The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

: Chapter 641

Chapter 641 - Ultimate Terror

Han Wu's words assured the Origin of Mutation, but it was still curious how he would save them.

The answer soon became apparent. Raising his arm, Han Wu's Microcosm appeared in his hand. With some willpower, he materialized his Microcosm and used it to block the descending blade.

When Warmaster saw this, he muttered, "It's useless. Final Judgement is strong enough to cleave a Microcosm apart. You'll both die here."

As he said that, he heard cracking sounds echoing from Final Judgement. He looked up just in time to see cracks webbing across the blade before it shattered apart.

"What's happening? Why did Final Judgement shatter?" Warmaster was baffled. After carefully examining Han Wu's Microcosm, he was astonished to find that it had suffered no damage.

Warmaster instinctively thought of Stasis, an effect that could fortify the durability of one's Microcosm. "No, how can this be? He's only just become a World life form. How could his Microcosm have the effect of Stasis?"

Han Wu smiled at his Microcosm's successful defense against Final Judgement. Then, he abruptly noticed blood dripping from his nose and down his lips. Although his Microcosm could withstand the blow from Final Judgement while under the effects of Stasis, his physical body could not endure the shockwave.

The blow had left him injured, but he couldn't bring himself to regret it. The most important thing was that he had stopped Final Judgement and saved the Origin of Mutation.

Tears welled up in the Origin of Mutation's eyes. Han Wu had saved it yet again. It had no idea how to express how touched and grateful it was in words, so it chose to keep those warm feelings close to its heart.

The viewers were already numb to Han Wu's ridiculous achievements, so they couldn't even muster up surprise when he stopped Final Judgement with his Microcosm. In fact, they would be more shocked if he couldn't. They reckoned that Han Wu was born with the Divine Power to create miracles.

The two emcees were stunned speechless. Yu Meng was simultaneously excited, in awe, and incredulous. Qiu Yun, on the other hand, was in despair and denial.

Han Wu had successfully blocked Final Judgement. The Divine Civilization's team had foiled every single plan of the Divine River Civilization's team. The winner was clear.

Warmaster fell to his knees. "We lost!"

Their crystal had yet to be shattered, but it was obvious that it was inevitable at this point. Before the match began, each member of their team had been recognized as a talented individual at the top of the Divine River Civilization's hierarchy. Despite this, they had lost.

Torrent had sacrificed most of his power and was a step away from death. Oracle had lost his sight. Warmaster had used up his Obsidrum equipment to unleash Obsidrum Judgement, and it would take a while for him to recover them.

Selene had expended most of her energy summoning the 1,000 cloned Super Genesoldiers. She had also channeled a lot of energy to Torrent and had since been rendered unconscious. All of the Super Genesoldiers that she had summoned had their energy sapped and could only sit on the ground to slowly recover. The only one left who could fight was Carnage.

Meanwhile, the Divine Civilization's team was largely in good health, except for the injured Han Wu, and quickly rushed over with twenty World Death Aura Bugs.

Warmaster had never expected the match to end with such an overwhelming disadvantage.

"Carnage, we lost," Warmaster said defeatedly. "Let's just break our crystal."

However, Carnage didn't heed his order and instead stepped out to face his foes. "I am Carnage, and I'd rather die standing than live kneeling at others' heels. I will never surrender!"

Carnage confronted Jia Gui first. Though weak, Jia Gui had equipped himself with so much defensive equipment that his defense was staggeringly high. This was the only thing giving him the courage to face Carnage.

Three seconds later, Jia Gui was blown back several hundred meters. Jia Gui's unfounded confidence left the Origin of Mutation and the others speechless. Did he not know his own strength? There was a clear line between delusion and ambition.

Jia Gui had a lot of HP and defense, but his combat experience was nothing compared to Carnage. Even if Carnage were exhausted, he could likely kill Jia Gui. The gap between them was just that large.

The other three weren't as weak. The Origin of Mutation charged, but even with its somewhat capable techniques, it could barely keep up with Carnage. Strangely, the latter ended up suffering from mysterious wounds during the fight.

The Origin of Mutation had equipped its new dragon scale armor, which could block 50% of the enemy's damage and reflect 25% back. With Xu Hai and Commerce's assistance, the trio successfully defended against Carnage, even gaining the upper hand once more.

Seizing his chance, the Origin of Mutation pounced. It punched a hole through Carnage's chest, dug his heart out, and ate it. The bloody sight caused Jia Gui to vomit.

The Origin of Mutation felt a thrill it had never experienced before. The adrenaline from killing its sworn enemy had ignited its fighting spirit. With the twenty World Death Aura Bugs occupying the exhausted cloned Super Genesoldiers, the four from the Divine Civilization's team entered the plaza of the opposition side.

Warmaster had since dragged Torrent, Selene, and Oracle into the fountain while he himself stood in front of the crystal. When he saw the four of them, he immediately knew that Carnage had been killed.

"We lost," Warmaster said earnestly before smashing his weapon against the crystal. A teleporting force appeared in the fountain, capable of transporting those within out of the field, though it would take some time.

"Don't you dare run away!" The Origin of Mutation tried to stop the three from teleporting away, but Warmaster intercepted it.

"You'll have to step over my dead body to reach my friends," Warmaster said firmly, preparing for a vicious battle. Though exhausted and well aware he couldn't defeat the four of them, he still chose to stand tall. He wouldn't be reduced to a coward begging to live.

"So be it!" The Origin of Mutation went mad with bloodlust.

It ate the dragon's heart it had been holding onto, just so it could defeat Warmaster as quickly as possible. Activating Gene Lock, it then turned into a Great Dragon. Its health and energy multiplied to reflect the power of Great Dragons.

Despite pushing himself to his limits, Warmaster only managed to buy a little time. Fortunately, this was enough for the teleport array to activate, and Torrent, Selene, and Oracle were transported away without incident.

Warmaster relaxed once he saw his friends leave safely. That was when the Origin of Mutation pierced his chest.

"It doesn't matter if they escape. I'll go and hunt them down in the Divine River Civilization myself. I am the Origin of Mutation, the ultimate terror of your creation." The Origin of Mutation gouged out Warmaster's heart and ate it before his eyes.

Fresh blood stuck to the Origin of Mutation's mouth, giving it a sinister appearance.

Outside of the match, the Divine River Civilization representative was watching these events in horror. The Origin of Mutation's final words echoed endlessly in his mind as he muttered on repeat, "We created the ultimate terror."

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 642

Chapter 642 - Deathwing

After killing Warmaster, the Origin of Mutation turned its attention to the cloned Super Genesoldiers and murdered them. Its brutality caused the other three to shudder.

"Has it always been this violent?" Jia Gui whispered.

Commerce rolled his eyes. "Isn't that obvious?"

"I believe it's venting years' worth of frustration on them," Xu Hai muttered.

"I can understand the need to vent," Jia Gui said, "but what kind of pervert does it while eating the hearts of others?"

As if hearing his comment, the blood-soaked Origin of Mutation stopped its onslaught to stare at Jia Gui. Its dangerous aura had Jia Gui on the verge of crapping himself.

Hastily applauding, he praised, “Good job on murdering them! You’re the best at murder!”

When Commerce saw this, he couldn’t help but doubt his choice in friends. He had never expected to befriend a coward like him.

With the crystal shattered, the Divine Civilization’s team was declared the final victor.

As the viewers were about to log off, Yu Meng suddenly exclaimed in surprise. “Everyone, look! Deathwing is still alive!”

The viewers quickly turned their attention to the screen once more. Sure enough, Deathwing’s bisected body was stitching itself back together in the dragon’s nest. Its death aura acted like threads, connecting the two parts.

Deathwing successfully revived itself. “Those damned Genesoldiers! They almost cleaved me—the ever-powerful king of the Deathlords, Deathwing—to death! Face my wrath!”

Clambering from the dragon nest, it soared high into the sky, exuding an imposing pressure onto the field below. The Origin of Mutation and the others could detect its terrifying presence even from afar.

Deathwing used its senses to confirm the group’s strength, checking that there wasn’t anyone stronger than it among them.

It immediately recognized the Origin of Mutation as the cause of its earlier death, but catching the scent of Karl on it, Deathwing hesitated. “You filthy ant, why do you have the scent of my God, Karl?”

“I am the envoy who connected this field to the Nether Realm,” the Origin of Mutation explained simply.

Deathwing nodded, then went on to examine the other three alongside the twenty World Death Aura Bugs hovering in the air. The death aura emanating from the twenty Death Aura Bugs was tantalizing.

“They don’t have the scent of my God, Karl, on them, so I can kill them,” Deathwing reasoned to itself, opening its maw to swallow a Death Aura Bug.

Despite being a World life form, the Death Aura Bug could do nothing against Deathwing’s overwhelming strength. The bug was merely a tasty meal to it.

Savoring the death aura in the bug’s flesh, Deathwing let out a satisfied rumble. “It tastes like chicken!”

The Origin of Mutation and the others could hardly hold back their indignation. The bugs were technically Han Wu's assets, but none of them could afford to offend a being of Deathwing's caliber.

Aware that the scent of Karl on it acted as a deterrent, the Origin of Mutation boldly stepped forward to stop Deathwing. "These Death Aura Bugs are my soldiers. Do not harm them."

"If not for the scent of my God, Karl, you wouldn't even be able to protect yourself from me," Deathwing mocked. "Leave, and do not interfere with the mealtime of the fearsome king of the Deathlords, Deathwing!"

Deathwing then ate another Death Aura Bug. Unable to endure the impudence any longer, the Origin of Mutation attacked. It turned into a Great Dragon and swiped its claws at Deathwing. Unfortunately, Deathwing was also a Great Dragon, and a powerful one at that. The Origin of Mutation couldn't even scratch its scales, much less deal any damage.

Insulted at the offence, Deathwing sneered, "Who do you take me for? I am the king of the Deathlords, the mighty Deathwing. You tiny ant, you shall pay for your stupidity!"

Deathwing gathered energy in its maw and unleashed its breath attack. The Origin of Mutation was the strongest among them due to Gene Lock, and it had durable scales to defend itself while in its temporary Great Dragon form. Moreover, it was equipped with sturdy dragon armor, which could negate 50% of the damage taken.

Even so, the sheer destructive force of Deathwing's breath attack eroded persistently at the Origin of Mutation's flesh. The Origin of Mutation activated its genes to continuously recover while also activating the dragon armor to reflect as much damage as possible.

This reflected damage was accumulated into an orb before being shot back at lightning speed, easily piercing through Deathwing's head.

The cocky Deathwing crashed heavily to the ground. Its massive body cracked the stone foundation of the plaza, hollowing an enormous crater in the ground.

Xu Hai and the others were in awe at the Origin of Mutation's swift accuracy. If they had been Deathwing's targets, they would've undoubtedly perished, much less killed it with a single reflected blow.

The Origin of Mutation was about to butcher Deathwing for parts when the hole on its head stitched itself back together. Deathwing stood up on shaky legs. It had revived itself like the Deathsworn.

"You dare kill the mighty king of the Deathlords, Deathwing? You puny ant, don't blame me for disregarding the honor of my God, Karl, when you attacked first!" Deathwing roared, opening its jaw wide to swallow the Origin of Mutation whole.

Commerce was quicker, draining the assets he had accumulated after the defeat of the Divine River Civilization's team and channeling them into a powerful blow. His punch left a gaping hole in Deathwing's abdomen.

Deathwing died once more. Commerce combed his white hair back and boasted, "This is just a matter of slaying a Great Dragon. Anybody can do that."

His bragging was cut short when he saw Deathwing's abdomen slowly healing itself. Deathwing was going to revive yet again.

"What are you waiting for? Run!" Jia Gui cried in alarm, fleeing ahead of the group. None of the others could match his speed, and Deathwing revived before they put any meaningful distance between them.

Deathwing glared at Commerce. "You braggart. Come and die!"

Commerce's white hair flopped down as if deflating. Without his assets, he was weaker than Jia Gui.

The Origin of Mutation was also out of ideas. As long as they remained in the match arena, they couldn't use their Divine Rings or Microcosms. Gene Lock was still active, but Deathwing was a Great Dragon of purer blood, meaning the Origin of Mutation couldn't intimidate or wound it. It had also already used its dragon armor to reflect the previous attack, and the ability was still on cooldown.

Xu Hai released Fireballs that he had refined as much as possible, but they did nothing to Deathwing. Deathwing's elemental resistance was simply too high. Without his Divine Ring, Xu Hai couldn't evolve the Fireballs enough to pierce through its defences.

"Who among you will die first?" Deathwing asked with sadistic glee. The remaining three were in despair. They had won the match against the Divine River Civilization, only to become Deathwing's meal. There was no way they could win this fight. It was as if their only option was to die.

At that moment, a voice rang out from behind them. "I'd like to see you try."

It was Han Wu. Jia Gui had carried him over.

"You!" Deathwing gaped at Han Wu with shock and confusion. "Why do you have the presence of the Defier? Who are you?!"

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 643 - Proclamation of Death

Defier was the gift that Alpheus had bestowed upon Han Wu. Among the Great Dragons, it was the highest symbol of honor. Among their kind, strength and prestige were inseparable. Otherwise, they would be deemed snacks.

To Deathwing, Han Wu was nothing more than a morsel. He was only a World life form, yet he carried the title of Defier. To the Great Dragons, that alone was an affront.

Deathwing's gaze burned with greed. "I don't care who you are or how you obtained that title. You stand before the powerful king of the Deathlords, Deathwing. Become my meal. Don't resist, and I will grant you a painless death."

Deathwing intended to devour Han Wu, claim the title of Defier, and become the Great Dragon with the highest prestige.

Han Wu chuckled at its threat. "What if I don't?"

"Ants like you have no right to negotiate with me. You are weak, and you will become my food!" Deathwing stated.

Han Wu almost laughed. He stepped forward and activated Demon King Transformation. Now that his powers had fully unlocked, his transformation had returned to normal. He reached a height of 10,000 meters and exuded a crushing aura that clashed with Deathwing's Dragon Fear.

Still, Deathwing didn't believe that it would lose to Han Wu. It opened its jaws and prepared to unleash its breath.

Han Wu activated his Black Dragon King Transformation and released his Great Dragon Ring. The combined force amplified his Dragon Fear until it tore through the surrounding space like a typhoon. Below them, the Origin of Mutation and the others almost lost their footing.

Deathwing finally felt the bloodline suppression. Even though both were Great Dragons, Deathwing was only the Deathlords' king. However, Han Wu was the Black Dragon King, sovereign of black dragons. In bloodline hierarchy, Deathwing stood beneath him. Moreover, Han Wu bore the Great Dragons' title of Defier. By that authority, Deathwing had no choice but to bow to him.

Under the weight of Han Wu's Dragon Fear, Deathwing started to tremble. The superior bloodline's suppression made it hard for it to control its own body.

Han Wu looked down and rested his sharp claws gently on Deathwing's head. "Am I the food that you spoke of? It seems that you've been rather disrespectful."

Deathwing tried to explain. “I didn’t. I just—”

Han Wu didn’t give it a chance to finish and crushed its head. Deathwing’s death scattered the death aura enveloping it, so Han Wu seized the moment and absorbed some of it. Naturally, his Death Aspect rose at once.

Moments later, Deathwing revived. Although Han Wu had killed it once, it didn’t bow this time. Instead, it fought back. “I worship Karl of Pluto. My God granted me an undying physique. You cannot kill me.”

“Is that so?” Han Wu killed it again and absorbed more death aura.

Soon, Deathwing revived again and shouted. “I cannot die!”

Han Wu continued the cycle, killing it each time it revived. After many repetitions, Deathwing suddenly realized that something had changed with its frame. The death aura it once contained was steadily dissipating. When the last trace vanished, it would no longer be able to revive itself!

“You?” Deathwing blurted. “You have been plundering my death aura?”

“Correct, but there’s no reward for guessing right.” Han Wu chuckled and killed it again.

Deathwing revived once more, but its hostility had vanished. It lowered its head and pleaded, “I was wrong. Glorious Defier, please forgive me...”

“You should seek Karl’s forgiveness. My task is to send you to him!” Han Wu ended its life numerous times.

The spectacle dragged on so long that the Origin of Mutation and the others grew bored. When Han Wu absorbed the final trace of death aura, Deathwing failed to revive, and Han Wu returned to his normal form. He had reached Level 99, the highest level possible, and had unlocked most of his Skills. Just standing there was enough to intimidate the others.

The moment he resumed his human form, Han Wu used Stellar Plunder on Deathwing’s corpse. With the Machine God’s aid, he completed every step in one second. A strange energy flowed from his hands and penetrated Deathwing’s corpse.

When the energy returned, it brought back dozens of Microcosms shrouded in deathly silence. One was noticeably larger than the rest. Han Wu’s gut told him that it was Deathwing’s original Microcosm.

He drew the Microcosms into his consciousness and had an epiphany. At the same time, his Death Aspect grew more powerful, while his World Ring suddenly manifested without command.

Under everyone's watchful gaze, his Divine Ring turned into the Death Ring composed of pure death aura. Under its effects, Han Wu had a brand new understanding of his Death Aspect and gained a brand new Skill unique to it: Proclamation of Death. In the simplest terms, he could kill someone with a word. One utterance was enough.

Back when Death had intervened to stop the Thirteen Guards from attacking Imperial College, he had used this Skill to slay two World rank guards with ease.

Now Han Wu possessed the same Skill. However, at his current energy level, he could use it once to kill one World life form, or he could command several weaker foes to die.

Proclamation of Death reminded him of the Skull Guillotine that he had made while still learning the Death Aspect's intricacies. The Skull Guillotine selected random enemies, and its success rate had never been high. By contrast, Proclamation of Death carried a 100% chance of success. It could be called Skull Guillotine's upgrade, and he was looking forward to enhancing it further.

Once Han Wu declared that he no longer needed the corpse, the Origin of Mutation began dismantling it. A Great Dragon's corpse was a trove of treasures. Even its flesh and blood could nurture units and increase their potential.

While dissecting it, the Origin of Mutation found a mysterious black orb embedded within the corpse. It didn't recognize the object. Xu Hai and Commerce examined it. Despite their vast knowledge and experience, neither could identify it.

Han Wu took the orb. The moment his fingers brushed its surface, his consciousness pierced through numerous dimensions. In the next moment, he stood above an endless expanse of black sea.

A figure cloaked in black robes faced him across the dark waters. "Interesting. To think someone from the Divine Civilization could kill Deathwing. Since you've done so, you will take its place."

A black mark suddenly seared itself into his flesh, and he jolted awake. He quickly checked the spot where the mark had appeared in the strange vision. As expected, a black mark like a planet had appeared there.

The Origin of Mutation stared at it in disbelief. "Vessel, you've caught Karl's attention!"

Chapter 644 - Goal: Conquer the Divine River Civilization

Comments exploded across the livestream at blazing speed.

“Is this the true strength of the second-year valedictorian from Imperial College?”

“Alright, those from Imperial College, please don’t comment on anything. I was expelled from that place, so let me tell you the truth. Han Wu can only be the second-year valedictorian. Once he enters the third or the fourth year, he won’t even rank in the top ten.”

“He’s right. I am also a student from Imperial College. At this stage, we’re too embarrassed to greet anyone if we aren’t even World life forms. In fact, you might not even receive clearance to graduate if you are not a Major God by the end of the fourth year.”

“Is that true? That’s shocking if it is.”

“Hey, wait a minute. Demonic Imperial College, aren’t you guys at least half a globe away from Imperial College? How much Divine Essence did they pay you to advertise for them? I’ll pay double!”

Overall, Han Wu had become famous within the livestream.

Back in the field, Han Wu checked the black mark resembling a planet and frowned. After witnessing Karl’s Nether Realm, Han Wu doubted Karl was going to be some kind of philanthropist.

He resolved to investigate Karl once he returned to Imperial College. He was hoping that Xu Hai could get some information from the higher-ups. If that didn’t work, he would seek out the God King of Death and see what they could do about it.

He and the others gathered their belongings along with the World Death Aura Bugs and prepared to exit the field.

At that moment, the Will of the Divine River Civilization, which permeated the field, informed him that the Death Aura Bugs were virtual life forms animated by the energy of the Divine River Civilization. Thus, he couldn’t bring them back with him.

Han Wu’s expression darkened. He didn’t believe a single word. If they could bring back every piece of equipment that they had obtained from the match, why were the Death Aura Bugs suddenly off-limits?

He had a feeling that the Will of the Divine River Civilization was manipulating the rules to keep the Death Aura Bugs for itself.

In reality, that was actually the case. The Death Aura Bugs could defeat the Deathsworns with ease, and the Will of the Divine River Civilization had noticed that. It had decided to

twist the rules to secure them. With them under its control, it could finally eliminate the Deathsworns that had plagued its side for a long time. For now, it had to wait for Han Wu and the others to leave.

Unfortunately for the Will of the Divine River Civilization, Han Wu was its enemy now. He refused to accept the decision. Since he couldn't bring them with him, he would sacrifice them instead.

Once he set his mind on it, Han Wu equipped Sacrifice in one of the empty Ability Slots that he had accumulated after reaching Level 99 and activated it.

