An automaton without power was nothing more than scrap. Moreover, many places lacked dedicated energy charging stations, especially in the wilderness.

An automaton that could automatically gather energy from its surroundings was very valuable. The automatons on the market could only gather energy under certain conditions, and their efficiency was low. Even then, it wasn't guaranteed that they could function in different environments.

However, Luxun was different. It ignored the environmental parameters and continued absorbing energy. That alone justified its X rating. Even so, as an X-rated automaton, it had its shortcomings too. It didn't have any attacking methods. Thankfully, this weakness could be addressed through the installation of additional chips.

Kerry took out a chip from her pocket. She had made it herself, a high-quality Level 7 chip. It contained an attack program called Laser Blast. After equipping it, an automaton could consume energy to unleash a huge barrage of laser bullets. The chip came with a prerequisite. The automaton needed sufficient capacity to equip it in the first place.

Kerry decided to test it, so she handed it to Han Wu and asked him to equip it onto Luxun. The program loaded successfully, and Han Wu saw the Multi-chip count change to 7/20.

After confirming the result, Han Wu ordered it to attack. Luxun's form changed as a dense array of barrels appeared in front of it, followed by a wild spray of laser bullets. The barrage hammered into the steel trees, carving dents up to a centimeter deep.

The bullets' raw power was average, but it was not just a physical attack. The laser bullets were infused with lightning, and they could paralyze anyone they struck. This was Laser Blast's true value.

Han Wu nodded with satisfaction. Based on its strength and firing speed, he judged that Laser Blast could easily kill a Heroic life form. It could even defend against a Lord life form.

After confirming that the chip had loaded successfully, Kerry took out several complementary chips.

[Level 1 Chip: Accelerate. Consume energy to amplify bullet speed by 20%.]

[Level 3 Chip: Overload. Consume energy to amplify lightning attribute x3.]

[Level 4 Chip: Multishot. Consume energy to multiply bullet count x4.]

[Level 5 Chip: Tracker. Consume energy to grant bullets target-tracking capability.]

Han Wu equipped the chips onto Luxun, and the automaton's performance rose sharply. He was confident that it could take down even King life forms now. However, it would still function as a supporting automaton against Earthsunder or Heavenrender life forms. Even then, it was still a powerful automaton.

By the time they finished modifying it, they had used up half of the surrounding Energy Parts. They decided to split the rest so everyone would carry some. The Black Rose Squad and Luxun would carry most of the Energy Parts out of this place.

Just as they prepared to leave, a group of guards descended from above in flying vessels. More than thirty gun barrels were locked on them.

The leader shouted, "Leave behind those Energy Parts and the automaton that you've just assembled. Hand over the blueprint too, and I might let you leave this place alive. If not, you will end up like that steel tree."

They fired at the steel tree he indicated. A hail of bullets tore through it, and the steel trunk, roughly one meter in diameter, shattered into pieces!

Han Wu watched them with a cold smile. He had to admit that he loved the unspoken rule in the Lawless Civilization, where anyone could plunder or steal whatever they fancied.

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- Chapter 598 - New Target

[1,091 words]

Chapter 598 - New Target

The guards piloted their flying vessels as they warned Han Wu, "Raise your hands up and surrender. Do anything stupid, and we will kill you."

Han Wu smiled and slowly raised his arms. Bart and Akanzor looked at their God in disbelief. They knew that Han Wu wasn't someone who would ever submit to evil.

Han Wu kept his attention on the flying vessels and used his eyes to signal the rest to follow his lead. Everyone understood his intent. He wanted their flying vessels. Even

though the Black Rose Squad could carry them through the air, it would be uncomfortable and drain a lot of their energy. Securing several flying vessels was helpful to them.

Kerry copied Han Wu and raised both arms. Luxun was programmed with rapid learning protocols, so it also raised its two tiny mechanical arms just like Han Wu.

The guards relaxed and murmured among themselves.

One guard scoffed. "Never thought I'd see an automaton that mimics its owner. Both of them are useless."

"Yeah," another guard agreed with a laugh. "I've never seen an automaton that cowardly."