Sacrifice's massive array appeared on the field, and he sacrificed all of the Death Aura Bugs, locusts, and mutated locusts. He left not a single one behind for the Divine River Civilization.

Once the array drained the Life Energy of the so-called virtual life forms, the familiar options appeared before Han Wu once more.

[Option 1: 10,000x Fourth-Series Gene Catalyst: Stubborn Locust]

[Option 2: 10x Second-Series Gene Catalyst: Berserk Heart]

[Option 3: 1x First-Series Gene Catalyst: Annihilating Lightning]

A broad smile spread across Han Wu's face. He hadn't expected that Sacrifice, when used within the field governed by the Divine River Civilization, would yield him the Gene Catalysts unique to that civilization.

He reviewed each option carefully.

Stubborn Locust would modify the consumer's genes and grant two effects. First, it would transform them into a Locustman. Second, it would grant them exceptionally strong Life Energy. The Gene Catalyst's effects were mediocre, but the sheer quantity made the option tempting.

Berserk Heart was several times stronger. Those who consumed it would ultimately unlock four effects: immunity to pain, enhanced strength, increased speed, and reinforced cardiac function. Each effect was modest on its own, but together they granted the wielder the power of a berserker. Unfortunately, there were only ten doses. At most, Han Wu could produce ten Super Genesoldiers.

He then checked Annihilating Lightning, which granted five lightning-based effects: increased lightning power, further amplification, overload capability, higher voltage output, and significantly greater destructive discharge. For someone who specialized in lightning, it was exceptional.

Han Wu immediately thought of Qin Shuang. He hadn't seen her in a long time and missed her already. Without hesitation, he chose the third option and resolved to give it to her when they met again.

Soon after, everyone left the field. The Will of the Divine River Civilization returned to clear the field, eager to harvest Death Aura Bugs. Yet when it scanned the field, it realized that there was nothing there. This turned into a mystery that would haunt the rest of its existence.

On the other side, Han Wu's return set the entire Imperial College ablaze with excitement. Everyone knew Han Wu was powerful, but they had never imagined he possessed such overwhelming strength. In the end, Han Wu used his own strength to defeat Deathwing. That feat would adorn the halls of Imperial College.

Yet the first to greet him weren't the college's higher-ups, but the Divine River Civilization's experts. They quickly intercepted Han Wu and blocked the representatives from Imperial College.

Han Wu frowned. The Origin of Mutation and the others tensed, ready for battle.

"What's wrong? Are the Super Genesoldiers from the Divine River Civilization here to fight outside the ring?" Han Wu asked.

The leader quickly raised a hand to show peaceful intent. "We are here to extend a formal invitation. Join the Divine River Civilization. We are willing to accept any condition that you name."

Han Wu replied, "I will go to the Divine River Civilization."

Relief flickered across their faces. They had expected Han Wu to demand an exorbitant price before agreeing.

"I will go there to conquer the Divine River Civilization!" Han Wu declared chillingly.

Their expressions darkened. The Divine River Civilization ranked among the stronger named civilizations. They stood on equal footing with the Divine Civilization and surpassed it in some aspects. Who gave Han Wu the audacity to utter such arrogant words?

The representatives of the Divine Civilization and the higher-ups of Imperial College hurried forward to protect Han Wu.

"Han Wu is exhausted and needs to return to rest. Goodbye," a representative said as he stepped between them. "And the Divine River Civilization still owes us an explanation for this match!"

Without sparing the Divine River Civilization's experts a glance, they quickly escorted Han Wu away.

The experts watched him go, torn between regret and unease. They recognized his potential, and the Origin of Mutation accompanied him. There was a chance that Han Wu would actually come and conquer them.

"Let's head back to report to the Divine River Civilization," the leader said at last.

The experts had no alternative. Any attempt to abduct Han Wu now would amount to suicide. Their only option was to relay every detail to the higher-ups and await further instructions.

Before departing, they left two Gene Catalysts behind. The first fulfilled the compensation that they had promised in the event of their defeat: the first-series Void Hunter.

The second came from their own reserves, offered as additional compensation to Han Wu. It was also a first-series Gene Catalyst, known as Omniversal.

: Chapter 645

Chapter 645 - Omniversal

Under the protection of the Imperial College, Han Wu returned to his divine realm and slept for ten days straight to recover from his exhaustion.

As if somehow knowing how long he would rest for, Xu Hai contacted him on the day he awoke about the two Gene Catalysts from the Divine River Civilization. They were to be given to Han Wu as compensation.

These were the First Series Gene Catalysts: Void Hunter and Omniversal. Han Wu had checked the four effects of Void Hunter before, so he knew what to expect, but he had never heard of Omniversal.

Upon skimming through its effects, Han Wu was left stunned.

Omniversal was a peculiar Gene Catalyst that had only one effect with the same name. This effect was useless on its own, but could enhance another skill or ability by ten times when used concurrently! After consuming it, the user's body parameters would also increase manifold when ascending a rank.

Han Wu was a World life form. He could only imagine his growth potential with Omniversal. With it, he could even reach the point of crushing a Microcosm with his bare hands!

Naturally, he decided to save Omniversal for himself. Besides the Gene Catalysts, he had also obtained many treasures like the Slaughter Knife and Dragonfang Breaker. Once out of the field, the quality of the two pieces of equipment had diminished, affecting their effects.

The Slaughter Knife no longer gave a permanent strength boost after killing a life form. Instead, it gave a buff that would fade over time. Sustaining that buff required constant slaughter.

Meanwhile, Dragonfang Breaker retained its effect to ignore defenses, but could only deal physical damage.

Though their effects had diminished, they were still exceptional weapons. Thus, Han Wu decided to give them to Akanzor and Bart, the two units who had followed him to the Lawless Civilization. The two happily accepted the gift from their God.

Other than that, Han Wu also received a cut of Deathwing's body parts, which he immediately passed off to Hammie. Despite ascending into an Earthsunder life form, Hammie was inexperienced in combat. His forging skills, however, were unmatched.

Han Wu wanted to prepare a ceremony to officially decree Hammie's integration as a core follower in his divine realm.

Materials aside, his next largest gains were the plundered Microcosms. He had obtained forty-two over the course of the match, bringing him up to a total of forty-four. However, out of the looted Microcosms, only Deathwing's original Microcosm was of significant size. The others were tiny and exuded a death aura of low purity.

These useless Microcosms wouldn't help him much. Even 1000 of them would do nothing for him.

A newly formed Microcosm was weaker by default. While the Microcosms could grow if his units inhabited them, they would also stop if they left or died. Han Wu couldn't imprison his units on these Microcosms just for the sake of growing them.

Suddenly, he had the brilliant idea to merge the Microcosms.

Sitting down, he calmed his breath and focused on the two smallest Microcosms filled with death aura. The two Microcosms shuddered but didn't fuse.

Han Wu figured this was probably because his Merge power wasn't strong enough. Even an Exclusive Divine Power had its limits. That was when he had another idea: Omniversal could enhance his other skills and abilities tenfold.

Decisively drinking the Gene Catalyst, his genes went through a series of changes as his body assimilated it.

Aside from being a Major God, he had also become a Rank 1 Super Genesoldier. After successfully obtaining Omniversal, he activated it in tandem with Merge. With Merge enhanced tenfold, the two Microcosms actually started to fuse together.

Fifteen minutes later, the two Microcosms had combined to form a brand new Microcosm. It was slightly larger and had a purer death aura, though still comparatively smaller than Deathwing's original Microcosm.

Han Wu decided to merge more Microcosms. After three sleepless days and nights, he finally merged most of the Microcosms within him, leaving him with three. These were his original Microcosm, the Mechanical Microcosm, and the Dead Microcosm.

Although he had fewer Microcosms overall, these three provided him with far purer and more abundant energy than the numerous small Microcosms he had before. As he was about to test his new strength out, the Origin of Mutation visited him.

"Vessel, I managed to produce two powerful Gene Catalysts as well as other weaker ones."

During the match, the Origin of Mutation had killed Warmaster and Carnage before eating their hearts, hoping to bring their complete genetic information out of the field. Fortunately, it had succeeded, so once it returned, it immediately went into research mode and soon created some Gene Catalysts.

The Warmaster Gene Catalyst had four effects. The first granted the user the ability to turn their own energy into Obsidrum armor and weapons. Obsidrum was excellent for suppressing Gods and was also widely called a God-killing metal. Besides that, it also improved its users' reflexes, enhanced their physical strength, and gave them the ability to use Obsidrum Judgment.

The Carnage Gene Catalyst also had four effects: granting the user permanent strength from killing another life form, giving the ability to temporarily improve the user's damage, increasing their exuded pressure with the aid of corpses, and enhancing their physical strength.

In addition, the Origin of Mutation had also reproduced hundreds of vials of Gene Catalysts it had extracted from the cloned Super Genesoldiers for Han Wu to use on his units.

There was an abundance of Gene Catalysts, and Han Wu had the delightful dilemma of assigning them.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 646

Chapter 646 - Bad News

A sudden call from Sun Qingnian interrupted him. Realizing that their group had likely just returned from the Heaven Stair Civilization, Han Wu happily picked up the call.

“Han Wu,” Sun Qingnian greeted lowly, without his usual enthusiasm.

Han Wu chuckled. “What’s wrong, Qingnian? Did your new girlfriend dump you?”

Normally, Sun Qingnian would’ve returned his banter, so his eerie quietness immediately tipped Han Wu off that something was wrong. “What happened? Tell me quickly.”

“Qin Shuang and Jing Jing are gone.”

Han Wu’s ears rang. It felt as though his head had been hammered in, leaving him disoriented. “Wait, what are you talking about? Where are you? Where are they? Tell me!”

“At the college plaza.”

Han Wu hastily left his divine realm and hurried over. Numerous coffins were lined up along the plaza, surrounded by crying parents. Scanning the area, he soon spotted Sun Qingnian standing before two coffins with a crestfallen expression. The man no longer looked like his charming self.

Han Wu’s heart clenched, but he forced himself to approach.

Two figures lay in the two coffins in front of Sun Qingnian. It was Qin Shuang and Jing Jing. The ringing in Han Wu’s ears intensified as he fell to his knees. His World rank did little to help him compose himself in the face of tragedy.

Sun Qingnian rushed to help Han Wu up, tears rolling down the former’s cheeks despite his attempts to maintain his composure. “A World life form on the forty-eighth floor attacked us. Their souls were dragged out of their bodies, along with most of the other students lying here.”

Han Wu gingerly touched Qin Shuang's face with his trembling hands. Her skin was still smooth and soft to the touch, as if she were merely sleeping.

However, he could no longer sense her soul. Jing Jing was the same—a soulless sleeping beauty in a coffin.

"Their souls were dragged away? Then why don't they go get them back?! Where are the God Kings? What are they doing?!"

Sun Qingnian feared Han Wu would offend the God Kings and quickly stopped him from speaking further. "Wait, don't get hasty. I know how sad you are, but the God Kings already caught that World life form. However, that person killed themselves during the interrogation and ferried their own soul away using the same method that snatched the souls of Qin Shuang and Jing Jing. None of the God Kings could stop it."

"FUCK!" Han Wu punched the floor, leaving a dent in the reinforced tile.

Qin Shuang's family showed up not long after. Her parents' eyes were red from crying, and their sobs only grew more grievous when they saw their child lying in the coffin.

"My poor daughter!" Qin Shuang's mother wailed, unable to contain her grief as she carefully perched on the edge of Qin Shuang's coffin.

Qin Shuang's father was more stoic, but the tears in his eyes betrayed his anguish.

Unsure how to console them, Han Wu stood to the side. He couldn't accept it either. They had been perfectly healthy and alive before this, but an unexpected attack had suddenly snatched them away. It was a bitter pill to swallow.

Qin Shuang's parents ended up taking her coffin with them. Before they left, Qin Hai came up to Han Wu and silently patted his shoulder. While Qin Hai knew casualties were inevitable in war, it was much harder to accept when that casualty was his daughter.

Han Wu saw them off, using the last of his strength to shout to their departing figures, "I swear I'll bring her back. I will!"

The couple said nothing. Han Wu was undeniably strong, but he was vowing to achieve something that was beyond even the God Kings.

As the day went by, the other parents gradually left with the coffins of their children as well.

Soon, only Jing Jing was left. She didn't have a family—or rather, Han Wu was her family.

Han Wu stood over her coffin for a long time before finally placing it into his divine realm and wiping his tears away. It was time to find the God King responsible for this case.

After inquiring with Xu Hai, he soon received an answer. The God King responsible for the case was the Harvest God King, Qiu Shao. With Xu Hai's and Commerce's aid, Han Wu managed to secure a meeting with Qiu Shao.

The two met at the station on the fifty-first floor of the Heaven Stair Civilization. Although Qiu Shao looked like a God King, the mediocrity of Divine Jurisdiction, Harvest, meant his true strength was actually average at best. He was only a regular World life form.

While Qiu Shao had known he was meeting an outstanding college student, he had not expected said student's presence to be actually stronger than his. When he discovered this, he couldn't help but start doubting his entire life.

Han Wu cut to the chase and asked about the World life form that had snatched the students' souls, especially Qin Shuang's and Jing Jing's. Qiu Shao carefully explained everything under Han Wu's intimidating pressure.

After investigating, Qiu Shao had confirmed that the World life form was a follower of a powerful evil God from another civilization. The method he used to snatch souls was called Reaper Seal.

This technique allowed him to steal the souls of others and seal them in the evil God's body, effectively turning them into a potent energy source for the evil God. Those with weak souls were more susceptible to it.

Han Wu was surprised. Qin Shuang cultivated lightning, so it was understandable that her soul was on the weaker side. But Jing Jing was a skeleton. The strength of her soul was only second to her Osteomancy! So how had Jing Jing fallen for it too? Although not a true World life form yet, her soul couldn't have been sealed so easily.

Han Wu pressed for more information, but that was all Qiu Shao had.

As he was preparing to return, Qiu Shao suddenly said, "By the way, I'm technically the Harvest God King. I have an abundance of food, so if you need meals urgently for your units, you can always contact me. I assure you that the price and quality will be just."

"I will." Han Wu nodded, knowing very well he would never need to.

While his Life Aspect wasn't as efficient as Qiu Shao's skills, it could still accelerate the growth and maturation of plants and fruits, making him more than capable of ensuring all of his units were well-fed.

Once back in his divine realm, he approached Jing Jing's coffin and placed his palm onto her forehead to carefully inspect her soul.

A connection formed between him and a tiny sliver of soul. "God, is that you?"

Jing Jing’s consciousness was speaking to him!

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 647

Chapter 647 - Hope and Despair

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Han Wu was elated and quickly answered, “Yes, it’s me. I’m here!”

Jing Jing spoke quickly. “Qin Shuang was attacked. I followed her to protect her soul. We are currently stuck in the evil God’s body.”

“Where are you? Which civilization? What region?” Han Wu asked.

“I don’t know.” Her consciousness flickered, and her voice weakened. “But I can sense the sliver of soul in my body. As long as it's close enough, I can tell you where I am.”

Han Wu was at a loss. This huge universe held countless civilizations, each divided into multiple regions. Finding one evil God among them would be like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Still, he refused to give up. This was his only chance to rescue Qin Shuang and Jing Jing. He had to try. “Hold on. I will find you. I promise.”

“My faith in my God is eternal,” Jing Jing said piously.

Clinging to that clue, Han Wu sought out Xu Hai. They immediately abandoned their first plan to dispatch numerous troops to every civilization for a search-and-rescue operation. The cost would be staggering, and the effort would take too long. Worse, it was dangerous since many civilizations were openly hostile. They could even suffer heavy losses before they rescued Qin Shuang and Jing Jing.

Han Wu found another solution: the Transmigrate Helmet. It could consume Divine Essence to project a part of the user's consciousness, or soul, into another civilization. Through transmigration, one could gain the powers of numerous civilizations and strengthen their divine realm. He could use it to search for Jing Jing's soul.

Unfortunately, there was only one helmet. Checking each civilization one by one would take too long. Han Wu felt powerless.

Xu Hai used his intellect and proposed a solution. The helmet was technically mechanical in design. If they approached it as an engineering challenge rather than a mystical artifact, Han Wu would find a way to overcome the problem.

Han Wu immediately thought of Kerry. She was a genius in mechanical engineering, and if anyone could solve this, it was her. He quickly sought her out. After she learned what had happened, she agreed without hesitation. She wanted to save the students' snatched souls, and the helmet itself intrigued her.

Han Wu invited her to his divine realm and handed the helmet over for study. He also had the Machine God Avatar to assist Kerry in analyzing the helmet's internal structure. Together, they would attempt to modify it.

After expending a lot of Divine Essence and materials, they succeeded. The new, modified Transmigrate Helmet no longer functioned as single-user equipment. It became a server that 500 people could access simultaneously.

However, time constraints forced them to work without fully understanding the helmet's core principles. The rushed modification produced a deadly side effect. Even though 500 users could transmigrate at once, their memories would merge during the process. In severe cases, the resulting mental overload would cause schizophrenia and lead to death.

In practical terms, the server was useless. Unfortunately, they were strapped for time, and the mission outweighed any technical shortcomings. This was the best they could achieve within ten days.

Han Wu refused to accept defeat. In fact, he had an idea on how to refine it further. His Avatar Creation allowed him to divide himself into multiple avatars. Since each avatar remained an extension of his true self, the risk of merging memories wouldn't harm him at all.

He deployed every Divine Power, Divine Aspect, Divine Authority, and even his Divine Jurisdictions, splitting them into 300 avatars that operated the server in sync.

Every time an avatar transmigrated into a new civilization, Han Wu would ask the sliver of Jing Jing's soul, "Are you here?"

Han Wu had no idea how many times he had repeated that question. When Jing Jing failed to answer, he would end that life and exit the civilization. Ask. Wait. Die. It was as if he were stuck in a loop of reincarnations. He had to endure the torment thousands of times each day. His spirit deteriorated, and his body felt heavy. Only his iron will kept him moving forward.

The pattern continued until the twenty-ninth day. As usual, he arrived in a new civilization and asked the sliver of Jing Jing's soul that was linked to the server, "Are you there?"

While waiting, he scanned his surroundings for a suitable place to kill himself. He found a cliff and decided to leap this time.

"I've always wanted to try bungee jumping, and it will be good to relax a little this time," he joked, standing at the edge of the cliff.

He was about to jump when Jing Jing's voice exploded in his mind. "God, I am here!"

Han Wu's eyes grew wide with joy. She was there, which meant she was in the same region as he was, within that very civilization. As long as he could locate the evil God, he could rescue them both.

"Wait for me. I will find you soon!" Han Wu shouted happily before plummeting to his death.

He had to admit that bungee jumping without a rope was exhilarating. After his life ended there, his avatar sprang from the pod with excitement. "I found her! I finally found her!"

Kerry rushed to the database and pulled up the logs to trace the avatar's destination. The logs showed that it had transmigrated to the Giant Shadow Civilization, Region 789645.

A listed region number meant that someone from the Divine Civilization had traveled there before. That detail offered a glimmer of hope. Yet when Han Wu and Kerry calculated the distance, both fell silent.

It was 460,000 light-years away from the Divine Civilization. Even with access to various wormholes and established teleportation stations, the journey would require at least two years in Divine Civilization time.

Two years within the Divine Civilization meant 730 years would pass outside it. It was unlikely that Jing Jing and Qin Shuang's souls would last that long. Han Wu had reached another dead end. He had located the evil God, only to find that the clue had led him to despair.

“Han Wu, don’t give up hope. The Divine Civilization’s reach extends far. Someone has traveled there before. I remember a merchant group that passed through that region to purchase Giant Protectors. Don’t give up hope,” Kerry said.

She spoke of a small possibility, but her words suddenly filled Han Wu with hope. “Giant Protectors! I need to find Commerce!”

He recalled that the Supreme Merchant Group under Commerce had those Giant Protectors.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 648 - Divine Soul Transmigration

Han Wu called Commerce immediately. The latter answered promptly.

After listening to Han Wu’s explanation, he nodded and answered, “I do know of a shortcut to the Giant Shadow Civilization. Even so, the journey will take you ten Divine Civilization days.”

Ten days within the Divine Civilization equaled ten years in the outside civilization. Still, it was definitely much faster than the earlier estimate of 730 years. Han Wu had no better choice.

When Sun Qingnian heard the plan, he volunteered to come along. He wanted to aid his companions as well. Han Wu didn’t object. He then selected several of his most powerful units. Imperial College sent Xu Hai, Kerry, Saliya, and a few more to aid Han Wu. Ten years was neither long nor short.

For safety, Han Wu decided to take an additional precaution. He donned the helmet and transmigrated ahead of the main force to the Giant Shadow Civilization. He intended to prepare for the invasion and gather detailed intelligence.

Once he activated it, he found himself floating in the void. Then five options materialized before him.

[Transmigrate Consciousness: Cannot transmigrate with any Divine Power, Divine Aspect, Divine Authority, or Divine Jurisdiction. Retain a faint shard of memory. Cost: 50 million Faith Points.]

[Transmigrate Spirit: Can transmigrate with one Divine Power. Retain all memories. Cost: 50 million Divine Points.]

[Transmigrate Soul: Transmigrate with a sliver of the soul. May carry one Divine Power and one Divine Aspect. Retain all memories. Cost: 5 Divine Essence.]

[Transmigrate Sacred Soul: Transmigrate with a portion of the soul. May carry one Divine Power and one Divine Authority. Retain all memories. Cost: 500 Divine Essence.]

[Transmigrate Divine Soul: Transmigrate with a fragment of the soul. May carry one Divine Power and one Divine Jurisdiction. Cost: 50,000 Divine Essence.]

Only one transmigrated entity could exist within a sector at a time. Since his task involved reconnaissance for the invasion, the mission would naturally be more difficult. Thus, he chose to transmigrate his Divine Soul, the highest option.

He possessed many Divine Powers but only two Divine Jurisdictions: Duel and Conversion. He needed to choose one carefully before pairing it with a suitable Divine Power.

Duel focused on survival in combat. It thrived on endless battle, and every fight would permanently increase his strength. It leaned toward the physical aspect.

Conversion could convert any form of energy into another. Energy-based attacks would lose their threat, and he could change them at will. It was more suited for non-physical aspects.

Both were excellent, yet he had to consider the weight of this mission. It would be extremely difficult, so he ultimately chose Duel. With that decision made, he dismissed Divine Powers that specialized in energy-based attacks and selected Undying as the perfect complement.

After confirming his choices, he expended 50,000 Divine Essence and transmigrated.

Han Wu opened his eyes in the Giant Shadow Civilization and tried to sort through the strange, foreign memories flooding his mind. In this civilization, his name was Hanwu. He was eighteen years old and a young master of the Kokkai family in the Giant Wood Village.

Today marked his coming-of-age ceremony. To prove himself, he had to leave the village and slay giants alone. The bigger the giants he slew, the greater the reward from his family. Subsequently, greater rewards meant more resources as well.

Yet someone within the family didn’t want him to succeed and had sent ninjas to assassinate him. The original Hanwu had died in the attack, unaware of the reason. The memories ended there.

“Giants and ninjas... Doesn’t look too bad.” He organized the information in his mind, and a simple interface appeared before him.

[Name: Kokkai Hanwu]

[Strength: Apprentice (Ranks: Apprentice, Adept, Master, Shadow)]

[Nin: 3 (Ninjutsu proficiency)]

[Tai: 6 (Taijutsu proficiency)]

[Gen: 2 (Genjutsu proficiency)]

[Wisdom: 4 (Experience and Intellect)]

[Power: 5 (Physical Strength)]

[Speed: 5 (Speed and Reaction Speed)]

[Control: 5 (Chakra Recovery Speed)]

[Seal: 4 (Speed and Accuracy of Hand Seals)]

[Skill Ranks: E, D, C, B, A, S]

[Taijutsu: Collapsing Fist D, Steel Palm E]

[Ninjutsu: Clone E, Substitute E, Transform E]

[Hijutsu: Water Style: Black Water Bullet D]

[Divine Power: Undying. The body functions at ten times its normal capacity. All wounds can heal within a short period. Dismemberment and fatal wounds regenerate at a slower but steady rate.]

[Divine Jurisdiction: Duel. During battle, all parameters increase. The host will enter combat flow more easily, and their skills will be enhanced. Current progress: 0%]

When he studied the information on the interface, Hanwu frowned. Even though he was the young master of the Kokkai family, his skills and abilities were pitifully weak. None of his parameters exceeded an average of six, the minimum required to qualify as a ninja.

With stats like this, any giants he encountered would've killed him. Why would anyone want to employ ninjas to assassinate him? Whoever wanted him dead had wasted their money.

Still, he had already transmigrated there. Complaining would only waste the 50,000 Divine Essence he had spent.

“At least the family background isn’t too bad. We have a hijutsu,” Hanwu muttered, trying to comfort himself.

Once his thoughts settled, he recalled his mission to kill giants and bring them back to his family to complete the ceremony.

The stronger and taller the giants, the greater the reward in resources and treasures. If he wanted information about the evil God and the Reaper Seal, he would have to push himself to the limit.

He left the forest to find giants to test his strength. The trees thinned, and he stepped onto an open plain. Without anything obstructing his view, he saw giants of varying heights wandering aimlessly across the plain.

Their faces were vacant, and one look was enough to tell they lacked intelligence. Yet according to his inherited memories, these giants had once belonged to the Giant Kingdom across the sea before exile cast them out.

Hanwu chuckled. He would never have guessed that the giants were technically returnees with prestigious overseas backgrounds.

A few giants nearby noticed him observing them. Without hesitation, they instinctively charged toward him.

Hanwu decided to test his powers. Drawing on his inherited knowledge, he made a series of hand seals and used Clone. A duplicate materialized beside him and ran toward the other end at his command.

The giants couldn’t distinguish the real from the fake, and half of them chased after the clone. The remaining three locked onto Hanwu himself.

Hanwu quickly made another series of hand seals and used Substitute. A wooden log appeared where he had stood, and the charging giants crashed into it and toppled over one another in a tangled heap.

Dust billowed everywhere, and Hanwu landed safely on the back of one fallen giant. His memories told him that a giant’s weak point lay at the nape of its neck. He gathered his strength and used Collapsing Fist on the giant he was standing on.

A sharp succession of cracks rang out, as if bones had splintered under immense pressure.

He suddenly noticed that the giant he was standing on emitted a lot of heat before burning away into nothingness. Only ashes remained, scattering on the wind.

A white orb the size of his thumb fell to the ground. Up close, it resembled a brain. That was the giant’s essence and proof of the kill.

He dispatched the other two and retrieved two more white orbs. According to his inherited memories, the number and size of the orbs directly correlated with a giant's height.

The three orbs in his hand were the weakest. If he returned with only those, he suspected that his family would exile him and strike his name from the family registry.

The Kokkai family possessed a unique hijutsu and guarded their prestige fiercely. If he wanted to succeed in the ceremony and obtain abundant resources and support afterward, he needed larger orbs and many more of them.

Fortunately, the plain offered no shortage of targets.

Chapter 649 - I'm Such a Kind-Hearted Person

After expending a great deal of stamina, Hanwu hunted thirteen giants, each ranging between three to five meters tall. The giants themselves weren't strong; Hanwu was just physically weak. If not for his battle experience, he would have needed to rest after killing five or six.

By the time he felled the thirteenth giant, he had gained an understanding of his new vessel. His Duel Jurisdiction also reached 100% for the first time and gave him a single parameter upgrade.

He had eight to choose from, and any one below six required only one upgrade point. Once the value reached six, however, advancing it further demanded several additional points. He could also upgrade his skills. For example, any E-rated skill required only one upgrade point to level up once, but higher ranks demanded more.

This wasn't too hard for Hanwu. After killing thirteen giants, he had already earned one upgrade point. If he continued hunting, he could eventually upgrade everything. For now, he had to decide where to invest first. Upgrading parameters was a direct path to greater strength, but the effects weren't that obvious. Upgrading his E-rated skills, such as Steel Palm, Clone, Substitute, and Transform, would possibly yield more tangible results.

He considered that his Tai parameter was already at six, so he chose to upgrade Steel Palm. A faint clarity washed through his mind as his Steel Palm's rating advanced to D.

When he activated it, chakra cloaked his palms, and every single strike multiplied his destructive force. Compared to Collapsing Fist D, Steel Palm D was more versatile. He

could attack with open palms or slice like a sword. It hardened his palms to the density of steel, so the damage he dealt was similar.

This was very convenient for him. Collapsing Fist lacked a guaranteed chance to rupture the muscles at a giant's neck, which often forced him to strike numerous times. Steel Palm could sever muscle fibers cleanly, making it the better choice.

Hanwu found a concealed spot to rest before resuming his hunt. He fought until nightfall and killed thirty giants in total. In the process, he obtained many orbs and two upgrade points.

Steel Palm had proven its worth, and he intended to upgrade it again. That was when he sensed a slight resistance from his mind. He carefully inspected the source and realized that his parameters couldn't support a further upgrade. Both his Tai and Power parameters were insufficient to sustain Steel Palm C.

Hanwu sensed a pattern: a parameter value of six corresponded to E-rated skills. If he wanted to learn stronger skills, he would first need to upgrade his parameters. It appeared that there was an exception to this rule, however. He could learn a skill one tier above its corresponding parameter, but no further.

As for how the original host had managed to learn three E-rated ninjutsu even with a Nin parameter of only three, Hanwu could not explain. The only conclusion he could draw was that some rare stroke of fortune had allowed the original host to overcome it.

Without a choice, he invested his precious upgrade points in Power and Speed. When both rose from five to six, a distinct transformation coursed through his body. He was physically stronger, and his reflexes sharpened.

"Upgrading a parameter doubles its effects on me. Interesting," he murmured.

Night settled over the forest in pitch-black darkness. The giants continued to roam without pause. Hunger gnawed at him, but he dared not light a fire. Instead, he found some wild fruit to satiate himself.

The coming-of-age ceremony lasted three days, and he needed to return within that time to present his spoils to his family. With forty-three orbs, he could barely qualify for a reward. If he wanted better resources, he would have to hunt stronger giants.

The darkness thickened. Without Divine Points to enhance his vision, he couldn't see anything, so he concealed himself in a tree and rested.

He tried his best to avoid the giants' detection, but trouble found him regardless. A group of travelers forced their way through the forest, risking their lives.

As expected, the giants detected them. Wails and desperate cries for help attracted more giants to the scene.

From his perch, Hanwu silently cursed their foolishness. In a forest this silent, shouting would only attract more giants. The giants were quite sensitive when it came to detecting another life form. Though slow-witted, their physical strength rivaled bulldozers. Screaming for help merely accelerated their deaths.

Hanwu intended to watch and ignore them until a fat merchant spotted his tree and climbed up while shouting.

In dire situations, a life form would unlock all of its potential. Somehow, the fat merchant scrambled ten meters up the trunk without falling.

Most of the pursuing giants were five meters tall or less, so he was relatively safe now. Still, the merchant continued to shout to dispel the fear in his heart.

As a result, more giants gathered below.

Hanwu's expression darkened. If he didn't stop the merchant anytime soon, he would be affected too. The tree had its limit. No matter how thick the trunk, it couldn't endure sustained attacks from multiple giants.

"Be quiet! If you shout again, I will twist your head off before a giant gets the chance to eat you!" Hanwu's cold voice drifted down from the canopy.

The merchant froze. He had never expected someone else to be in the tree.

"Please help me," he pleaded. "I'm a merchant traveling to trade at the Giant Wood Village. I will pay you handsomely if you save me."

"What? You think money can solve everything?" Hanwu shot back.

Are you looking down on me? I have a lot of money. In fact, I just spent 50,000 Divine Essence. That was when reality intruded. He had transmigrated here with a portion of his soul. The assets he had in the Divine Civilization had nothing to do with him right now.

He smiled warmly at once, and his tone shifted. "Haiyo, it's not easy to travel the wilderness, is it? Come, don't just cling to the branch. It's very cold down there. Come, let me pull you up. Also, how much are you willing to pay?"

The merchant met his smile and felt a chill. His instinct as a merchant told him that if he offered too little, Hanwu would likely release his grip, letting him fall into the giants' embrace.

"I... I can pay a million gold!" the merchant said through clenched teeth.

Hanwu loosened his hold slightly, and the merchant blurted, “Two million! I can’t do anything more than that.”

Hanwu whistled softly. “Oh? Is that so?”

Hanwu searched the original host’s memories. An Apprentice could earn roughly 200,000 gold a year through frequent missions. Adepts earned about 500,000, and Masters earned about one million. The original host had never encountered information about how much the abnormally powerful Masters or Shadow earned. In a sense, two million gold was enough money for Hanwu to hire two Masters for an entire year. The sum was substantial.

Hanwu smiled kindly. “That’s not what I meant. I’m a kind-hearted person to begin with. How could I not save you? Don’t you agree?”

He pulled the merchant onto the crown of the tree, then added, “Wait, how are you going to pay me? I don’t think you carry that much money on you right now, right? You aren’t trying to trick me, are you?”

His smile was kind and cruel at the same time.

The merchant shivered. Hanwu felt far more dangerous than the giants below.

“There’s a merchant guild branch in the Giant Wood Village,” he said quickly. “They have the funds there!”

Hanwu relaxed a little. “Is that so? No need to panic. I was just asking. I like saving people because I’m kind. It has nothing to do with money.”

The merchant forced a smile while cursing him inwardly, As if I’d believe you!

: Chapter 650

Chapter 650 - Mutant

Hanwu and the merchant hid in the tree's crown, the thick leaves concealing their bodies. Night had fallen, and in theory the darkness alone would keep the giants from spotting them.

Hanwu expected the giants to disperse once they couldn't find their target. Instead, their numbers grew! More giants crowded beneath the tree, pressing shoulder to shoulder as they tried to climb. They looked so excited that they showed no signs of leaving.

The original Hanwu hadn't been the sharpest tool in the shed, but Han Wu was. There had to be a reason. When he had been alone, the giants had behaved normally. After the merchant joined him, they turned crazy and kept attacking without leaving. Evidently, the merchant was hiding something.

The merchant stared at the giants below in mounting panic. At the same time, Hanwu noticed that whenever the merchant grew anxious, his hand unconsciously drifted to his abdomen. Hanwu felt certain that the merchant possessed something that roused the giants.

The merchant caught him watching. He unconsciously held his abdomen and forced a smile. “Is something wrong?”

“I’m just considering how to make sure you pay me by the end of this,” Hanwu said calmly. “Maybe I should take the item you are hiding under your shirt as a deposit?”

The merchant stiffened and clutched the item beneath his shirt tighter as if afraid Hanwu would snatch it.

The merchant’s reaction confirmed Hanwu’s suspicion about the valuable item. There was no doubt now.

“More giants are arriving as time passes. Give me that item, and I will lead the giants away,” Han Wu demanded. “If you don’t, you will die here today. You need to understand that I am more than capable of running away from the giants.”

Alarm flashed across the merchant’s face. The item he guarded was priceless, and he couldn’t trust anyone with it. Yet Hanwu spoke the truth. If the giants continued to ram the trunk, they would topple this tree, and he wouldn’t be able to escape. He would lose both the item and his life.

“How should I trust you?” the merchant asked.

Hanwu replied simply, “I am the young master of the Kokkai family, a clan with its own Hijutsu. My name is Hanwu Kokkai. You can seek my family after this.”

The merchant relaxed slightly when he heard that Hanwu came from a family with their own unique Hijutsu. An established family whose secret technique could be learned only by its bloodline offered reassurance. If Hanwu disappeared, the merchant could seek compensation from them.

Still cautious, the merchant asked, “Do you have proof that you are the young master of the Kokkai family?”

Hanwu checked his belongings and realized he carried no token of identification. Even so, he still possessed their Hijutsu: Water Style, Black Water Bullet.

He formed a sequence of hand seals and guided chakra through his meridians. A dense sphere of black water gathered in his mouth, and he fired it downward like a bullet.

The projectile moved faster than a bullet and tore through two giants in a single line. The wounds it left behind festered at once, flesh blackening and corroding under the technique’s virulent effect. This corrosive property marked the Kokkai family’s Hijutsu.

The power came at a steep cost: it drained half of Hanwu’s total chakra in one use.

The merchant had seen the Kokkai Hijutsu before. The display was enough. He accepted that Hanwu indeed came from the Kokkai family.

With the proof, the merchant carefully took out what he was hiding beneath his shirt. It was a palm-sized box containing five sealed vials of liquid. The moment it appeared, the giants below grew agitated and started ramming into the tree. They desperately wanted to seize the box.

Hanwu didn’t have Divine Points right now, so he couldn’t identify the liquid. Nonetheless, it represented his payment of 2 million gold. With it in his possession, the merchant would have no choice but to pay.

“I will take this for now and return to the Giant Wood Village. Wait until the giants disperse, then escape,” Hanwu instructed before leaping from the tree.

The giants down below opened their mouths to eat him. However, he used Substitute midair, and their jaws closed around a log. Hanwu then activated Steel Palm and sliced through a giant’s neck with ease. He didn’t have time to pick up the orb and sprinted toward the village.

After his Speed reached the value of six, his velocity had improved tremendously; the giants couldn’t match him. He soon left them behind. Before he could catch his breath, however, a low rumble rolled across the ground.

Under the moonlight, a ten-meter giant charged on all fours. He recognized it at once as a mutant. Giants like this were among the most troublesome to face. They moved unlike ordinary giants and were much faster, which made them especially dangerous compared to others of the same height.

The mutant closed the distance in seconds. Hanwu knew he couldn’t outrun it, so he decided to turn back and attack.

The mutant noticed his approach and opened its mouth excitedly to eat him.

As he sprinted forward, Hanwu made a series of hand seals. A dull explosion sounded, and a clone appeared beside him. This was Clone Ninjutsu, a technique that produced only an illusion with no power to attack. Its sole purpose was to confuse his enemies.

The mutant saw two identical figures running toward it. Without hesitation, it lunged at one at random. By sheer misfortune, it chose the real Hanwu.

“What bloody luck,” Hanwu grumbled.

He had not expected the giant to guess correctly with a 50% chance. Still, he didn’t panic and kept running.

Just as the mutant opened its mouth to eat him, Hanwu spent the last of his chakra on Substitute. In that critical instant, he had switched places, and the mutant bit into a wooden log.

Hanwu seized the opening, leaping onto the mutant’s back and driving both palms down with Steel Palm. He struck the base of its neck multiple times until he severed it as cleanly as chopping through a stalk of cabbage.

As the mutant died, it released a lot of heat, and its corpse burned to ashes. A yellow orb the size of a ping-pong ball dropped to the ground. He picked it up and sprinted toward the village with every ounce of his strength, racing to outrun the other giants before they could close the distance.

Undying accelerated his recovery, knitting his wounds, and he ran with renewed vigor. Within an hour, he reached the Giant Wood Village’s entrance.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 651 - Information about the Giant Shadow Civilization

On a flying ship heading toward the Giant Shadow Civilization, Han Wu was gathering information from the avatar wearing the Transmigrate helmet and his true body on the ship. The other avatars were occupied with other tasks.

Even while traveling, Han Wu continued nurturing his units and evolving his locusts using Random Evolution. While this drastically increased the combat capabilities of his units, it

also reduced their cohesion. Fortunately, Han Wu had already drafted plans to counteract this.

He allowed half of the newly hatched locusts to retain the Random Evolution trait and evolve into powerful life forms. The other half consumed their hearts using the effects of the Heart Eater Sacred Object Set, maintaining an army of proper locusts for Han Wu to lead. In addition, he assigned some of his units to live in his other two Microcosms.

The Law of the Mechanical Microcosm affected the locusts living there, eventually turning them mechanical. These mechanical locusts were overall more powerful, and their Self-Detonation was also more explosive. In exchange, however, they could no longer breed. Han Wu had raised 10 billion locusts into mechanical ones to function as secret weapons that could Self-Detonate.

Then there were the locusts living on the Dead Microcosm. The death aura transformed those locusts into Death Aura Bugs, increasing their parameters and stats. They also gained a new ability called Instant Death.

Death Aura Bugs had a chance of injecting their death aura into their victims when attacking, causing instant death. The success rate of this depended on the strength gap between them and their victim. It had good potential, so Han Wu also sent 10 billion locusts to live on the Dead Microcosm.

After dealing with his core race, Han Wu turned his attention to the other races. He created a larger forge for the Scorching Dwarves so they could churn out equipment for him.

Every few days, Hammie, now anointed the Smith God, would forge a piece of God equipment for Han Wu as tribute. Han Wu stored an abundance of Hammie-made God equipment in his vault for future use.

Han Wu also paid attention to the minotaurs, Tigermen, and Half-Dragons in his divine realm. The powerful Gene Catalysts that the Origin of Mutation had created had far greater effects on these three races. Han Wu estimated it would take less than a hundred years for the first Heavenrender-born life form to appear from these three races after consuming the Gene Catalysts.

Then, there were the Epistians. The Epistians mainly focused on developing and researching Mystic Arts, but they recently expanded to researching mechanical engineering as well. Ji Zhongyi, the genius reincarnated Epistian, was the leading expert.

Under Ji Zhongyi’s guidance, a pioneering group of young Epistians commenced research on mechanical engineering, lauding themselves as the new generation of Epistians. They tinkered with machines all day, and there were many incidents of their machines exploding. There were even some casualties from the accidents.

Even so, this didn't stop them from researching machines. In a show of support for their endeavors, Han Wu used his name as their God to create many BD-04 Luxuns using Fabricator and assigned one to each of them. This not only ensured their safety but also made research easier.

Finally, Han Wu created a brand-new caldera using fire-related treasures for the Flame Demons. Karot, the Flame Demon King, would also occasionally replenish the fire in the forges of the Scorching Dwarves.

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Han Wu spent plenty of effort nurturing his regular units, but he made sure to focus on improving his more powerful ones as well.