A third guard snorted and shook his head. "What do you know? This is not a bug but a feature. We can sell it for a higher price once we are back."

The guards lowered their vigilance and chatted leisurely. Eight of them descended and disembarked from their flying vessels to retrieve the items, while the other twelve stayed aloft.

Han Wu could tell that the other twelve wouldn't come down and murmured with dissatisfaction, "Fine. Eight is better than nothing."

The guard closest to Han Wu didn't catch what he was talking about and snapped, "What? Are you dissatisfied?"

Han Wu raised his head and smiled. "As if."

He then kicked the guard with all his might. His World power erupted through the blow. The guard wore a bulletproof vest, but it was useless. He flew backward nearly fifty meters before crashing into a steel tree, where his life ended instantly.

Only then did the remaining guards finally realize what had happened. They raised their guns and aimed at Han Wu. Unfortunately for them, Han Wu had already given the command to Luxun even before they descended.

The moment he attacked, Luxun attacked as well. It activated Laser Blast, and hundreds of laser bullets fired simultaneously, striking the descending twelve guards.

Electricity coursed through their bodies, and the smell of burnt flesh filled the air. The other seven guards fell at the same time, taken down by the others.

With no one left to control them, the flying vessels dropped from the air. Han Wu acted swiftly and managed to seize three before they crashed. Kerry caught one, Bart caught

another, and the Black Rose Squad caught two. Unfortunately, Akanzor accidentally destroyed one when he tried to catch it with his greatsword.

The remaining flying vessels crashed onto the ground and exploded, sending up waves of fire and smoke. Thankfully, nothing flammable lay nearby, so the flames died out quickly.

Kerry asked Han Wu, "Why do you need so many flying vessels? We only needed four."

"I have my own reasons. Watch closely," Han Wu replied with a chuckle.

He then brought two of the flying vessels together. Under Kerry's watchful gaze, they merged into one. The appearance remained unchanged, but its material and functionality had increased. The rating also shot up from B to A.

Kerry was surprised and quickly asked him what he had done. After several days together, Han Wu trusted her enough to reveal what he had done. He told her that he could merge items together with similar properties, and the resulting object would emerge with enhanced parameters.

Kerry was stunned by how overpowered it was. The ability to merge two items with the same property and directly enhance an object's parameters was astonishing. If she possessed such a capability, she would become one of the most renowned mechanics in the Divine Civilization.

At the same time, Kerry recalled her lifelong goal of infusing Psychic Energy into her bullets and looked at Han Wu with excitement. She had failed numerous times because she couldn't find any high-purity Prismatic Titanium. With Han Wu's ability, acquiring it would be simple, and infusing Psychic Energy into her bullets would no longer be a dream.

When Han Wu finished merging all of the flying vessels, he had ended up with four S-rated vessels. Each one was several times faster than the originals, with improved safety and comfort. The new flying vessels would immensely improve their travel speed.

Akanzor and Bart found a lot of condensed energy bars from the guards. These bars were used to refuel automatons and, while not expensive, they were versatile.

Kerry used the Energy Parts to recharge the Black Rose Squad. After the prolonged fighting, the four automatons had dropped to just 20% energy. Once recharged, they would be able to sustain several more rounds of combat.

After disposing of the corpses, the group boarded their newly acquired flying vessels and departed the Steel Forest. Their next objectives were the Nanite Mythril and the remaining restricted zones. Han Wu also looked forward to obtaining more components from the Machine God's other parts.

They flew without pause until they finally reached a larger city situated near the second restricted zone, the Lightless Sewers. Compared to the settlement near the Steel Forest, this city felt far more vibrant. Hunters filled the streets, many of them carrying formidable firepower. Some even rode mechanical beasts or wore mechanical armor. The city thrummed with activity.

Kerry's first priority was to sell some of the Energy Parts. Otherwise, they wouldn't even have enough money to eat today.

They wandered through the streets and eventually found a suitable shop. Before they entered, raised voices spilled out from inside.

"Don't you dare try to restrict my freedom just because you are my father. I will accept the job installing those conveyor belts in the Lightless Sewers!"