The match with the Divine River Civilization had resulted in a few First Series Gene Catalysts falling into his hands. He had already consumed Omniversal, and he intended to keep Annihilating Lightning for Qin Shuang, leaving three more: Warmaster, Carnage, and Void Hunter.

Han Wu gave the Warmaster Gene Catalyst to Steely. Steely had followed him for many years and had done all sorts of meritorious deeds. Han Wu could never ignore him. He gave Warmaster to Steely for two reasons.

Firstly, after the Origin Virus had modified Steely into his Hecatonchires form, he had to wield 100 God weapons at once. The intensity of the combat often meant he would have to replace most of these. Consuming the Warmaster Gene Catalyst meant Steely could use his own power to form Obsidrum weapons and armor, saving Han Wu a lot of money.

Secondly, Obsidrum Judgment could kill Gods, making it an extremely useful and powerful technique for Steely to have.

As for the final two Gene Catalysts, Han Wu gave Carnage to Akanzor and Void Hunter to Bart. Once the three of them finished incorporating their respective Gene Catalysts, they would most certainly become World life forms. Han Wu would then have three more Microcosms in his consciousness.

Han Wu was still busy nurturing his units when Jiang Ming called him. Ever since Han Wu had bought his freedom from Commerce, he had been actively trading in various civilizations to earn money for Han Wu.

He had called Han Wu after hearing that the latter was headed for the Giant Shadow Civilization. Jiang Ming had once been there to purchase the Giant Protectors, so he was quite knowledgeable about the region.

After consolidating all the information he knew, he sent it to Han Wu in a report. Han Wu checked the report and relayed the information to his transmigrated avatar in the Giant Shadow Civilization.

The other Hanwu was staring at the fifty-meter-tall wall surrounding the Giant Wood Village when he received the information. It turned out that the Giant Shadow Civilization had undergone a type of merging.

The Giant Civilization had invaded the Shadow Ninja Civilization, only to be met with fierce retaliation. Locked in a stalemate, the two civilizations had ended up forming the Giant Shadow Civilization instead.

Eight major villages in the Shadow Ninja Civilization represented the eight noble households, with each corresponding to one of the eight parameters a ninja could have. Each village also had a secret scroll that allowed one to improve their corresponding parameter above its usual limit, though only Masters and above could read it.

When an individual maxed out all eight of their parameters, they became eligible to receive the core power of the Shadow Ninja Civilization. However, no one—not even Jiang Ming—had any idea what kind of power it was.

The Giant Civilization had a similar belief as well. Nine Giant Sages had once led the initial invasion of the Shadow Ninja Civilization. If one could gather the power of all nine Giant Sages, they could rule the entire civilization.

Jiang Ming also included a curious tidbit at the end of the report. According to legend, anyone who could harness both the core power of the Shadow Ninja Civilization and the powers of the nine Giant Sages would become the ultimate master of the Giant Shadow Civilization.

But no one had ever succeeded before.

Chapter 652 - Vicious Tiger Does Eat Its Cubs

“Eight ninja villages, nine Giant Sages, and I have to collect them all to become the owner of the Giant Shadow Civilization?” Hanwu murmured.

He shook his head as if to dispel those useless thoughts. That goal was far beyond him at the moment. His priority was locating the evil God as soon as possible and rescuing both Qin Shuang and Jing Jing.

Knocking on the front gate of the Giant Wood Village, he shouted at the Apprentice on guard duty, “Guards, let the ladder down for me, please.”

After confirming he was Kokkai Hanwu, the guard lowered the ladder.

“I thought today was supposed to be your coming of age ceremony?” asked the guard. “Why did you come back after a single day?”

“Why not?”

The guard said nothing, but his eyes betrayed the disdain he had for Hanwu. He had long heard that the young master of the Kokkai family was useless. This only confirmed it.

Hanwu didn’t care about the guard’s opinion of him. He just wanted to get back to his family and obtain as many resources as possible to improve his strength.

The guard watched as Hanwu’s figure disappeared down the street. Later, the guard would share this story with his peers, gossiping about how weak Hanwu was.

Meanwhile, the youth in question found his family estate based on the previous host’s memories.

The servants were startled when he entered the gates. “Young master? Why are you back so soon?”

“I completed my mission,” he answered simply before heading deeper inside.

The servants shook their heads. Hanwu had only been out for a single day. What giants could he have possibly hunted in that time? The Kokkai family was destined to fall with him.

Hanwu entered the hall. After hearing the news of his return, the various elders rushed out to evaluate his results. Hanwu carefully studied the minute changes in expressions on their faces.

The previous host had been assassinated. Given that the previous host was mediocre at best, but came from a prestigious family, Hanwu suspected that the perpetrator was someone within the family.

After examining the elders, he realized that all of them appeared normal. At most, they were simply looking down on him for returning so soon.

Am I mistaken? Hanwu doubted himself until his father—or rather the original host’s father—appeared.

The father's eyes were harsh, yet betrayed a slight hint of panic. The realization shocked Hanwu.

What the heck? Did this father call for the assassination of his own son? What kind of TV drama is this? Even a tiger wouldn't eat its own cubs. Perhaps the original host isn't the real son of the patriarch?

But even then, killing your own stepson is still too much. Unless... Was the previous host a bastard child conceived between the mother and their neighbour?

Hanwu stared at the patriarch of the Kokkai family with interest. With everyone gathered, the patriarch, Kokkai Hakurou, started the assessment. "Hanwu, show us your proof of killing giants."

His words were cold and devoid of warmth, as if they were coworkers as opposed to father and son. The fact that the other elders paid no attention to it meant this was normal. Hanwu poured out the orbs he collected into the tray that the servants had prepared.

He first poured out the orbs he collected from the three-to-five-meter-tall giants, each white and the size of his thumb. The elders were initially disappointed, but then they realized this was expected.

After all, Hanwu was weak. His parameters were the lowest in the entire family. He was so weak that just learning the three basic Ninjutsus took him two additional years compared to the other children.

Given his strength, killing this number of giants was already considered excellent. Hanwu placed one final orb onto the tray as they were thinking this. Unlike the others, this orb was yellow and the size of a ping pong ball.

The sudden weight almost caused the servant to drop the tray. Everyone's attention was fixed on the orb. Its size alone indicated that it came from a ten-meter giant. Moreover, it was a different color from the rest.

Regular orbs were white and darkened with strength, going from white to yellow, light brown, dark brown, and finally black. In other words, the deeper the color, the stronger the giant.

A yellow orb meant the giant was adequately strong, or at least on the same level as an elite Adept. But how had Hanwu, a mere Apprentice, defeated a giant as powerful as an Adept?

The stumped elders glanced at Kokkai Hakurou in bewilderment. The patriarch was just as baffled. The ninjas he sent were supposed to have killed Hanwu, yet not only did he not die, he even returned with a yellow orb to boot. This was beyond his comprehension.

“Speak,” the patriarch demanded. “Who gave you the orb?”

The elders immediately understood. It was impossible for Hanwu to have hunted the giant with his power alone. It was more likely that someone had given the orb to him. However, an orb of that color and size would cost at least 500,000, the annual salary of an Adept. Who would give such a precious item to the weak Hanwu? They were all dying to know.

Hanwu refused to entertain the patriarch’s slander. “I risked my life to kill a giant and retrieve its orb.”

“How could you possibly defeat a ten-meter giant with your Ninjutsus? Tell me the truth, and I will give you a lighter sentence. Even if you’re my son, I won’t let you off so easily,” the patriarch warned sternly, playing the part of a father impartial even to his family, as if he hadn’t already killed the original Hanwu once.

“I’ve told you the truth. Patriarch, if you don’t believe me, you can ask someone to test me.” Hanwu was no longer the original weak host. Regardless of the previous host’s shitty hand of cards, Hanwu could use his experience and force a royal flush in the end.

The elders were interested to see where Hanwu’s confidence came from. They had never seen him act like this before.

“Since Hanwu wants to prove himself, I’m willing to send my son to test him,” said one of the elders.

His son was already an Adept at fifteen. Even putting the family’s resources aside, the boy had gotten this far because of his talent. His Nin was also already at 8, the minimum for a Master.

The elder summoned his son. The boy glanced at Hanwu with a look of superiority. Despite the young master being three years older than him, he was effectively useless. In other words, there was no need for him to hold back.

“Fine. Hanwu, if you can defeat him in this match, I will recognize the results of your coming-of-age ceremony,” the patriarch agreed. “But if you fail, I will punish you with the harshest sentence we have in our family for lying to us.”

Hanwu chuckled. *What did the original host do for the patriarch to want to kill him this badly? How did the original host make it to eighteen with a father like this?*

When the elders saw the patriarch’s impartiality toward his son, they couldn’t help but inwardly praise him. Meanwhile, the fifteen-year-old Kokkai Toutetsu was already doing warmups.

Today was the day he stepped on the young master!

Chapter 653 - Despicable, but Effective

Everyone watched as the two stood opposite each other.

“Brother Hanwu, since you’re an Apprentice, you can have the first strike,” Toutetsu said arrogantly, clearly looking down on Hanwu.

Knowing the original host’s powers, Toutetsu simply couldn’t take Hanwu seriously. Regardless, Hanwu was ready to use his abundance of battle experience to prove himself.

Hanwu carefully checked his interface. While running back to the village, he had accumulated four upgrade points. He decided to cover his weakness and upgrade his Nin.

His Nin value had only been 3 in the beginning. Spending three upgrade points upgraded it to 6. Unfortunately, if he wanted to make it 7, he would need another two upgrade points, so he opted to upgrade Clone instead.

His Clone E turned into Multiclone D. Although clones were all illusions and couldn’t deal damage, they could disorient his foes. It was quite useful.

After spending all his upgrade points, Hanwu glanced at Toutetsu. “Are you sure you want me to attack first?”

Toutetsu scoffed. “I’m an Adept. If I attack first, they’ll say that I’m bullying you, brother Hanwu.”

It was an obvious but infuriating taunt. Hanwu wasn’t the original host, but he was still insulted. The feeling of being looked down on by a junior was uniquely maddening.

“You better not regret it then!” Hanwu made a series of hand seals, but because his Seal value was only 4, his motions weren’t that fast.

The elders laughed when they saw what he was casting.

“He’s using Clone? That’s a useless Ninjutsu.”

“Wait, he’s not executing Clone.”

“Let me see… Those hand seals resemble the Multiclone Ninjutsu. Who did he learn it from?”

Everyone watched as Hanwu completed the seals, and four clones appeared beside him. The clones were realistic to the point that no one could tell which was the real Hanwu.

Hanwu and the clones swiftly attacked Toutetsu from five different directions.

Although startled that Hanwu could use Multiclone, Toutetsu quickly recomposed himself and started making seals. He was much faster than Hanwu, and once the seal was completed, a black ball of water emerged from his body and mimicked his form.

The clone made from the black water was only 70% similar to him, which meant he hadn't completely mastered it yet. Still, his Ninjutsu caught the elders' attention.

"That's a B rank Hijutsu, Water Style: Black Water Clone!"

"He's so young, but he's already learned such an advanced Ninjutsu. He just needs to practice more to become a Master!"

"A genius. He's truly the genius of our household!"

Their praises pleased Toutetsu, but he was in a battle. The slight lapse in his attention created an opening for Hanwu and his four clones to close the distance.

"*Hmph!* It seems you've mastered Multiclone well. I can't even tell which is fake and which isn't. No matter, I'll just smash them all at once!"

He and his Black Water Clone attacked in tandem, destroying the four clones and hitting Hanwu in the process. However, at the last second, Hanwu turned into a wooden log.

"Substitute!" Toutetsu immediately turned around. According to the teachers in the village, Substitute was mainly used to redirect one's attention so that they could sneak up behind them. Toutetsu was ready for an ambush from the back.

Unfortunately for him, Hanwu hadn't used Substitute at all. He had actually used Transform to turn into a wooden log upon being struck. That gambit successfully lowered Toutetsu's guard.

Hanwu attacked with Collapse Punch, slamming Toutetsu onto the ground. The genius of the Kokkai family fainted on the spot. The Black Water Clone dissipated when Toutetsu was knocked unconscious.

The elders were stunned. Toutetsu was stronger than Hanwu, but he had clearly lost to Hanwu's battle experience.

"Do you still doubt me? You can send someone else to test me if you're not satisfied," Hanwu suggested eagerly.

Toutetsu had hit him once during the battle, but with Undying in effect, his wounds recovered swiftly. However, as he was fighting against an Adept, his Duel Jurisdiction immediately hit 200%, giving him two upgrade points. If he suffered a few more hits, he could upgrade all of his parameters to the limit.

Thus, Hanwu was actually hoping that the elders would send someone else to fight him, as long as they were Adepts or Masters. He preferred not to fight with an Apprentice as they contributed a negligible number of points.

“Patriarch, Hanwu used a trick to win,” cried Kokkai Takumi, father of Toutetsu. “That match doesn’t count. I want a rematch!”

“Kokkai Takumi, are you dense? Do you think your opponent will always fight you fair and square? I think Hanwu is an excellent child. Patriarch, you must reward him.” One of the elders stood on Hanwu’s side.

“He used Transform flawlessly and redirected the enemy’s attention by faking Substitute,” praised another elder. “It’s despicable, but effective. Patriarch, I agree in rewarding Hanwu for his performance in his coming of age ceremony.”

The patriarch had wanted to kill Hanwu and was naturally pissed at this result. *You get to live this time, but I’ll kill you next time. This is all for the sake of Lord Huangquan.*

“Since most of you are in agreement, I announce that Hanwu has attained an Excellent for his coming-of-age ceremony. His resources will be disbursed to him as outlined in the guidelines.”

The elders nodded approvingly. Only Takumi was in disagreement, but there was nothing he could do. Hanwu had defeated his genius son, Toutetsu, in front of everyone. There was no room to twist this situation to his advantage.

Hanwu, just you wait. I won’t forgive you! Takumi snarled to himself.

: Chapter 654

Chapter 654 - Exchanging Hijutsu

Those attaining an Excellent in the Kokkai family received abundant resources. They received 200,000 gold per month as salary, as well as medicine that could increase one’s parameters. They could also pick a D-rated Hijutsu from the vault every month to learn.

Hanwu's results were officially confirmed the next morning, and he received his promised rewards that same evening. Among these were two large stacks of paper notes, with each note denoting 1000 gold. He also received a month's worth of medicine, which, taken over long periods of time, would increase one's parameters.

As for the D-rated Hijutsu, he would have to head to the Kokkai family vault to pick it out himself. With Undying and Duel, Hanwu didn't actually need to rely on the resources all that much. All he needed to do was keep fighting.

According to the original host's memories, several sites outside the village were suitable for his purposes. Hanwu wanted to visit those areas soon to fill up his progress bar as quickly as possible, but he needed to make sure he was well prepared before he departed, as he was still a mere Apprentice in this civilization.

As a Major God, he could go without eating or drinking for a year or two, but as an Apprentice in the Giant Shadow Civilization, he would die from dehydration in three days. Even those of the most powerful rank, Shadows, weren't exempt from this limitation.

However, as the Giant Shadow Civilization didn't have any items resembling a Spatial Ring, he couldn't bring that many supplies with him. Fortunately, there were spatial manipulation Ninjutsu with similar functions.

The only caveat was that these Ninjutsu were extremely difficult to learn and had a minimum requirement before one could attempt them. Moreover, even if one wanted to learn it, they would be hard-pressed to find a teacher and would likely have to learn it on their own.

Hanwu was confident in his capabilities to understand abstract concepts as long as he had the necessary information. Thus, he went to the vault in hopes of finding a scroll containing the Ninjutsu.

An old man guarded the vault. Apparently, the old man was the bodyguard of the village's one and only Shadow in his prime, with his strength being second only to the Shadow. As he aged, he eventually returned to the family and took on some easy jobs.

When Hanwu asked the old man about Ninjutsu related to spatial manipulation, the old man stared at him and sighed. He remembered Hanwu as the weakling of the family—not someone capable of learning spatial manipulation Ninjutsu.

If not for someone informing him in the afternoon that Hanwu received an Excellent for his assessment, the old man would've ignored him. Even now, the old man assumed that Hanwu only scored an Excellent because his father used his position to manipulate the entire thing.

The old man hated nepotism and so decided not to engage Hanwu more than necessary, simply pointing him to a shelf further down the vault. Hanwu followed the old man's guidance and reached the shelf.

The shelf was filled with scrolls and books of different Hijutsu. As promised, there were two scrolls containing the details of space-related Ninjutsu.

One was sealed off with a special seal that prevented anyone below a Master from opening it. If someone unqualified opened it, an alarm would sound, and the scroll would burn to ashes.

Hanwu glanced at the other scroll. It contained an E-rated Ninjutsu called Pocket Dimension Jutsu. With this Ninjutsu, one could create a pocket that existed outside this dimension.

The pocket wasn't large and was usually used to hide sensitive information from one's enemies, but the requirements to learn it were steep. One would need to have their Nin reach 8, Wisdom 7, and Control 7 to study it. This was clearly the reason so few ninjas were willing to learn spatial manipulation Ninjutsu.

Thankfully, with Duel as his cheat, Hanwu could easily learn the Pocket Dimension Jutsu. Moreover, as one D-rated Ninjutsu was equivalent to two E-rated ones, Hanwu could negotiate for another E-rated Ninjutsu for his monthly quota.

He wasn't lacking in strength but in supporting jutsu. After rummaging around, he found a jutsu that he liked—an E-rated Genjutsu called Oversight. While technically called a Genjutsu, it was more accurate to call it a sensory-type jutsu, as its target was the user themselves.

Upon activation, the user would find themselves standing on an imaginary tower. They could then see everything around them from a bird's-eye view, allowing them to see all the happenings within a set radius around them.

However, this Genjutsu required the user to have 7 in both their Gen and Wisdom parameters, making it quite difficult to learn. Even so, Hanwu chose it as his second E-rated jutsu. After registering his choices, the old man waved his arm to shoo him off.

Some time later, Kokkai Toutetsu approached the old man, having just recently roused from being knocked unconscious by Hanwu.

"Grandfather Wu, has Hanwu visited yet?"

The old man recognized Toutetsu as the young genius of the Kokkai family, with the potential to become a Master despite his youth. If they continued to invest resources into Toutetsu, he could even become a Shadow.

“He just left with two E-rated jutsu,” replied the old man.

“E-rated jutsu? What did he take?” Toutetsu asked nervously.

The old man pulled out the logbook for Toutetsu to read.

“E rated Ninjutsu: Pocket Dimension, and E rated Genjutsu: Oversight. What are these?” Toutetsu asked. “What do they do?”

“These two jutsu are useless because he can’t learn them with his parameters. Maybe not even in his lifetime.”

Toutetsu smiled before quickly composing himself. His defeat at Hanwu’s hands before all the elders had left him embarrassed and seeking revenge. Hanwu, don’t you dare think you can win against me with your tricks a second time.

Meanwhile, Hanwu had returned to his room. He couldn’t yet learn his two chosen jutsu due to his lacking parameters, so he would need to increase them as soon as possible. After all, he had no idea when the patriarch would send the next round of assassins.

The duel with Toutetsu had earned him another two upgrade points, which he used on his two remaining E-rated Ninjutsu.

Substitute E became Swap D, which allowed him to swap his position with anything within a one-meter radius. This jutsu had admirably high potential. If he could extend the range and shorten the time needed to complete the seals, this jutsu could both save his life and piss the others off at the same time. It was extremely efficient in that sense.

Transform E became Transform D. While the jutsu itself didn’t change, the resulting transformation became more refined and realistic. Still, it was quite useless in direct combat.

With that, he had used up all of his upgrade points.

“I can’t stop here. I need to train harder.”

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 655

Chapter 655 - Merchant

Hanwu finished drinking the medicine that night and checked his status. His weakest parameter, Gen, had increased from two to three. The improvement was minor, but it did save him one upgrade point.

That night, he packed his belongings and prepared to sleep when a servant knocked on his door. “Young Master Hanwu, the patriarch requests your presence in the hall. Someone has come to see you.”

Hanwu pondered a bit before he concluded that the merchant was likely there to deliver the payment. He dressed and headed to the hall, where he found the patriarch drinking tea with the merchant.

The moment Hanwu stepped inside, the patriarch’s expression hardened, and he showed no signs of affection for him. It was as if Hanwu was his enemy.

The merchant noticed the strange tension between them but remained silent. Instead, he looked at Hanwu. The meaning was clear. He had brought the money and expected the box in return.

“Mr. Sayama here told me that you saved him yesterday. Is that true?” The patriarch’s tone resembled an interrogation more than a question.

“Yes,” Hanwu simply replied.

Fearing the patriarch would derail their arrangement, the merchant quickly interjected, “It’s all thanks to you that I could successfully escape the giants. Please, accept this token of my gratitude.”

The merchant commanded his underling to bring a chest. Inside lay twenty bundles of cash, ten times the amount Hanwu had received that afternoon. Even the patriarch couldn’t hide the greed in his eyes as he stared at the money.

Even though he was a patriarch and a Master, two million gold was still a considerable sum to him. Assuming he didn’t accept any S-rank missions, he would need an entire year just to earn that much.

Hanwu watched him closely. He was currently living under this roof, so he had to be discreet rather than acting out of line. The flash of greed in the patriarch’s face confirmed his suspicion. Once the merchant left, the patriarch would do everything he could to seize the money.

Hanwu wouldn’t allow that. He refused at once. “We are all from the same village, and saving you was my duty. Please, keep the money. There’s no need for gifts.”

The merchant’s face froze. What? Take it back? You were the one who wanted it!

Still, he was keenly attuned to the moods of those around him. Even though he couldn't read Hanwu's intentions, he understood one thing: now was the time to cooperate. Since Hanwu publicly refused the money, there was no need to insist. Besides, from what he knew of Hanwu, the money would still end up in Hanwu's hands.

Meanwhile, the patriarch had already planned how to monopolize the reward. Unfortunately, Hanwu's words crushed his dream. He stared in disbelief as the merchant kept the chest of money. In just one sentence, the 2 million was gone.

That was a lot of money! The patriarch's heart clenched. Wait, why is the merchant so agreeable? Does he really think that gratitude alone repays saving his life? Is his life that worthless?

The patriarch badly coveted the money, but there was nothing else he could do now that the merchant had stowed the chest away. All he could do was curse Hanwu in his heart and regret not killing him that afternoon.

The merchant carefully studied their reactions. Something felt off, so he stood up and offered a polite farewell.

Hanwu claimed he would see him off and followed him outside.

The two settled into the merchant's carriage, and the merchant asked urgently, "Young man, I brought you the money. Shouldn't you return it to me?"

Hanwu wasn't in a hurry to comply. Instead, he countered, "What's that liquid? Why are you so nervous?"

The merchant's heart skipped a beat. For a moment, he felt as though he faced not a youth who had only just come of age, but a shrewd old schemer in a young man's skin. "Well... that's a trade secret. I can't disclose it."

Hanwu scoffed. "Is that so? I suddenly can't remember where I put it. Never mind. It's no loss to me, and I don't need the money."

Hanwu reached for the carriage door, but the merchant stopped him. "Fine. Honestly, I'm more afraid of you. I will just tell you. The vials contain the Giant Sages' spinal fluid."

Hanwu's eyes lit up at once. Jiang Ming's report had information on the Giant Sages. There were nine of them in the Giant Civilization, and those who could force them into submission would control the entire civilization.

Hanwu grew curious. The Giant Sages are supposed to be strong, so how did anyone manage to extract their spinal fluid? Also, what's the spinal fluid's use?

The merchant anticipated his questions and spoke first. “A Giant Sage's spinal fluid can turn ordinary people into witless giants. This is a weapon for war. Imagine this. The enemy captures prisoners from our side and imprisons them in their camp. Then, without warning, those prisoners transform into giants and destroy everything around them. It would be a devastating blow!”

Hanwu listened and thought of even more ways to use it. He could acquire slaves, inject them with the spinal fluid, and transform them into giants before using Sacrifice on them. He could already imagine how much Life Energy he would sacrifice.

However, the spinal fluid appeared to be very expensive.

“Where did you obtain it?” Hanwu asked.

The merchant panicked. “Young man, could you please stop asking me questions?”

Hanwu shrugged as if it made no difference to him. “Then I will take my leave.”

The merchant relented and offered part of the truth. “I have connections with some traitors of the Shadow Ninja Civilization. Their main job is capturing giants. Just a few days ago, they went to great lengths to capture one of the Giant Sages. They gave me some of the spinal fluid from that operation.”

“Tell me about these traitors,” Hanwu said.

With his current strength, Hanwu stood no chance against the so-called traitors that could capture even the Giant Sages. Still, he would likely cross paths with them in the future. It would be wiser to gather as much information as possible right now.

The merchant felt that he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. The situation gnawed at him. Not only had he failed to recover the spinal fluid, but he even revealed classified information. If the traitors learned that he had spoken out of turn, they would probably kill him.

The merchant clamped his mouth shut and remained silent. He decided to complete the transaction as soon as possible and leave this place for good. Above all, he hoped he would never meet Hanwu again.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 656 - Becoming Stronger With Money

In the end, Hanwu didn't manage to extract any more information about the traitors from the merchant. The man understood the stakes. If he only offended Hanwu, he would lose the five vials of Giant Sage spinal fluid. If he offended the traitors, he would most likely lose his life.

Seeing that the interrogation had reached a dead end, Hanwu chose not to waste any more time. He took out the box containing the five vials and gave it to the merchant.

The merchant finally sighed with relief.

At that moment, Hanwu spoke. "Hey, could you help me with something regarding the 2 million gold?"

The merchant immediately grew cautious. "What kind of help? Let me make this clear first. I won't do anything dangerous."

He had known Hanwu for a short time, but his sharp instincts warned him not to provoke the young man. The consequences would not be pleasant.

Hanwu smiled. "It's nothing dangerous. I just want to test my strength and find a few teachers to guide me through real battle. Could you help me find some Masters who are willing to teach me?"

The merchant didn't suspect anything. Seeking Masters for guidance was not unusual. Most prospective students would seek guidance from a teacher or family member. It was more uncommon to hire Masters for that reason, just like what Hanwu had proposed. Still, it wasn't unheard of. Not everyone had access to a Master through family connections.

"I have my own channels, but it may be a little expensive," the merchant replied.

"How expensive?" Hanwu had no idea what the market rate was. The previous host had no memories of such matters.

"It will cost 10,000 gold per day for each Master," the merchant answered.

The price was reasonable. A Master ranked among the strongest fighting forces in any ninja village. Under normal circumstances, a Master could earn 2 million gold in a year by regularly accepting missions. Earning 10,000 gold per day was merely compensation for their time, a profitable side arrangement.

Hanwu's eyes lit up. With 2 million gold, he could hire the Master for half a year. That was more than sufficient.

He immediately abandoned the idea of venturing outside to train. There was no need to try his luck outside when he could simply hire the Masters to spar with him.

"Alright, I want to hire them for a month! Find three Masters. One who specializes in Taijutsu, one in Ninjutsu, and one in Genjutsu," Hanwu said.

The merchant chuckled. If Hanwu hired them for only two or three days, the fee would remain 10,000 gold daily. However, since Hanwu wanted to hire them for an entire month, there was room to negotiate and secure a better margin. He could trim at least 20% of the fees and pocket the difference.

The merchant nodded. "No problem. I'll arrange for them to meet you tomorrow."

After bidding the merchant farewell, Hanwu returned to his family estate.

The patriarch burned with the urge to thrash his son for rejecting the 2 million gold. Unfortunately, he couldn't act in front of the others. He scoffed and left, already considering another subtler method to remove his son.

Hanwu didn't know what the patriarch was thinking and went to rest for the night. He couldn't wait for the training the next day.

At dawn, he woke up and headed to the agreed location. Three ninjas in casual attire waited for him; two men and one woman with different fashion styles.

The man in a green jacket and black tights was most likely the Taijutsu Master. The one in a windbreaker and sunglasses appeared to be the Ninjutsu Master. The woman in a loose black camisole dress was most certainly the Genjutsu Master.

Hanwu's assumptions proved correct.

The Taijutsu Master's name was Shikata Sadamasa. He hailed from a family with a unique Hijutsu, which was unexpectedly geared toward Taijutsu.

The Ninjutsu Master was Senju Kumori. Unlike Sadamasa, he wasn't from a family with a Hijutsu. He rose from common origins through exceptional talent from a young age. He was well-versed in Ninjutsu of the five elements and was quite famous in the Giant Wood Village.

The Genjutsu Master was Haruno Natsutsuyu. Her delicate features and alluring black camisole dress gave her the appearance of a refined woman. From the way Sadamasa and Kumori kept their distance from her, however, it was clear that she was the most dangerous of the three.

He greeted and introduced himself to the trio. “I greet my three teachers. I am Hanwu, the one who employed you to teach me.”

“Young man, you should hire one person at a time. Why hire all three of us together? I am very curious.” Natsutsuyu purred. As she spoke, she licked her lips seductively.

The other two Masters edged farther away.

Hanwu offered a casual explanation. “I just want to awaken my potential by experiencing danger. That’s why I hired all three of you.”

Naturally, the trio didn’t believe him, but they didn’t care. The money was generous enough to silence their doubts.

“Well, Hanwu, what sort of training do you have in mind?” Sadamasa asked. “In terms of Taijutsu, I’ve nurtured many remarkably talented children.”

“Simple. I just need the three of you to attack me simultaneously,” Hanwu replied.

Kumori’s face darkened with anger. “What? This is ridiculous.”

To him, Hanwu had hired them to flaunt his wealth instead of earnestly trying to learn. He would rather not accept this request.

“You’re relying on your family’s wealth. You’re nothing but a spoiled young master. I’ve seen many of your kind. Not everyone is willing to entertain your foolish games. I have more important matters to attend to. Goodbye.” Kumori turned to leave, fury stiffening his shoulders.

Hanwu had already paid them, so he wouldn’t let them leave. “I’m not wasting my money. How can you judge without even trying? Just do it. You’ve already taken my money, and now you want to leave without teaching me anything? Are you trying to cheat me?”

As expected, his taunts struck home, and Kumori stopped mid-step. Rage flared in his eyes. He had risen from poverty through relentless effort and undeniable talent to become a Master. To be accused of dishonesty by a pampered youth cut deep.

His hands blurred as he formed seals. Chakra surged through him, and he slammed the ground with his palms.

“Earth Style, Stone Pillar!”

A dense stone pillar erupted from behind Hanwu and forcefully slammed him forward. The impact could have shattered bones. Kumori intended it as a harsh warning to Hanwu to respect his elders.

Sadamasa and Natsutsuyu didn't intervene. In reality, they also found Hanwu's extravagance distasteful. Still, since they already accepted his money, they would fulfill their duty.

"So, we can rest for today, right?" Sadamasa asked lightly.

Before the two Masters could respond, Hanwu's voice cut in. "Sir, you held back, but you made a solid start to the lesson. Now, I need all three of you to attack me with the same intensity. Do it as if you intend to kill me."

Hanwu pushed himself back to his feet and wiped the blood from his lips. That blow had increased the Duel meter by 30%. A few more strikes would earn him an upgrade point.

The result strengthened his conviction that he had made the right decision. Spending money to grow stronger was one of the fastest paths to power. Experience had taught him that lesson time and again. With Undying, his wounds healed rapidly.

The three Masters stared at him, astonished. The arrogant brat before them had just become far more interesting.

: Chapter 657

Chapter 657 - Don't Stop

The three Masters readied themselves for the lesson. The fastest to act was Sadamasa. His fist crashed into Hanwu's chest with crushing force. The sharp crack of breaking bone echoed, but the attack didn't end there.

Kumori completed his hand seals, and his cheeks swelled. He then shot a huge fireball at Hanwu. "Fire Style, Grand Fireball!"

The fireball engulfed Hanwu. Already crippled by shattered bones, he took the flames head-on. Fire swallowed him whole, and when it faded his body stood blackened and smoking. In the next instant, Undying activated. His charred skin peeled away and recovered, while his broken bones fused and aligned. Within seconds, Hanwu stood whole again.

Hanwu rolled his shoulders and chuckled. "Teachers, use a bit more force. I can endure it."

He couldn't suppress his grin. After two hits, the Duel meter reached 100%, granting him an upgrade point. With it, he upgraded his Seal level to five, increasing the speed at which he formed hand seals.

If enduring attacks filled the meter so quickly, how much would striking back yield? He started forming hand seals for a counterattack.

He had just completed them when a sudden stab of pain pierced his chest, snapping his focus into clarity.

Natsutsuyu had somehow appeared before him without his noticing. A bloodied kunai rested in her hand. She had used her Genjutsu so subtly that he never sensed it.

In the next instant, Undying activated again, healing his wound. At the same time, his completed hand seals triggered his Swap Jutsu. He exchanged places with a pebble behind Natsutsuyu and tried to punch at her. In his haste, he relied on raw strength rather than Taijutsu.

As a Master, Natsutsuyu reacted instinctively. She dodged without even turning. Still, she was one step too slow. Hanwu's fist slid past her smooth skin. Even though he caused no injury, he still made contact, so the Duel meter rose to 50%. The increase exceeded what he gained from enduring attacks.

So attacking fills it faster. Hanwu barely had time to savor the discovery before Natsutsuyu angrily spun and kicked him away.

He flew backward, yet even then he found the breath to taunt her. "You are wearing pink!"

Sadamasa and Kumori stopped mid-motion and pretended that they had heard nothing.

A flush crept across Natsutsuyu's pale face. She regretted her choice of dress. Also, her anger flared hotter at Hanwu's shameless remark. Even after catching a glimpse, he had the nerve to announce it aloud. She would teach him a lesson he wouldn't forget.

Her fingers fluttered like butterflies as she swiftly completed her seals. In the next instant, Hanwu found himself in hell. Numerous demons swung their blades and stabbed him. He knew these were illusions, but the pain felt real all the same.

At the same time, the meter was slowly progressing. Every blow from a demon increased it by 1%. Hundreds of demons were attacking him simultaneously.

"Don't stop... Don't... Don't stop..." Hanwu muttered with pleasure and joy as he was stuck in the Genjutsu.

Natsutsuyu still simmered with irritation. Despite her provocative appearance, she was actually a pure-hearted maiden. She dressed seductively only because it made it easier to drag her opponents into her Genjutsu. To her, it was more of a work uniform.

Still, Hanwu wasn't an enemy, so she meant to punish him a little. After three seconds, she released the Genjutsu. She was certain that even such a brief torment would have traumatized Hanwu.

Unexpectedly, Hanwu staggered upright and said, "Teacher, can you use that Genjutsu again? I'll pay you extra."

Natsutsuyu's anger evaporated at once. She now suspected he had lost his sanity. Meanwhile, Sadamasa and Kumori examined him from head to toe. They had never encountered a ninja quite like Hanwu.

Hanwu's excitement only grew. He had gained four upgrade points in that short time. If the battle continued, he was confident that he could raise all his parameters to ten and become the strongest ninja within seven days!

"Teachers, please continue," he urged. "I can't wait."

The trio looked at each other and agreed that such a peculiar case required the Shadow's attention. Fearing that Hanwu would flee, Sadamasa and Kumori stayed behind to continue attacking him, while Natsutsuyu left to report.

Hanwu endured their combined attacks and slowly improved his parameters. At first, he couldn't hit them at all. As the session wore on, he could land occasional blows. Three hours later, his blows connected consistently.

Sadamasa and Kumori panted with exhaustion, while Hanwu remained vigorous and demanded more. He warned them that if they stopped attacking, he would attack them instead.

Hanwu was about to use a jutsu when Natsutsuyu returned with the Giant Wood Village's Shadow. The latter used Wood Prison to trap Hanwu and turned to the three Masters. "Gather all the available information on him."

"Yes!" they answered in unison.

Before they could move, Hanwu used Swap and switched places with a pebble, slipping free of the prison. "There's no need to do something so troublesome. I am Kokkai Hanwu."

He used the Black Water Bullet, the Kokkai family's unique Hijutsu, and struck the wooden prison. The jutsu corroded one of the wooden beams, and it snapped in half. The jutsu left no doubt about his lineage.

The Shadow frowned. He kept close watch over every major development in the village. Just yesterday, a report had crossed his desk stating that Hanwu had completed his coming-of-age ceremony and earned an Excellent evaluation from his family.

Yet only now, seeing him in action, did he grasp the boy's true strength. Since the Kokkai family was one of the village's most prominent families, the Shadow chose to trust him.

In that case, Hanwu must receive proper guidance and correct resources, the Shadow thought.

He instructed, "Bring him back with me. Also, summon the patriarch of the Kokkai family. I want to talk to him."

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 658 - I Want Another Hour

The patriarch was unsettled. As he made his way to the Shadow's office, he wondered whether his identity had been exposed.

But if they have discovered my identity as Lord Huangquan's believer, why would the Shadow summon me to his office? Had my secret truly come to light, he would've acted personally and captured me with a small team of elite ninjas. Lord Huangquan is still an enemy opposed by all eight ninja villages.

When he reached the office, the patriarch took a deep breath and knocked.

"Come in," the Shadow answered.

The patriarch entered. "Lord Shadow, is something the matter?"

The Shadow rose from his seat and gestured for Hakurou to sit. "Hakurou, you've rendered tremendous service to our village!"

That only deepened Hakurou's confusion. He hadn't accepted any mission in quite some time. Since when did he contribute anything to the village?

"You've nurtured an exceptional son!" the Shadow continued.

Hakurou assumed the praise was sarcastic and quickly replied, "Lord Shadow, are you referring to Hanwu? Tell me if he did anything wrong. I will personally punish him and provide the village with a proper explanation!"

Hakurou was actually worried that the Giant Wood Village's punishment would be too lenient. Had the decision been his alone, he would have executed Hanwu on the spot.

Meanwhile, the Shadow misunderstood his urgency as paternal concern and assumed that Hakurou couldn't bear to see his son suffer punishment.

"Calm yourself," the Shadow said, patting his shoulder. "I know you care deeply for your son, but this is good news."

Hakurou frowned. "Good news?"

Since when did Hanwu do anything worthy of praise for the village?

"Your son possesses extraordinary talent. I've decided to teach him myself. Before that, however, he must complete a certain mission."

"Is the mission dangerous?" Hakurou asked nervously.

"It will be very dangerous!"

Hakurou almost shouted, "Then you must allow him to take part!"

"I know you value your son, but..." The Shadow assumed that he had misheard. "Wait, did you just agree to send him?"

"Serving the Giant Wood Village is the Kokkai family's duty," Hakurou said firmly. "Lord Shadow, please set your mind at ease and let Hanwu participate in the mission. You must!"

Hakurou's magnanimity touched the Shadow. If every Hijutsu family showed such selflessness, the Giant Wood Village would surpass the other seven ninja villages in strength.

"With your consent, this becomes much simpler," the Shadow remarked.

Both men exhaled in relief. Hakurou knew that Hanwu was only an Apprentice. In a mission the Shadow described as dangerous, the boy would likely die. Once Hanwu was dead, he could report back to Lord Huangquan and claim an indescribable power.

Still, a sliver of doubt crept in. What if the mission isn't that difficult and he won't die?

Hakurou decided to seek clarification. "Lord Shadow, could you tell me what kind of mission and how dangerous it is?"

The Shadow regarded him sidelong. The mission was supposed to be classified, but as Hanwu's father, Hakurou was effectively tied to it. There was little harm in sharing the essentials.

"Our patrols discovered an island beyond our borders. A certain unwanted guest resides there. A Giant Sage. I am assembling a small team to capture it and strengthen our village."

Hakurou was so overjoyed that he struggled to suppress his laughter. Giant Sages stood in a class of their own. A ninja from the Giant Wood Village had fought against a Giant Sage in the past, and their grave was already overgrown with weeds. He was confident that Hanwu would certainly die.

The Shadow heard Hakurou's soft laughter and assumed that it reflected pride in Hanwu's talent. Had he known Hakurou's true thoughts, he would've killed him.

In the end, the two reached the same conclusion: Hanwu would participate in that dangerous mission.

Elsewhere, the three teachers dragged Hanwu into another room.

He wouldn't let them off so easily. "Teachers, let's continue!"

Sadamasa and Kumori were exhausted. They had already fought for three hours, yet Hanwu still demanded more. Their chakra reserves were nearly depleted, while Hanwu remained energetic.

If the fight continued, they would face an unfavorable outcome. Hanwu was only an Apprentice; they were Masters. Victory would earn them no recognition, since it was expected. Defeat would bring humiliation!

Both men turned to Natsutsuyu. "Do you have a Genjutsu to make him shut up a little?"

Natsutsuyu was already itching to use them on Hanwu. "Let me try."

She made a series of hand seals and used her Genjutsu on Hanwu.

He didn't struggle against her and was soon dragged into the Genjutsu. Within it, hundreds of demons continuously attacked him. He felt their blows and watched the meter rise steadily.

Unfortunately, it didn't last long. After enduring the Genjutsu for quite a while, he slowly developed resistance. The demons' attacks gradually lost their impact, and the meter stopped progressing.

Dissatisfied, Hanwu forcefully broke out of the Genjutsu and barked at Natsutsuyu, “Teacher, how could you do this? You should go all out against me. You can’t fool me with these small tricks. Didn’t I pay you? Give me another hour. I’ll pay you more afterward!”

Natsutsuyu stared at him, unsure whether he had truly broken free or was still stuck in the Genjutsu. Since he demanded something stronger, she decided to oblige. She formed hand seals again and unleashed her strongest Genjutsu on him.

“S-rated Genjutsu, Helljoy!”

Darkness swallowed Hanwu as the Genjutsu took hold. He found himself in a dark world where strange creatures surrounded him: a bird-face Bodhisattva, a terrifying demon gripping a trident, a monster clad in monk’s robes, and many others.

In that strange world, Hanwu was their common enemy. They attacked together with kicks, punches, stabs, and flames. They tormented him by every means imaginable.

As Hanwu endured the pain and watched the meter climb rapidly, a satisfied smile spread across his face.