"Get out of here! Don't even think about getting a single Enercoin from me. I don't have such an unfilial son."

"*Hmph!* Fine! If you don't give me the money, I will sell your shop. Do you think I'm that weak?"

Han Wu had just opened the doors when the shop owner's son approached him. "Dear customer, my name is Ji Zhongyi. I am the shop owner's son. I feel that fate has brought us together today. Would you like to purchase this shop and take it off my hands?"

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Chapter 599 - Give Me Everything on This Page

[1,204 words]

Chapter 599 - Give Me Everything on This Page

An old man hobbled out of the shop, brandishing a titanium feather duster. "I'm going to kill you, you ungrateful bastard!"

Han Wu observed him and noticed that the old man's legs weren't flesh and blood. Mechanical limbs had replaced them, and each step came with a creak and clatter.

Ji Zhongyi hid behind Han Wu and shouted, “Fine, beat me! If you don’t beat me to death today, I will make sure to pull the oxygen tube out of your mouth on your deathbed!”

The old man was so angry that the titanium feather duster started cracking in his grip. “I swear I will kill you today!”

The old man and Ji Zhongyi ran around Han Wu in circles until even Han Wu felt a bit disorientated. At last, exhaustion slowed Ji Zhongyi. The old man caught him, bound him securely, and tossed him into a back room.

After dealing with his son, the old man approached them and apologised, “Dear customers, I’m sorry for letting you witness that embarrassing bastard of a son. I’m the owner of this shop. My name is Ji Dezhu. How may I help you?”

Kerry laid out all the Energy Parts that they had been carrying. “We want to sell all of these.”

At the sight of so many Energy Parts, Ji Dezhu’s eyes lit up. Energy Parts were remarkable items, extremely durable and considered top-tier products sought after by most mechanics. He didn’t need to worry about not being able to sell them. The more Energy Parts the group was willing to part with, the more money Ji Dezhu would be able to earn.

“Dear customers, please wait for a moment while I appraise everything,” Ji Dezhu said, bowing politely. He even instructed a shop assistant to serve them tea and dried fruits.

Ji Dezhu also placed the shop’s product catalogue on their table. Kerry moved closer to assist him with appraising the Energy Parts, while Han Wu flipped through the catalogue out of boredom, idly snacking as he read.

The catalogue listed every item the shop owned. Notably, there was a certain mechanical mouse that the shop had in large supply.

Before he could even ask about it, the shop assistant explained eagerly, “This must be your first time in Mayfort. The mechanical mouse is essential for exploring the Lightless Sewers. The restricted zone is subterranean, and there’s no light at all. The sewers are like a maze.

“It’s easy to get lost down there. Having a mechanical mouse drastically reduces that risk. We are also having a promotion. Buy three and get one free. Buy five and get two free. Buy ten and get four free. You definitely won’t regret purchasing from us.”

The assistant kept talking at length, enthusiastically promoting the shop’s services.

Han Wu, however, remained stoic and gave no indication of his thoughts, no matter how hard the assistant tried.

Even though Han Wu was a beginner in mechanical engineering, he could tell how simple the mechanical mouse's components were. He only needed the materials, and Kerry could make tens of them. Why would he waste money on something like this? Enercoins didn't fall from the sky.

When the assistant realized that Han Wu had no intention of purchasing anything, his mood soured. He backed away and abandoned his pitch. On the other hand, Han Wu continued flipping through the catalogue to see what else they offered.

Other than mechanical devices, they also sold chips. Chips were integral for most automatons, since a powerful and compatible chip would change an automaton's directives.

Han Wu looked at his left arm, or rather, the Machine God's left arm. It was rated EX, and he had no idea what it meant. Was it higher or lower than an X rating? He wanted to find out, so he waved at the assistant as he read the catalogue.

The assistant smiled and hurried over. "Dear customer, is there anything you need?"

Han Wu chuckled at the speed of the attitude change. "I want some powerful chips. Do you have any recommendations?"

"You have an excellent eye. All of our chips come from a master, so their functionality is second to none. We have the Level 6 Lightning Fist chip, which converts energy into powerful Electric and Kinetic Energy. It's a popular chip to install in mechanical beasts.

"Then there's the Level 7 Railgun chip. It converts energy into powerful electricity and magnetic force. Its projectiles can punch through twenty-centimeter-thick steel plates with ease. However, you will need a cannon barrel with a twenty-centimeter diameter to use this chip.

"Then there's..." The assistant was only introducing the very expensive chips. None of them cost less than five digits.

Han Wu didn't want to deflate his enthusiasm, so he chose the Level 3 Piston Punch chip, which cost 3,000 Enercoins. "Give me this one."

The assistant felt crestfallen. After all that effort, Han Wu only wanted a chip worth 3,000 Enercoins. All that work had gone to waste. Nonetheless, he couldn't reveal his frustration and merely said in a cold tone, "Let me get it."

He soon retrieved the chip. Han Wu took it and waved him off to attend to other matters. The assistant frowned and pouted slightly. He didn't want to serve a customer as poor as Han Wu.

After chasing the assistant away, Han Wu touched the chip with his left arm. A mechanical voice whirred to life in his mind.

[Appraising chip...]

[Appraisal complete. Level 3 chip, Piston Punch, has a compatibility rating of 12% with the current chip sets. Not recommended to equip it. Do you want to replace the chip sets?]

An interface appeared in front of him, showing that the Level 10 Cable Form chip was still equipped. It was asking if he wanted to replace it with his Level 3 Piston Punch chip. Only an idiot would do that. He would never exchange a Level 10 chip for a Level 3. He declined the option, and the Level 3 chip reappeared in his left hand.

His interest in his left arm deepened. He wanted to know how powerful it could become if he gathered a full set of compatible chips. He waved to summon the assistant again.

The assistant hesitated. He still assumed that Han Wu was poor, but his employer stood nearby, and he didn't want to make it too obvious. He forced a smile and approached Han Wu. "Dear customer, is there anything you need?"

Han Wu showed him the catalogue and pointed to a page filled with chips. "Give me everything on this page."

The assistant was stunned. In all his years working there, he had never heard of such an absurd request. There were hundreds of chips listed on that page alone, with a total value easily reaching tens of millions.

In an instant, his assumption collapsed, and he thought that Han Wu wasn't a poor bastard but a hidden billionaire.

"What? Didn't you hear me? I want this page," Han Wu urged the assistant.

"Yes, sir. Please wait, sir. I will get them now!" The assistant dashed into the storeroom faster than an automaton with jet boots.

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[1,066 words]

Chapter 600 - Ji Dezhu's Request

The assistant returned with a tray filled with chips, panting. The tray held the chips listed on the page.

Han Wu checked each chip with his left arm.

[Appraisal complete. Level 6 chip, Lightning Fist. Compatibility rating with the current chip set: 18%. Not recommended for use.]

[Appraisal complete. Level 7 chip...]

He slowly appraised each chip and finally selected three from the hundreds available, choosing only those with a compatibility rating of 80% or higher to equip them. They were the Level 2 Electrocute, Level 4 Signal Jammer, and Level 6 Lightning Whip chips.

Han Wu lifted the three chips from the tray. The assistant looked at him eagerly. "Sir, do you not want these three chips?"

Han Wu looked at him. "No, I want these three. I don't want the rest."

The assistant was stunned and almost cursed out loud. He had brought out hundreds of chips, yet Han Wu only wanted three of them!

Does he take me for a fool? Fool me once, shame on you! The assistant walked away with the tray of chips.

Han Wu called after him, "Wait. You can take this Level 3 Piston Punch chip away too."

The assistant wanted to scold Han Wu, but he swallowed his anger. He was only a worker and had received special training to restrain himself from scolding customers, unless he truly reached his limit.

The assistant stepped forward two paces and muttered under his breath, "Idiot."

Han Wu smiled and considered paying the young man a visit later to discuss the importance of manners.

Meanwhile, Kerry and Ji Dezhu finished appraising the Energy Parts. The total sale reached 4.39 million Enercoins.