Chapter 659 - Refusing Empty Promises

Under the Genjutsu’s effect, Hanwu’s meter filled rapidly, and he soon grew immune to its illusions. By the second day, Natsutsuyu’s Genjutsu no longer affected him. He could even break free on his own with ease.

Any ordinary ninja, even a Master, would need some time to recover after dispelling a Genjutsu. Meanwhile, Hanwu’s soul was too strong and could withstand the damage inflicted by illusions.

The other Masters had to admit that Hanwu was a monster. Over the next two days, Kumori and Sadamasa subjected him to relentless tag-team attacks, and Hanwu accumulated numerous upgrade points.

After allocating them, he reviewed the updated parameters on his interface.

[Name: Kokkai Hanwu]

[Strength: Master (Ranks: Apprentice, Adept, Master, Shadow)]

[Nin: 9 (Ninjutsu proficiency)]

[Tai: 10 (Taijutsu proficiency)]

[Gen: 9 (Genjutsu proficiency)]

[Sage: 8 (Experience and Wisdom)]

[Power: 10 (Physical Strength)]

[Speed: 9 (Speed and Reaction Speed)]

[Control: 8 (Chakra Recovery Speed)]

[Seal: 8 (Speed and Accuracy of Hand Seals)]

[Skill Ranks: E, D, C, B, A, S]

[Taijutsu: Vortex Collapsing Fist B, Slashing Steel Palm B]

[Ninjutsu: Swap B, Transform B, Pocket Dimension B]

[Genjutsu: Oversight B]

[Hijutsu: Water Style: Black Water Multiclone A (Fused Multiclone and Black Water Bullet)]

[Divine Power: Undying. The body functions at ten times its normal capacity. All wounds can heal within a short period. Dismemberment and fatal wounds regenerate at a slower but steady rate.]

[Divine Jurisdiction: Duel. During battle, all parameters increase. The host will enter combat flow more easily, and their skills will be enhanced. Current progress: 60%]

Neither Sadamasa nor Kumori could defeat him anymore. Natsutsuyu couldn't deal damage at all.

It took him only four days to reach this stage.

Naturally, the speed of Hanwu's growth stunned the Shadow. Originally, he had intended for Hanwu to rely on Undying to assist the team during the mission. Now, it appeared that Hanwu had become the team's main force, and the Shadow's confidence in the mission increased accordingly.

That night, the Shadow summoned them to his office for a briefing. At first, the mission required only Sadamasa and Kumori. Since Natsutsuyu was one of Hanwu's teachers, the Shadow decided to include her and Hanwu as well. With all four participating, the success rate would rise.

Once everyone was present, the Shadow took out the mission scroll and laid it before them. “According to our scouts’ report, our target is located on Whirlpool Island, fifty kilometers from our village. Your objective is to capture the Giant Sage and bring it back. If containment is not an option, you have permission to kill it.”

The moment he heard that a Giant Sage was their target, Kumori asked, “Which Giant Sage is on the island? I recall that there are nine, correct?”

The war between ninjas and giants had lasted for years. The ninja villages already gathered extensive intelligence on each of the nine Giant Sages, including their names, powers, and distinctive traits. Each required a different strategy.

The Shadow answered, “The Maw Giant is our target.”

According to their intel on the Maw Giant, the previous Maw Giants shared several unique traits: razor-sharp teeth, tremendous bite force, exceptional agility, and destructive power. The Maw Giant, however, wasn’t considered especially powerful. It ranked below average among the nine Giant Sages.

Sadamasa felt some relief when he learned that this was their target. Past Maw Giants had been slightly smaller, around ten meters tall, which meant that Sadamasa’s Taijutsu would be effective.

The Shadow suddenly warned, “You must remain cautious. There are threats other than the Maw Giant. It’s likely that the traitor ninjas will appear. Our reports indicate that they are searching for clues about the Giant Sages.”

The group grew serious.

“Lord Shadow, do you mean that we will most likely fight against the traitor ninjas on this mission?”

“Yes. According to my report, they have already captured a Giant Sage. They have begun extracting and selling its spinal fluid to create more witless giants and disrupt the battle. If you encounter them, proceed with extreme caution. You have permission to forfeit the mission at any time if your lives are in danger.”

The Shadow delivered the warning with unmistakable gravity. The Giant Wood Village had a smaller population than the other villages. He had no intention of sacrificing several powerful Masters for the sake of this mission.

The three Masters acknowledged the order. “Yes!”

Hanwu didn’t mind. After all, his only goal was to become strong.

The Shadow noticed his silence and the distant look in his eyes. Hanwu had just joined his ranks, and the village hadn't invested much in him. Hence, it was natural that he did not yet feel intense loyalty toward the village.

As the village's leader, the Shadow concluded that he needed to give Hanwu an appropriate reward to build trust between them.

"Kokkai Hanwu, since this is your first mission as a Master, I will give you a reward if you successfully return. By my authority as the Shadow, I will allow you to learn any A-rated Hijutsu in this village. With your parameters, I believe that you can master it."

Hanwu inwardly scoffed. That offer sounded hollow. He would only receive it after returning. By then, he suspected that most of his jutsu would have already reached the A rating and rival a Hijutsu. He doubted that he would need the reward at all.

The Shadow frowned when Hanwu responded with calm indifference rather than gratitude. In his experience, such an offer usually inspired overwhelming thanks. Why was Hanwu unaffected?

The Shadow asked, "Kokkai Hanwu, are you not satisfied with the gift?"

Hanwu maintained a respectful tone to preserve the Shadow's authority. "I am satisfied. However, I would prefer to learn it before the mission to strengthen myself."

Hanwu believed that a reward held value only when it was already in his hands. Any unfulfilled promise was nothing more than words.

Kumori was dissatisfied with his response. "Hanwu, we depart tomorrow. You can't master a Hijutsu in just one night. We don't have time to delay the mission while you train."

Kumori still bore the wounds from several defeats at Hanwu's hands.

Hanwu shook his head. "I'm talented and smart. I will only need one night."

Hanwu wanted the reward upfront, and the Shadow had a habit of indulging prodigies. He was also curious to see whether Hanwu truly possessed the talent to master an A-rated Hijutsu.

"Very well," the Shadow said at last. "I will grant your request. You may begin learning it before the mission starts."

: Chapter 660

Chapter 660 - Eight Gates

With the Shadow's guidance, Hanwu reached the vault that housed the Giant Wood Village's various Hijutsu. Inside, a huge scroll listed the names of every Hijutsu.

"Place your palm on the scroll and focus on those that you can learn," the Shadow instructed.

Hanwu obeyed. The moment his palm touched the scroll, darkness engulfed him. Bubbles flickered to life, their glow the sole light source. As he approached, he noticed that each bubble contained a jutsu.

[Ninjutsu: Multi Shadow Clone A]

[Ninjutsu: Lightning Cutter A]

[Ninjutsu: Magnify A]

With his current parameters, Hanwu could learn almost 90% of the Hijutsu recorded here. He knew what he specialized in, however. Since he transmigrated through the Divine Soul Transmigration option, his strongest powers were Undying and Duel. He needed a jutsu that would complement them.

He scanned the bubbles and found a suitable match.

[Taijutsu: Eight Gates A]

This Taijutsu enhanced the user's physical strength. It was separated into eight gates, and each one would unlock a further increase in raw strength. A user who activated all eight gates would burn away their life force as their strength reached the limits of the body.

For most ninjas, this Taijutsu was detrimental. After all, training it carried a high risk of severe injury and bringing themselves very close to death.

For Hanwu, however, it was a perfect match since he had Undying. It burned life force, but with Undying, Hanwu didn't need to fear depletion. As such, he selected it and started to cultivate it on the spot. His aptitude allowed him to grasp it without difficulty. His Tai, Power, and Speed were at ten, ten, and nine, respectively.

The Shadow and the three Masters watched as Hanwu managed to open six of the eight gates in just one night. The speed defied belief. Even Kumori, the so-called genius of the commoners, acknowledged Hanwu's talent in Taijutsu.

After this, the Shadow's confidence in the mission increased.

Soon, it was time to depart. The four of them gathered their supplies and set out for Whirlpool Island.

All four were Masters, so they traveled swiftly and reached the island within half a day. From an elevated vantage point, they surveyed the Maw Giant below. Thirty-five giants, each twenty meters tall, stood behind it. Numerous mutants clustered among them. These giants formed several defensive rings, guarding the Maw Giant at the center.

“The Giant Sages are unique amongst giants. If we want to capture it alive, we must first deal with the giants protecting it,” Kumori explained.

Thirty-five giants were no small force. Each stood twenty meters tall, comparable in strength to a Master. It would be no small feat to kill them.

Natsutsuyu, who wore a revealing outfit, spoke up. “I have a better plan. I can use my Genjutsu to distract them. But there are too many giants here. I can maintain it for three minutes at most.”

Kumori weighed her proposal. With the three of them working together, they could likely capture the Maw Giant within three minutes. In the end, he nodded. “We shall do as you say.”

Sadamasa agreed with the plan as well. Hanwu also nodded. He had already received his reward, so he intended to earn it.

After confirming the plan, Kumori refined the details.

Once everything was set and each of them signaled agreement, they moved. Natsutsuyu acted first, sprinting toward the giants.

The giants caught her scent and charged like wild beasts. Natsutsuyu focused and maneuvered with fluid precision. Using their massive bodies as footholds, she jumped thirty meters into the air, completed her hand seals midair, and unleashed her A-rated Genjutsu, Confusing Miasma. The witless giants fell under its influence at once and froze in place as if stripped of their souls.

Natsutsuyu maintained her Genjutsu from atop a giant’s head and signaled to the others.

They acted swiftly. Kumori channeled his chakra to unleash a powerful lightning-based ninjutsu at a moment's notice. Meanwhile, Hanwu and Sadamasa charged forward, slipped past the immobilized ring of giants, and confronted the Maw Giant head-on.

The Maw Giant knew that it had been targeted the moment the ring of giants moved. Still, it didn’t panic. Though small for its kind, its combat strength far exceeded that of the witless giants.

The moment Hanwu and Sadamasa landed, the Maw Giant struck. Its claws tore through the air at a speed that shattered the sound barrier.

Sadamasa had anticipated the attack. He completed his seals and slammed his palms onto the ground. “Summoning Jutsu!”

A huge mammoth materialized and absorbed the blow with its body. The Maw Giant’s claws ripped into its thick hide.

Hanwu and Sadamasa attacked in tandem, but the Maw Giant’s hide was as tough as the mammoth’s. Their attacks failed to penetrate and only seemed to provoke it. Not only was it slashing at them, but it was also snapping at them with its huge maw.

The Maw Giant tore off the mammoth’s proboscis, and it disappeared with a pained cry. The giant then pushed back Hanwu and Sadamasa.

Sadamasa shouted, “Kumori, are you done?”

Dark storm clouds gathered overhead in answer. Lightning flashed and struck the Maw Giant without warning. The bolt coursed through its body and left it paralyzed.

Hanwu used his strongest attack and opened the sixth gate of Eight Gates. Steam swirled around him, and he felt weightless. At that moment, he judged himself at least comparable to an Earthsunder life form.

He dashed forward and targeted the Maw Giant’s toughest feature, its teeth. “Vortex Collapsing Fist!”

Empowered by Eight Gates, the Taijutsu’s destructive force multiplied several times over. One punch shattered the teeth that the Maw Giant prized most. Sheer agony snapped the giant out of its paralysis, and it instinctively touched its mouth, only to find empty gums. Its teeth were gone!

Enraged, it lunged at Hanwu in a frenzy. Empowered by Eight Gates, Hanwu moved with blinding speed. He could even circle the Maw Giant. At one point, the Maw Giant couldn’t react in time, and Hanwu jumped onto its back.

“Slashing Steel Palm!”

Tens of slashes rained down on the Maw Giant’s nape. Even though its hide was thick, it couldn’t withstand so many rapid slicing attacks. By the end of the assault, its nape had become a bloodied mess. The Maw Giant was in so much pain that it fainted.

Hanwu had deliberately avoided severing the key muscle in its nape that controlled its movement.

As Hanwu was about to kill it, Kumori stopped him. “Wait, keep it alive!”

Hanwu frowned. “Why?”

“Lord Shadow ordered us to bring it back to the village for research as a potential secret weapon. Its value will plummet if we kill it,” Kumori replied.

Hanwu stopped and jumped down from the Maw Giant. The battle had filled his meter five times, earning him five upgrade points.

As Kumori stepped forward to seal the Maw Giant, someone clapped from above. “Not bad, ninjas of the Giant Wood Village. We shall accept the Maw Giant now, thanks.”

Hanwu looked up and spotted two figures hovering overhead. One of them was standing atop a giant eagle, likely a summoned beast. The second figure hovered on mechanical, doll-like wings that flapped behind its back. His face was blank and emotionless, as if nothing could attract his interest.

“Rogue! You guys finally decided to show yourselves,” Kumori growled.

They had exhausted much of their chakra in the fight. If they failed to drive off the two Rogue ninjas and lost the Maw Giant, the mission the Shadow had assigned them would end in failure.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 661

Chapter 661 - You Can Fly?

Natsutsuyu’s three-minute time limit was up. Having run out of chakra, she was forced to release her Genjutsu and rush toward the other three.

The giants woke up from the Genjutsu, caught the scent of the ninjas, and charged toward them.

When Kumori saw this, he realized the impossibility of transporting the Maw Giant with them at this point and decisively commanded, “Hanwu, kill that Maw Giant now!”

Hanwu was speechless. Kumori had told him not to kill it, only to reverse that order a few seconds later. The fact that Kumori treated him like an underling was irritating.

Before Hanwu could carry out the order, the two ninjas from Rogue attacked.

“I am the Hundred Beast Ninja Darcy, and it is your honor to die at my hands!” Darcy unfurled a scroll while seated atop a summoned eagle. Biting his finger, he let a drop of his blood fall onto the scroll. “Let’s see you try to defeat my army of summoned beasts. Summoning Jutsu, Bee Swarm! Summoning Jutsu, Explosive Bear! Summoning Jutsu, Split Hound!”

Darcy summoned beast after beast while chuckling.

The other ninja with the mechanical wings infused his chakra into a scroll, causing it to explode. Thirty-six golems of various shapes and sizes appeared.

“Azure Codex: 36 Slaughter,” he intoned, voice mechanical and devoid of feeling.

“You!” Kumori cried out in recognition. “You’re that traitor from the Fire Eye Village! The golem ninja Liuqing! You joined Rogue?!”

Liuqing remained expressionless as he directed eighteen of the golems to attack Kumori. The other eighteen golems split into three groups to attack Sadamasa, Hanwu, and Natsutsuyu.

At the same time, Darcy used his summoned beasts to distract the thirty-five giants so they wouldn’t interfere with the battle.

As Hanwu was about to attack the golems, the ground suddenly shook. Four massive walls rose up to protect them. This was Kumori’s Ninjutsu, Earth Style: Earthstream Wall.

The toughness of this wall was yet to be seen, but the Cerberus heads on the walls were admittedly quite lifelike. When Liuqing saw the walls appear, he commanded the golems to jump over them to attack.

Sadamasa had worked with Kumori for a long time and smoothly followed up with his household’s Hijutsu. “Taijutsu: Rampaging Steam.”

Heat radiated from his body, and he started punching at the golems from a considerable distance away. The golems were destroyed mid-leap as if directly punched by Sadamasa’s fists.

Natsutsuyu wasn’t slacking either.

“Ninjutsu: Kunai Clone!” she cried. Her attack picked off any straggling golems.

Although Hanwu saw her throw a single kunai, it appeared to multiply in midair. Their attacks made swift work of the golems. Hanwu was about to join in when Kumori stopped him.

“You have a more important mission. Follow me!” Kumori instructed, bringing Hanwu to the unconscious Maw Giant. “Hanwu, listen to me. You need to bring the Maw Giant back to the village.”

Hanwu was at a loss. Why do you change your mind like the wind? You told me not to kill it before, then to kill it, and now you want me to bring it back? How can I bring it back on my own when it’s so big? Cut it into pieces?

As if sensing his unspoken question, Kumori assured him. “Don’t worry, I have a way for you to transport it back.”

Kumori then made a series of hand seals before trying to place his palm onto Hanwu’s abdomen. Hanwu, however, was fast since his Speed parameter was already at 9, and avoided his palm easily.

“Don’t even try to ambush me!” Hanwu snapped, hackles raised.

“You dolt! I’m trying to give you the Four Guardian Seals so you can seal the Maw Giant inside of you!”

“Are you sure?”

“We’re allies. Why would I harm you?” Kumori asked exasperatedly.

The combined attacks from both the summoned beasts and the golems would have the Earthstream Wall crumbling soon. Sadamasa and Natsutsuyu couldn’t hold on for much longer either. Kumori needed to complete the seal as soon as possible.

“Alright, you’re right,” Hanwu agreed, finally accepting Kumori’s Four Guardians Seal.

Once activated, the Maw Giant was sucked into his body. Hanwu sensed an isolated space within his body, with the Maw Giant held within. With that, Kumori fell to the ground in exhaustion. The Four Guardians Seal had taken up most of his chakra.

“You’re the fastest amongst us. Bring the Maw Giant back to the village, quick!” Kumori urged weakly.

“What about you guys?” asked Hanwu.

Kumori smiled faintly. “It’s our honor to die for our village.”

Hanwu didn’t understand. “Why are we dying? I can defeat them.”

Kumori shook his head. “That person controlling the golems is a traitor ninja from the Fire Eye Village named Liuqing. His control over golems is exceptional, and he still has a trump card he hasn’t used. It’s a clay golem that counters ninjas that specialize in

Taijutsu, like you. You need to escape before they recognize how special you are. Run. Time is running out."

As he said that, an Explosive Bear smashed through the Earthstream Wall.

Darcy jumped down from the eagle. "Run? Where can you run? My summoned beasts have surrounded you. There's no escape."

The ground shook beneath Hanwu's feet once again. Huge ants the size of a fist broke through the earth around them. Their sheer numbers resembled a black tidal wave.

Hanwu activated Oversight to sense everything around him and was shocked to find that the swarm of ants stretched a ten-kilometer radius around them. It was like Darcy said, they were properly surrounded.

"My S-rated Summoning Jutsu, Black Ant Kingdom, probably caught you off guard. The only way to escape my black ants is to fly!"

"Oh? What makes you think I can't fly?" Hanwu bluffed.

Darcy panicked. Liuqing hastily pulled out a scroll and summoned several flying golems to prevent Hanwu from escaping.

Meanwhile, Kumori glanced at Hanwu with a sliver of hope. "Hanwu, you can fly?"

"No," Hanwu discreetly whispered back with a smile.

Kumori almost coughed up blood. Why are you talking so much if you can't fly?

Having run out of chakra, Sadamasa and Natsutsuyu also gave up. They were destined to die.

"So what if your flying golems stop me from flying?" Hanwu asked loudly enough for Darcy and Liuqing to hear, a strange confidence in his tone. "I can run faster than I can fly anyway. Want to see?"

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 662 - S-Rated Taijutsu: Flesh Ascendant

“You can run faster than you can fly? What an interesting ninja. My ants have spread out across a ten-kilometer radius. It doesn’t matter how fast you run, as long as you’re within that radius, you’ll be nothing but food for my ants.”

“Who says?” Hanwu bowed forward and prepared to run.

However, Liuqing wasn’t willing to risk the gamble and summoned the rest of his golems. A massive golem made from clay splattered to the ground, its form more intimidating than the Explosive Bear beside it.

“Capture him to extract the Maw Giant,” Liuqing commanded. “Kill the rest.”

“Understood,” Darcy replied, directing the black ants toward Hanwu and the rest.

Hanwu smiled and unleashed his Taijutsu. “Sixth gate, open!”

A powerful air pressure blasted outward from Hanwu, either killing or blowing away the black ants around him.

“Stop him!” Liuqing cried.

His clay golem pounced on Hanwu. Its sticky clay surface meant anything that came into contact with it would remain trapped forever, or until Liuqing willed it free.

The clay golem was Liuqing’s trump card against Taijutsu users. Unfortunately for him, his opponent this time was Hanwu. When the clay golem attempted to stop him, Hanwu didn’t bother to fight it head-on and instead deftly avoided it.

A powerful wave of air rippled out with every step he took, killing wave after wave of black ants. Though the ants weren’t strong, they were still part of the S-rated Summoning Jutsu, Black Ant Kingdom, and Hanwu’s meter filled up by a thousandth every time he killed one.

This progress was minute, but the abundance of ants around him meant he could easily slaughter thousands with a single step—sometimes even 10,000 if he was lucky.

Hanwu wasn’t about to let this chance to improve himself slip away. Running like a madman around Darcy and Liuqing, he farmed the ants, occasionally making his rounds to blow them away from Kumori and the other two as well.

Both Darcy and Liuqing were at a loss. Black Ant Kingdom couldn’t get close to him, and the clay golem couldn’t catch him. The way Hanwu ran circles around them had them looking like fools. Naturally, they were pissed.

“You bastard. You forced my hand!” Darcy snarled, losing his composure. A series of hand seals later, a huge amount of chakra gathered within his body before turning into a massive summoning array.

“S-rated Summoning Jutsu: Giant Salamander!”

A massive salamander landed with a loud boom, too large to even move on land.

“Giant Salamander, use your poison mist!” Darcy commanded, putting on the gas mask he always had on hand and withdrawing the other summoned beasts.

The salamander obediently belched out a purple gas of poison, which swiftly covered the area.

Hanwu was quick, but even he couldn’t avoid breathing in the purple gas. The poison entered his body, and he could feel his cells being destroyed. Fortunately, Undying regenerated new cells to replace the ones he had lost at a similar rate.

Even so, the constant process of death and regeneration happening at a cellular level was uncomfortable, and Hanwu slowed down drastically.

Darcy chuckled with pride. “My salamander’s poison is potent. Even a Master can only last ten minutes. You won’t last more than five with the way you’re exerting yourself. The poison will flow through your bloodstream and enter your heart. Before long, you’ll find it harder to breathe and start to suffocate. You’ll suffer the worst kind of death there is.”

This was Darcy’s ultimate move, and he greatly enjoyed watching as his prey slowly suffocated in the poison mist.

Meanwhile, Hanwu realized that Undying’s countering of the poison was rapidly filling up his meter. With Undying, he was certain that he wouldn’t be poisoned to death.

Since he couldn’t die, he decided to allow the poison to ravage his body further. He abruptly started running toward the giant salamander, where the poison fog was densest.

Hanwu opened his mouth wide to breathe in as much poison as possible. The more poison he took in, the faster his cells would be destroyed, and the more Undying could regenerate.

His meter increased rapidly, and he soon obtained 16 upgrade points, enough for him to upgrade an A-rated jutsu to S. Coincidentally, he had an A-rated jutsu, so he didn’t hesitate to upgrade Eight Gates.

New information appeared in his mind. His body also changed. Checking the jutsu, he realized that Eight Gates had been upgraded to Flesh Ascendant. This allowed him to open all eight gates without any side effects.

This ultimately was of little use to Hanwu as Undying had a similar effect, but he couldn't reverse the upgrade. Nevertheless, he activated his newly upgraded Flesh Ascendant, and an even more powerful wave of air blasted out from Hanwu.

The purple poison mist was blown away. Darcy was caught in the gust that Hanwu had released and was pinned to the ground. "What's... Going... On?"

Hanwu's first target was Darcy's Giant Salamander. Raising his fist, he punched it. With Flesh Ascendant in effect, his Vortex Collapsing Fist sucked the air around him into a vortex around his fist.

The Giant Salamander was eviscerated with a single punch, its body exploding into tiny flesh particles that scattered through the air.

When Darcy felt his summoned beast die, he no longer dared to make a sound, feigning death on the ground in the hopes that Hanwu would overlook him.

Liuqing had observed this series of events from his vantage point in the sky and came to the realization that he was up against a particularly powerful opponent. As a precaution, he decided to use his strongest golem. He unfurled a scroll, and it exploded into a box-shaped golem, which he tossed down at Hanwu.

Making a series of hand seals, he cried, "S-rated Golem Sealing Jutsu, Void Prison!"

: Chapter 663

Chapter 663 - Void Prison

The box-shaped golem fell to the ground and scattered into numerous pieces before shooting toward Hanwu. The pressure Hanwu was still exerting didn't stop the pieces from entering his body and turning into a seal that trapped him in a black void.

From the outside, Hanwu had turned into a box that matched his height.

"We finally caught him," Darcy muttered, pushing off the ground and brushing the dust off his body. He was particularly petty and held grudges, so once the seal was complete, he ran to the box and kicked it. "Weren't you all powerful? Where has that bravado gone? You're now trapped in the Void Prison, and you can't escape unless Liuqing lets you out. Just grow old and die inside."

The Void Prison rolled on the ground. A crack echoed. Darcy was so shocked that he froze in place. Liuqing flew down to check the condition of the Void Prison.

A tiny crack had appeared. While not enough to break the Void Prison on its own, if more appeared, it would eventually shatter, and Hanwu would be released.

“Liuqing, I thought your Void Prison was sturdy enough to capture even Giant Sages? What’s going on here?” Darcy asked, voice trembling in fear.

Another crack echoed. A second fracture appeared on the box. At this rate, it would take Hanwu less than an hour to break free.

Liuqing’s voice, however, was still monotonous when he responded, “We just need to head back and let the boss deal with this as quickly as possible. We can’t stop him with the two of us.”

“What are we waiting for? Let’s go,” Darcy urged, not wanting to deal with Hanwu any longer than necessary.

Liuqing turned to the three Masters on the verge of death from the poison. This was the best chance to kill them. As he stepped forward to do so, another crack sounded. Hanwu was slowly but surely breaking through.

Panicked, Darcy persuaded Liuqing, “There’s no time to deal with them. We need to head back and deal with this now.”

Darcy was worried that Hanwu would break out from the Void Prison if they delayed any longer. Liuqing didn’t have a second Void Prison Golem to seal Hanwu, so he nodded and hurriedly flew back to their base with Darcy.

Kumori, on the verge of death, watched with helpless fury as the two ninjas from Rogue flew off. He found it hard to move his fingers, much less stand. Even so, he still struggled to scratch out a report on the ground.

He had to get this information to the village before he died of poison. As his consciousness flickered, he noticed a figure in black robes and a black mask approaching. None of the three recognized the man.

“Such delicious souls. I shall offer you to the great Lord Huangquan!” The man made several hand seals. “S-rated Sealing Jutsu: Reaper Seal!”

An illusion of Lord Huangquan appeared behind the man in black. The illusion slowly extended its arms toward the three Masters before pulling their souls from their bodies and eating them.

The soul of the man was also taken, but after a moment, it was released back to his body. The man had received a powerful jutsu that enhanced his physical prowess, the S-rated Taijutsu: Rampaging Steam.

“Thank you, Lord Huangquan. I will serve you forever,” the man vowed devoutly, removing his mask to pray toward the illusion.

It was Kokkai Hakurou, the patriarch of the Kokkai family!

“I will kill my son to complete the tribute and return to your embrace as soon as possible,” he promised.

Meanwhile, in the Void Prison, Hanwu sat cross-legged, engaged in a conversation with the Maw Giant.

“You despicable human, let me out!”

The Maw Giant had recovered its stamina after regaining consciousness and had since been struggling against the chains and cage of the Four Guardians Seal. Every time it tried to escape, electricity arced out and zapped it. Still, the shaking of the chains and cage indicated that the seal wasn’t as stable as expected.

“Why should I let you out? Can you break free from the Void Prison?” Hanwu scoffed.

Despite being inside Hanwu, the Maw Giant could still sense the happenings outside. With a testy “Hmph!” it gave up.

“You can’t break free from the Void Prison, can you? But I can. I just don’t have enough chakra. Since you’re sealed inside of me, don’t you think you should be paying rent?”

“Do you think I’m sealed here by choice?!” the Maw Giant roared. “Let me out, you shitty bastard!”

Hanwu frowned. “It seems you don’t understand your situation. I can be perfectly violent, but I chose to be courteous first. Why don’t we have a duel?”

Having said that, he quietly activated Flesh Ascendant, and a terrifying pressure filled the space.

The Maw Giant trembled from fear. It had only ever felt pressure like this from the strongest Giant Sage, the Progenitor Giant. The suffocating feeling stifled all thoughts of fighting back. It knew it was useless to struggle. After all, the Maw Giant was only a below-average Giant Sage.

Hanwu stepped forward to grab the bars of the cage. Electricity arched out from the bars and shot him backward. This was a defense mechanism of the Four Guardians Seal.

The Maw Giant almost cried in happiness at the sight. It had previously thought the cage was imprisoning it, but it was actually protecting it from being bullied!

“Do you really think this cage can stop me?” Hanwu turned his hands into blades using Slashing Steel Palms. With Flesh Ascendant, the slashes he delivered were hundreds of times stronger.

His blows left deep grooves on the cage. A few more rounds of this and the cage would be sliced to pieces. The Maw Giant was enveloped in fear. Once the cage was gone, it would be the next victim of those blades!

Hanwu used it again. The grooves deepened until they were halfway through the bars. No longer able to endure the looming dread, the Maw Giant gave in.

“Alright, I give up,” it pleaded. “Stop attacking the cage. I will lend you my strength!”

“Good.” Hanwu stopped, sensing the Maw Giant send over its power as promised.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 664

Chapter 664 - Fusatsu

Back in Rogue’s secret base, six members were gathered around the Void Prison on the ground. The cracks webbed across its surface until it finally broke apart, freeing Hanwu.

Glancing around at the six Rogue members, Hanwu remarked nonchalantly, “Let me guess, you’ve brought me somewhere interesting, right?”

The group stared at him in bewilderment. Hanwu looked wildly different from before, with hardened bone covers on his head and hands that gave him a barbaric appearance.

Liuqing and Darcy knew Hanwu didn’t look like that before he was sealed. So where did it come from?

Noticing their stares, Hanwu explained, “I absorbed the Maw Giant’s energy and manifested it on my body. It’s normal if you haven’t seen this before.”

The Rogue members were astonished. This was the first time a ninja had ever used a Giant Sage's power! The leader of Rogue, a middle-aged man called Fusatsu, stepped forward. "Could you tell us how you used the Giant Sage's power?"

Hanwu observed the man. Despite his kind appearance, he exuded a subtle sense of danger. Fusatsu was almost certainly stronger than him, even with all eight gates open, and Hanwu couldn't help but wonder how much his meter would progress if they fought.

"Why don't you try to defeat me? I will tell you if you do."

Fusatsu remained silent, but his underlings were pissed. "You cocky bastard. You haven't earned the right to challenge our boss! Do you have a death wish or something? I can subdue you myself. Our boss doesn't even need to move."

"And who are you?" Hanwu scoffed.

"You would be scared witless if you knew my name. I was the most infamous ninja of Windmill Village. I am Sigurd, the drunk ninja!"

"Oh!" Hanwu feigned shock before deadpanning. "Never heard of you."

Sigurd looked as though he had found rat droppings in his meal, both disgusted and enraged. Grabbing his gourd of alcohol, he gulped it down.

"I will show you the power of the drunk ninja, Sigurd!" he declared, clutching the gourd with one hand while making seals with the other. "Fire Style: Ethanol Burner!"

Fierce flames rushed from his mouth in a mighty gust, carrying the scent of alcohol on its embers. Both the alcohol and the wind only fanned the fire hotter. The other members of Rogue stepped back to prevent themselves from getting caught in the crossfire.

Hanwu didn't move. He simply activated his most powerful jutsu, Flesh Ascendant. A powerful wind blasted out from him, blowing back the blistering blaze.

Hanwu stepped toward Sigurd. Sigurd tried to leap back, but Hanwu dashed forward with a Vortex Collapsing Fist before he could put any meaningful distance between them.

As a member of Rogue, Sigurd's strength was at least vouched for. Even so, Hanwu's Vortex Collapsing Fist had blasted even the massive S-rated Summoning Jutsu Giant Salamander into nothingness.

Hanwu's fist landed squarely. The resulting impact broke several ribs and blew Sigurd back in the process.

Unsatisfied with the disappointing fight, Hanwu glanced at the leader of Rogue, Fusatsu, and attacked without warning. "Your turn."

Fusatsu used all his strength to defend against Hanwu. Everyone watched as Fusatsu grew four arms and a dense bone plating across his body. He looked even more like a monster than Hanwu.

Blocking Hanwu's incoming fist with his own, he absorbed the power of the Vortex Collapsing Fist into his body. Hanwu was caught off guard. His mighty punch could level mountains. For it to do nothing to Fusatsu seemed illogical!

Hanwu used Vortex Collapsing Fist several more times, but Fusatsu absorbed every single one.

"My turn." Fusatsu retaliated with a single punch that shattered not only Hanwu's bone armor but also all of his bones. The impact of Fusatsu's fist was undeniably powerful.

A typical ninja, even a Master or a Shadow, would die from the hit. Thankfully, Hanwu wasn't a regular person. His Undying could even heal the most fatal of wounds.

Moreover, the Maw Giant in the Four Guardians Seal was also channeling its power toward Hanwu's recovery. Aware that the Rogues had been capturing Giant Sages, it knew its best bet lay with Hanwu. If it helped him, it would at least survive, albeit trapped, whereas only death awaited it if Rogue captured it. In other words, Hanwu couldn't die if it wanted to live.

With two different energies healing his body, Hanwu regained consciousness after three seconds. Realizing the single punch had filled his meter by 1000%, he staggered to his feet, his wounds all but healed by the time he stood tall. "Fuck yeah."

Rogue's medic was in shock. "That recovery speed! It's even stronger than the legendary S-rated Hijutsu Cellular Genesis. He's a rare research specimen."

Fusatsu was also surprised. That punch had been the strongest in his arsenal, yet Hanwu was not only still alive but could even stand tall. Just how preposterous is his regeneration speed? Is this the power of a Giant Sage?

"Come, let's continue! I still want to fight!" Hanwu rushed forward with another punch.

Fusatsu gripped Hanwu's incoming fist tightly, stopping him in his tracks. "You can take a single punch from me and survive. You're strong, but that doesn't mean you can't be defeated. If you join us, I can forgive your transgression."

"Everyone's trying to hunt you and your organization down." Hanwu shook free from the grasp. "Why do you think I would join you?"

"If you join us, I swear to fulfill one of your wishes. This isn't something the other ninja villages can do for you."

Hanwu hesitated. His enemies' words weren't to be believed, but it wouldn't hurt to gather information.

"Have you heard of the Reaper Seal?"

Fusatsu turned serious. "Are you connected to the evil God calling himself Lord Huangquan?"

Hanwu's eyes lit up. He had somehow accidentally found a person in the Giant Shadow Civilization with information about the evil God!

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 665 - I Think He Needs Some Company

Hanwu stepped back, releasing Flesh Ascendant as he stared into Fusatsu's eyes, trying to discern if the man was telling the truth.

Fusatsu's eyes were calm and unreadable, even despite Hanwu's experience in picking out liars. As if willing Hanwu to trust him, Fusatsu undid his transformation.

"The Reaper Seal took away the souls of my friends. I'm willing to join Rogue if it means I can save them," Hanwu said.

Fusatsu didn't fully believe his words, but neither could he ignore them. Still, he was aware Hanwu was likely only telling half-truths, with the part about his friends being true and the half about joining Rogue being a ruse.

Then again, every member of Rogue was a traitor of the eight ninja villages. None of them were trustworthy. Still, even though they didn't trust each other, that didn't stop them from terrorizing the ninja villages.

"If you join us, we'll fulfill your wish to the best of our abilities," promised Fusatsu.

"When can I start?" Hanwu asked in a rush. "Today, tomorrow, or the day after?"

Jing Jing's sliver of soul was stored in the server of the Transmigrate Helmet. While she could detect the rest of her soul when in the same region, and the presence of Hanwu's main body would allow for a more accurate read, it would take ten more years before they arrived!

Hanwu could wait, but he feared that Qin Shuang's and Jing Jing's souls couldn't. The faster he found them, the sooner he could rescue them. Even if he couldn't save them yet, he could at least protect them from any further mishaps.

"If you want Rogue to help fulfill your wish, you need to first contribute to the organization," Fusatsu said plainly. "I have an accurate report stating that a Giant Sage is gathering a force of regular giants near Water Mist Village. It wants to destroy that village. I need you to go and capture the Giant Sage and bring it back."

Hanwu frowned. "How much can you help me if I succeed?"

"Lord Huangquan is powerful. The organization won't want to offend him just because of a brand-new member, but I can tell you the three locations where he is most likely to be. It'll be up to you to find him."

Hanwu mulled it over and decided to trust him for the time being. After all, this was his only lead to find Lord Huangquan so far. He had to seize it.

However, if Rogue was tricking him, he silently swore to destroy them for good.

"Know that no one in this organization can endure my wrath if I find that you're lying," Hanwu warned.

Fusatsu nodded and pointed at another member of Rogue. "We usually operate in pairs to increase the success rate of our missions. He's the medic of our organization, and he will be your partner for this mission."

"Hello, I am Yakushi Nan," he introduced politely. Then, his tone shifted. "Your ability to regenerate yourself is amazing. It's even stronger than the S-rated Hijutsu Cellular Genesis. If possible, could I dissect you to see what's inside?"

A chill ran up Hanwu's spine. This so-called medic wasn't focused on treatment but dissection instead. That was probably why he was branded a traitor and hunted by the ninja villages.

Hanwu had no intention of being dissected and swiftly rejected him, "Don't try anything funny on me, or I'll make it so you'll never laugh again."

"I like your style, and I like your body even more. I hope we'll have a pleasant cooperation." Yakushi Nan showed no sign of fear whatsoever, instead staring at him with a chilling fervor.

Hanwu ignored him and asked Fusatsu for more information about his target and the mission. Fusatsu gave him the scroll containing the necessary information, but Hanwu found he couldn't read it at all. The contents had been encrypted, and as a transmigrator, he couldn't begin to parse the logic of the words and what they meant.

Yakushi Nan stepped up to translate the information for him. “The Giant Sage that’s going to attack the Water Mist Village is called Assault Giant. It’s currently hidden a hundred kilometers away in a dense forest. The Assault Giant has several enhanced capabilities, such as learning, regeneration, and rallying power...”

After listening carefully to Yakushi Nan’s explanation, Hanwu gained a rough understanding of what the Assault Giant was like. Still, these were only surface-level observations from the informants, and Hanwu had a better way to learn more.

He sat down and checked on the Maw Giant still trapped in the Four Guardians Seal within him. “Tell me everything you know about the Assault Giant, including its strengths and weaknesses. And don’t try to trick me. You know how strong I am. You won’t be able to handle me if I get angry.”

“I will never betray my brother, never!” refused the Maw Giant. The Assault Giant was his brother, one of the nine Giant Sages.

Hanwu changed tactics. “Look at you trapped here while the Assault Giant remains free to roam the outside, eating and drinking anything it pleases. It even has several giants as its lackeys. It's living a good life while you’re stuck here. Don’t you want someone to accompany you here?”

The Maw Giant was convinced. Hanwu was right; it was lonely here. A companion would be nice. It needed a real friend, not a terrorist like Hanwu, and the Assault Giant was indeed a good candidate.

“Are you sure you can drag it into the Four Guardians Seal?”

“I’m not sure, but I can try. Think about how much better it would be for you if I succeed.”

The Maw Giant nodded and told him everything about the Assault Giant. Hanwu was thrilled. As expected, there was pertinent information about the Assault Giant that was critical to the mission, but that the informants had failed to detect.

With this information in hand, Hanwu was confident that he could drag the Assault Giant into the Four Guardians Seal.

Chapter 666 - Completely Ball-Less

On the way to the Water Mist Village, Nan bombarded Hanwu with questions. “Do you think there’s a limit to how much blood you can transfuse? What do you think about

prosthetics? Do you want one? If you do get one, do you want to be fully anesthetized, partially, or not at all? Also, could you accept having two limbs from the same joint?"

Hanwu concluded that Nan was a certified maniac and pervert. Even perverts would likely label him perverted. Nan liked to gather limbs and graft them onto his test subjects. He would then lovingly call said test subjects "his projects."

The incessant chatter grated on Hanwu, and he almost murdered Nan on the journey.

In fact, he actually tried, but Nan could somehow still talk with half his head blown off. That caused Hanwu to realize that Nan was almost as hard to kill as he was. In the end, he had no choice but to endure the persistent prattling.

Once they reached the location, Hanwu activated Oversight and checked his surroundings. Thousands of giants had already gathered within the forest. There were many mutants as well.

At the heart of it all was the Assault Giant, one of the nine Giant Sages. It stood at fifteen meters tall and was comparatively smaller than the twenty-to-thirty-meter-tall giants around it.

However, its strength lay in its mind and core power—the strength to fight for the future. According to the Maw Giant, as long as the Assault Giant had hope, it could sustain its fighting abilities and regenerate. It was like an unbeatable buff.

Fortunately, this buff was easy to overcome through sheer brute force. If one could make it lose hope for the future, its power would naturally disperse as well. It would then be nothing but a regular giant, and sealing it away would become child's play.

As Hanwu made to clear the giants away, Nan excitedly stopped him. "Giants! Giants everywhere! And they have such incredible Life Energy! I'm in heaven!"

Hanwu didn't know how to respond. Didn't that make any place outside the ninja villages his heaven?

"I can dissect so many of them today. Please don't stop me until I have my fill," Nan said politely before pulling out a slew of scrolls. An object was summoned from a scroll, and Hanwu was surprised to find it was a four-meter-long scalpel.

Then came clamps and saws. Nan had prepared everything he needed to dissect the giants. He even summoned two corpses at the end. Despite being corpses, he had modified them to be controllable, and they could even use jutsu!

They were quite literally undead ninjas. Hanwu had never seen such unique beings. Nan was excited to introduce them to Hanwu. "My projects are amazing, aren't they? This is

number one. I grafted a pair of hands with the Bloodline Ability: Black Steel Hands onto it, allowing it to use Steel Style jutsu.