The entire room fell into stunned silence. Usually, a hunter team counted as top-tier if it could sell Energy Parts worth 100,000 or 200,000. Han Wu managed to earn 4.39 million, an amount equal to the combined results of forty hunter teams.

Ji Dezhu realized that they were different from the others and decided to treat them with greater courtesy. "Thank you. We will always welcome you to our shop."

After deducting the total from the cost of Han Wu's purchases, Kerry bought a large supply of compressed energy bars to restore her automatons' energy. They also purchased various other materials to prepare their venture down the Lightless Sewers.

Before leaving, Kerry asked Ji Dezhu for information about the Nanite Mythril. The old man flinched when she mentioned the rare material. He then shook his hands and said that he hadn't heard of it before.

Kerry and Han Wu noticed the slight shift in his emotions. It was clear that he knew about the Nanite Mythril but chose not to tell them due to certain circumstances. They had the same thought to come back and ask another time.

They were about to leave when the assistant shouted, "Boss! Young Master Zhongyi escaped!"

Ji Dezhu didn't get to send them off. He hastily rushed into the room. Even though his relationship with his son was strained, he was still his son.

Han Wu didn't want to get involved and left the shop. They wanted to find a decent hotel to rest before departing for the second restricted zone the following day.

Nothing unusual happened that night. The next morning, they woke up, packed the food they had prepared, and headed for the Lightless Sewers' entrance.

Although this was a restricted zone, many hunters had gathered there because it produced Energy Parts and chips. Ji Dezhu was also present there today. Only a night had passed, yet he appeared to have aged ten years. His white hair had turned even paler, and his back was noticeably more hunched.

Curious about what had happened, Kerry and Han Wu approached him.

Ji Dezhu handed out request orders to any hunters who got close to him. When he spotted Han Wu, he quickly pleaded with them as if they were his last hope. "Could you please save my son from the Lightless Sewers?"

Han Wu frowned. "Your son went into the Lightless Sewers?"

The restricted zones carried their reputation for good reason. Even if the Lightless Sewers ranked as the safest among the seven restricted zones, it was still dangerous. Even a seasoned hunter couldn't guarantee their own survival, much less an arrogant youngster.

“Zhongyi brought the Mechmouse King with him into the sewers. I only have one son. There’ll be no meaning to my life if I lose my only son down there,” Ji Dezhu said.

Han Wu glanced at Kerry after seeing Ji Dezhu’s grief. Kerry understood his intent at once. They planned to enter the Lightless Sewers, and if they rescued Zhongyi, Ji Dezhu would owe them a tremendous favor. That favor could easily take the form of information about the Nanite Mythrill.

Kerry spoke up. “We can try to rescue your son, but about the reward...”

Ji Dezhu said quickly, “Name your price. I won’t haggle.”

Kerry nodded. “How about information on the Nanite Mythrill?”

Ji Dezhu froze. Some truths carried risks that could threaten both his family and his life. Unfortunately, his son’s life was already at risk. What more did he have to lose?

Ji Dezhu ground his teeth and stomped loudly. “Fine. If you bring him back alive, I will tell you everything about the Nanite Mythrill.”

Han Wu nodded. “It’s a deal.”

They then paid the entrance fee and selected one of the sixty-four sewer entrances. The ceiling measured three meters high, which allowed even Kerry to walk upright without bending.

Before long, they reached a fork with three branching paths. Han Wu realized that he couldn’t discern anything in the darkness of each path.

“It’s just a maze. I’ve already prepared for this,” Kerry said.

She removed a large box from the storage compartment of one of her automatons and opened it to reveal a massive mechanical hive riddled with small openings. She took out another box from another compartment and retrieved several metal cubes along with compressed energy bars. She placed one cube and one compressed energy bar into a dedicated slot beneath the hive and activated it.

Mechanical buzzing filled the air as several finger-sized mechanical bees flew from the hive and split off toward the different paths.

The screen on the hive showed their flight routes. Han Wu was ecstatic because they far surpassed the mechanical mice.

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