“And this is number two. I grafted a pair of palms onto it with the Bloodline Ability: Wind Meridian, allowing it to absorb chakra-based attacks. I also have numbers three, four, and five. Do you want to see them?”

Hanwu shook his head. The way Nan grafted limbs and organs with Bloodline Abilities was undeniably fascinating, but his handiwork was shoddy. It was nowhere near the level of the Origin of Mutation’s manipulation of genes.

Although disappointed at the rejection, Nan quickly recovered. He grabbed his tools and ordered his two assistants to kill the giants. Manic laughter was soon echoing through the jungle.

Ignoring the madman, Hanwu ran toward the Assault Giant while the rest of the giants were distracted by Nan.

The Assault Giant had sharp ears, and though Hanwu’s movement had been quiet, it had detected him with ease.

“Human, why do you have the scent of giants on you?” it asked curiously.

Hanwu’s existence confused the Assault Giant. They were supposed to be different species, yet Hanwu held the scent of giants. It couldn’t help but wonder if the person before it was half-human, half-giant.

Still, it knew that this theory wasn’t plausible, as giants sent to this civilization couldn’t reproduce. After all, even their reproductive organs had been removed, making this a ball-less speculation. So, how did Hanwu have the strong scent of a giant? The Assault Giant was stumped.

Hanwu channeled part of the Maw Giant’s power in lieu of an answer. “The Maw Giant misses you. Don’t you want to accompany it?”

The bone platings of the Maw Giant covered his hands and head as his pressure rose. The strange scent of chakra and giant permeated the area. The Assault Giant was shocked before rapidly devolving into anger.

“How dare you toy with the warriors of the giant. You cannot be forgiven!” the Assault Giant roared.

It lunged forward, fist covered in a translucent crystal that increased its hardness. When combined with the force of its own strength, it could level even a small mountain.

Hanwu didn’t back down. Using Flesh Ascendant, the terrifying air pressure blasted out as he opened all eight gates.

Their fists collided. Hanwu’s Vortex Collapsing Fist was tiny compared to the Assault Giant’s massive fist. The terrifying force of the impact rippled around them. Even the ground beneath Hanwu fractured into a ten-meter deep hole.

The impact injured Hanwu, but Undying quickly healed his wounds. The Assault Giant, on the other hand, was in bad shape. Hanwu’s Vortex Collapsing Fist had shattered the crystal on its fist, and the bones in its arm had all cracked from the strike.

Hanwu, a mere human, had gained the upper hand from the very first blow.

: Chapter 667 - Sage

Chapter 667 - Sage

Hanwu continued his assault, punching ten times with the Vortex Collapsing Fist. The vortexes didn’t explode on impact but instead penetrated deep into the Assault Giant’s body and tore everything apart.

The Assault Giant’s skeleton shattered. Its regeneration speed simply couldn’t match Hanwu’s pummeling. As things went on, the Assault Giant gradually lost hope and thus its strength, becoming weaker with every hit.

Hanwu willed the Four Guardians Seal open. Chains shot from his body, bound the Assault Giant, and dragged it inside. A new cage appeared inside the Four Guardians Seal.

The Assault Giant sat next to the Maw Giant, the latter cheering at the sight of its old friend.

“Take care of your brother and make sure it learns the rules,” Hanwu ordered the Maw Giant before he left.

Outside his consciousness, Nan was on a killing spree, slaughtering several thirty-meter-tall giants and a myriad of the smaller ones. This showcased Nan’s strength and also satisfied his lust for dissection. While fighting, Nan had observed the battle between Hanwu and the Assault Giant and gained new insight into Hanwu’s strength.

An idea popped into his head, and he approached Hanwu. “Do you know why the boss is called Fusatsu[1] despite being so strong?”

Hanwu was indeed curious. In his match against Fusatsu, the latter had almost killed him in one blow. If not for Undying and the Maw Giant, Hanwu would've actually died. How could someone with the power to kill others in a single blow be called Fusatsu?

"Why?"

Nan smiled mysteriously. "That's because the boss can't attack first."

Hanwu was perplexed. What did Nan mean? After pondering this over for some time, he finally understood. "Are you saying that if I don't attack him, he won't have the power to attack me?"

Nan just smiled wryly in response.

"Why are you telling me this?" Hanwu asked warily.

This was important information, not something to be revealed in a casual conversation. If Nan's words were true, then he didn't actually need to help the Rogue to complete their mission.

He could simply not fight Fusatsu and capture him to interrogate him about the whereabouts of Lord Huangquan. But was Nan telling the truth? As he mulled this over, he suddenly realized that he had accumulated 36 upgrade points.

It was a staggering number, enough for him to upgrade his parameters. After allocating the points, he managed to upgrade all of his parameters to 10, completely maxing them out.

At the same time, he entered a profound state, as if having an epiphany. He abruptly noticed an abundance of free-floating energy in the natural world. Moreover, it appeared that he could use this energy as well.

He gave it a slight test, and to his surprise, he could use Black Water Clone with said energy instead of chakra. Normally, a clone could only inherit a tenth of his parameters and had the corrosive property of the black water.

However, the clone formed from the surrounding energy inherited half of his parameters, and could even use Black Water Bullet! This was a massive revelation. Hanwu felt as though he had ascended past the realm of a ninja.

He could now comprehend more rules of the world, and the strength of his soul meant he could learn a lot. After absorbing everything that entered his body, he learned that he had stepped past the rank of Shadow to become a Sage of this world.

After becoming a Sage, he could use the free-floating energy in the natural world to substitute his chakra and enhance his jutsu. He dubbed these enhanced jutsu as Sage Jutsu.

Hanwu decided to experiment with his Black Water Clone and upgraded it to a Sage Jutsu. The original jutsu was only C-rated, but after turning into a Sage Jutsu, it became comparable to a regular A-rated jutsu.

What if I turn all my other jutsu into Sage Jutsu as well? How strong will I become?

He absorbed the free-floating energy and tried to change his other jutsu, only to realize that doing so required enormous amounts of energy under normal circumstances.

While not in the profound state he had entered before, his absorption rate of the energy was abysmal. It would take him five days to upgrade even a B-rated jutsu. Turning an S-rated jutsu like Flesh Ascendant into a Sage Jutsu would take him an entire year.

Becoming a Sage is already an unexpected reward. I shouldn't rush. He consoled himself.

After completing his ascension, he woke to see Nan standing before him with the four-meter scalpel in his hand and a cryptic smile on his face.

Hanwu gave himself a panicked once-over and only relaxed after finding no evidence of wounds. He had truly feared that Nan had stolen his kidney while he was vulnerable. He wouldn't put it past the man.

"It seems that you've obtained a lot from that fight with the Assault Giant."

"Somewhat."

"Have you considered my proposal?" Nan asked excitedly. "I want to dissect the boss. With your help, we can both get what we want."

Hanwu was having a headache when he realized that Nan had admitted to wanting to kill the boss. Nevertheless, Hanwu was aware of his own strength. Even if he was a Sage, one step above Shadow, he had no means to suppress Fusatsu without attacking.

"I understand your concern. I have a powerful sealing jutsu, but I need you to exhaust his chakra first. Only then can I seal him. Fusatsu would be ours," Nan explained excitedly.

Hanwu stared at him with cautious curiosity. "What did Fusatsu do to make you want to kill him so badly?"

"Nothing," Nan replied with a discomforting smile. "I just want to dissect him. I like dissecting powerful foes. That's all. I would do the same with you too if I had a method to defeat you."

Evidently, Nan was more deranged than Hanwu had previously thought, but he didn't mind cooperating with a maniac if it meant achieving his goals.

1. His name means "doesn't kill" ☜

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 668

Chapter 668 - Killing Fusatsu

While they headed back to base, Hanwu asked Nan to slow down so he could enter his consciousness to talk to the Assault Giant. Between his strength and the Maw Giant's persuasion, the Assault Giant eventually relented and agreed to help Hanwu.

With the energy from two Giant Sages, Hanwu was confident in dealing with Fusatsu. Back at base, almost everyone had left for their own missions, with only Fusatsu and Sigurd remaining.

When Fusatsu saw that they returned empty-handed, he assumed they had failed. "Well, the Assault Giant is more troublesome than the others. It's fine if you fail. Go back and rest. I'll notify you when we have another mission."

Hanwu shook his head. "We captured the Assault Giant and sealed it in my body."

"That's good then," Fusatsu said, thrilled. "The Assault Giant has a special role even among the Giant Sages. Capturing it will aid our goal tremendously."

"What's your goal?" Hanwu prodded.

In a good mood and satisfied with Hanwu's success, Fusatsu decided to reveal his ambitions. "Rogue was established to capture all nine Giant Sages and fuse their blood into one body to induce the Sundering. This world is ugly and dirty. Each ninja village was formed from a mountain of corpses. They reek of the blood and tears of so many people. There's no need for a world like this to exist!"

"What will you do after you destroy this world?"

"I will then rebuild it. We would be the owners of the world, and we would control everything," Fusatsu proclaimed.

The man thought his ambitions were big, but Hanwu had seen the rise and fall of many civilizations and thought his goals were both childish and unrealistic.

The eight ninja villages had existed for a long time and had survived because they each had their own method of fighting. Using the nine Giant Sages to cause the Sundering did not guarantee the destruction of all eight ninja villages.

It was more likely that the eight ninja villages would unite to kill Fusatsu. Fortunately, Hanwu was a kind individual and didn't want to see Fusatsu at the hands of the eight ninja villages.

So, he decided to kill Fusatsu today and stop the Sundering from happening at all. While Fusatsu was distracted with daydreams of the future, Hanwu quietly used Vortex Collapsing Fist to attack. Fusatsu never saw that attack coming.

Hanwu's punch struck the defenseless Fusatsu, blasting him into a wall and leaving a human-shaped indent behind. Activating Flesh Ascendant, Hanwu continued his furious assault.

The sound of fists hitting flesh echoed in the chamber. Hanwu didn't give Fusatsu a chance to get his bearings and continued his barrage of Vortex Collapsing Fists.

In between attacks, Fusatsu found a brief window to activate his ability and transform into a monster with four arms. This form allowed him to absorb the kinetic energy from Hanwu's blows and turn it into one powerful counterattack. Once the energy reached the threshold of what he could endure, he would retaliate.

Hanwu already knew this from Nan. Yet, despite knowing Fusatsu's ability, he chose to attack in this way. This was because Hanwu had his own considerations.

While Fusatsu could absorb the impact and kinetic energy of his blows, there was surely a limit. Hanwu would win the moment he could cause damage beyond what Fusatsu could absorb. Thus, he increased his rate of attack, even absorbing the energy in the air to increase the power of his blows.

At first, Fusatsu still managed to absorb them. He was waiting for an opening to retaliate with all of the absorbed kinetic energy. However, with every passing strike, the realization that something was amiss slowly dawned on him.

How was Hanwu continuously unleashing his Vortex Collapsing Fist without pause? It was as if Hanwu didn't need chakra at all. That was when Fusatsu realized his mistake.

The Maw Giant and the Assault Giant within Hanwu were likely supplying him energy, meaning he would not run out any time soon. Deciding to forego the defensive, Fusatsu tried to attack.

He gathered the absorbed energy into a fist and prepared to attack when Hanwu accelerated his energy absorption rate while maintaining his assault. He used the energy to enhance the damage of his attacks.

The effect was noticeable. The damage of two fists was condensed into one. Paired with his speed, Fusatsu was sustaining blow after blow, making it nigh impossible for him to fight back.

Fusatsu could hardly even lift a finger. This could only end with his loss.

Nan had been watching from afar and saw that Fusatsu was about to be turned into minced meat. Hurrying over, Nan hastily sealed him. Fusatsu could no longer fight back.

Fearing Nan would dissect Fusatsu on the spot, Hanwu quickly questioned, “Tell me everything you know about Lord Huangquan, or face a fate worse than death.”

Fusatsu chuckled at Hanwu’s childishness. It had been a long time since he had feared death.

Hanwu frowned.

“Don’t worry,” Nan chimed in. “I’ll make sure that he tells you everything you need to know after I dissect him.”

“If I don’t get the information I need, you’re next,” Hanwu threatened.

Nan became visibly excited. “You’d better keep your word! Dying gloriously is one of my dreams.”

With that, Nan commenced his dissection of Fusatsu. At first, Fusatsu doggedly endured the pain, but as Nan went deeper, he became aware of the layer-by-layer separation of his flesh and scrape of Nan’s cold scalpel on his bones. Every sensation was harrowing beyond belief.

It didn’t take long before Nan was calling Hanwu over. Fusatsu was willing to tell him about Lord Huangquan in exchange for a swift death.

Hanwu agreed.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 669 - The Soul Kingdom of Lord Huangquan

“This is a crazy civilization!” Hanwu exclaimed in shock upon learning about Lord Huangquan.

He already knew the Giant Shadow Civilization was formed from the merging of the Giant Civilization and the Shadow Ninja Civilization. However, he hadn’t realized this merging wasn’t limited to just two civilizations, but also included the Yellow Spring Civilization, the Ghoul Civilization of Fusatsu’s origins, and possibly even a fifth civilization.

What treasure was hidden here that stirred the interest of so many civilizations? Hanwu badly wanted to know, but his objective was to find Jing Jing’s and Qin Shuang’s souls to protect them.

As Hanwu contemplated this, Nan had finished dissecting Fusatsu. The discovery that Fusatsu’s organs indeed differed from those of regular humans prompted an excited cry.

“I knew it!” he crowed. “He’s different from other humans. I was right! If I could graft them to my other projects, would they be able to absorb and release kinetic energy? Which organs should I graft first?”

Nan was immersed in picking Fusatsu apart and forgot about Hanwu. Uninterested in watching the entire process, Hanwu left the room. As he exited, he saw a still bandage-covered Sigurd coming in to find Fusatsu, unaware that his boss had been killed.

“I suggest that you don’t look for him now,” Hanwu warned. “He’s... busy.”

“And who do you think you are?” Sigurd ignored him and entered the room.

Hanwu shrugged. He had done his best.

“Another subject!” Nan squealed gleefully inside the room. “Today really is my lucky day!”

Sigurd’s pained cry followed.

Hanwu sighed. “I did try to warn that drunkard.”

With that, he left. Having obtained the three most likely locations to find Huangquan, he was prepared to visit each.

The first location was none other than the Kokkai family of Giant Wood Village. Hanwu hadn’t believed it at first, as he had stayed there for several days and never felt any powerful souls there.

Still, Fusatsu wouldn't have lied to him. Huangquan was supposed to be powerful, and the risk of dying was high if Hanwu encountered him. Fusatsu wouldn't have forfeited a chance to kill Hanwu using Huangquan.

"Might as well check it out. If Huangquan isn't there, I can at least cross out one of the possible areas."

He headed back to the Giant Wood Village. The sight of the massive wooden wall erected to block the giants brought a vaguely nostalgic sigh. It wasn't that long ago that he returned to this same gate after his coming-of-age ceremony.

This time, however, he didn't ask the ninjas to open the gate. Instead, he used his Taijutsu to slip into the village silently and return to the Kokkai family. The place was quiet as everyone was resting.

Hanwu used Oversight to check the place. As expected, Huangquan wasn't here, and he didn't pick up anything unusual. He was going to leave when he sensed something strange. Upon checking again, he noticed it was coming from the Kokkai family's ancestral hall. The patriarch was discussing something with the genius of the Kokkai family, Toutetsu.

Toutetsu appeared reluctant. In response, the patriarch flew into a fury, slamming Toutetsu against the wall. Strangely enough, the patriarch was using a Hijutsu of Shikata Sadamasa's family.

Why does he know the Hijutsu of the Shikata family? Hanwu wondered, deciding to approach.

Avoiding the guards was effortless for a Sage, and he soon neared the ancestral hall of the Kokkai family.

The patriarch's threats were audible from this close distance. "Toutetsu, I admire you, which is why I want you to join me with Lord Huangquan. Don't waste my kindness."

"I will never betray the Kokkai family and the Giant Wood Village. Huangquan is an evil God, and you will pay for this. Patriarch, wake up from your delusion!" Toutetsu urged.

"How dare you insult my master?" Hakurou snarled. "You will be punished for that. Since you refuse to join me, you can become my fertilizer instead."

After making a series of hand seals, Hakurou unleashed the Reaper Seal. The translucent illusion of Huangquan appeared behind him.

The illusion reached for Toutetsu before suddenly stopping. It had sensed Hanwu. It pointed at where Hanwu was hidden outside. Hakurou understood his master's unspoken words.

“Since you want to eavesdrop that badly, you should come closer and become food for my master!” Hakurou sneered, swiftly appearing outside the hall. When he saw it was Hanwu, he broke into wild laughter. “My good son, it seems that you haven’t died yet. Good. That means I can kill you with my own hands and offer you to my master!”

Huangquan’s illusion reached for Hanwu. Instead of avoiding it, Hanwu rushed forward to get captured. His soul was torn from his body and devoured. Huangquan also took Hakurou’s soul with him at the same time.

Hakurou was transported once more to the Soul Kingdom of Lord Huangquan. Usually, his soul would be returned to his body, where he would be resurrected with a new power, but this time, he encountered something unexpected.

The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was Han Wu’s dazzling soul, or more specifically, his Divine Soul! Huangquan’s illusion could do nothing against such a pure soul.

If Huangquan wished to cause any significant harm to Han Wu, he would have to attack him with his true body. Han Wu’s Divine Soul turned to see Hakurou’s bizarrely patchy soul. It looked as though different parts had been inserted into it. But Hakurou himself couldn’t see this.

“No, don’t come any closer!” Hakurou shouted, taking several steps back, innately afraid of Han Wu’s Divine Soul. He didn’t want to stay here anymore. He wanted to return to his body as soon as he could.

Han Wu destroyed Hakurou’s soul before he had a chance to do anything. At the same moment, a number appeared on his wrist. This number had originally been 480, but after destroying Hakurou’s soul, it became 487.

“What is this?” he wondered aloud, interest in this Soul Kingdom piqued. He could sense countless souls here, and among them was a single, thin thread of faith connecting him to Jing Jing.

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In the ancestral hall of the Kokkai family, Toutetsu dragged his injured body out to see both Hanwu and Hakurou lying unbreathing on the ground. He had a feeling he had just narrowly escaped disaster, leaving him simultaneously happy yet still terrified.

That was when Hanwu’s corpse suddenly shot up.

Not daring to get any closer, Toutetsu called out warily, “Brother Hanwu?”

Hanwu didn't respond to him, simply muttering to himself. "We did it. This body is ours now. What a powerful body with such excellent parameters and jutsu. This is the best human body we've found so far.

"I have a plan. What if we gather the power of the nine Giant Sages in this body? We can stomp out this civilization and become its owner.

"I agree. Let's find the others and forge a glorious era for the giants."

Toutetsu had no idea what Hanwu was mumbling about.

"Brother Hanwu, are you ok?" he asked hesitantly.

Hanwu turned to face him. "I'm fine. Very fine."

He then completed a series of seals. With the support of the giants inside of him, he managed to create an army of Black Water Clones.

"Kill everything," he commanded. "The Giant Wood Village has been impeding the giants for too long. We destroy them tonight!"

Toutetsu was stunned at the unexpected words coming from Hanwu's mouth. He tried to run away to spread the news, but one of the Black Water Clones intercepted him. Toutetsu died under the corrosion of the clone and became the first sacrifice of the night.

: Chapter 670

Chapter 670 - Soul Points

Han Wu carefully inspected his status in the Soul Kingdom and concluded that he had left his physical body behind for his soul form, or rather, his Divine Soul form.

His Divine Soul was tougher and more exquisite than normal souls, and his comparatively high durability meant his soul wouldn't shatter with a single touch like other souls, making it far less fragile.

Unfortunately, he couldn't use any of his powerful Taijutsu in this form. He was limited to only his Ninjutsu and Genjutsu. Fortunately, despite losing the two Giant Sages in his body as energy sources, he could still use the natural energy in the air for his Sage Jutsu. This meant he could at least still protect himself.

After confirming his strength, he focused on the thin thread of faith connecting him to Jing Jing. He knew that it was her, as none of his other believers were in this region. In other words, as long as he followed it, he could locate Jing Jing and Qin Shuang.

Han Wu rushed toward the end of the thread with renewed motivation. Along the way, he saw many souls fighting each other. He noted that those engaged in combat looked more solid, while the weaker ones appeared almost invisible, as if on the verge of dissipating.

That was when a large soul noticed Han Wu. The unique glow of Han Wu's Divine Soul was basically a beacon of its rarity, and a rare soul was inherently more valuable.

The temptation of a valuable soul incited the large soul to bring his lackeys and approach Han Wu. Fixated on finding Jing Jing and Qin Shuang as quickly as possible, Han Wu naturally didn't want unnecessary trouble, so he avoided them.

Seeing this only confirmed to the large soul that Han Wu was easy prey.

"You think you could hide? Where can you hide?" taunted the soul, encircling Han Wu with his lackeys.

"Get lost."

"Oh? You're feisty, that's for sure. I'm a special Master of the Lightning Howl Village, and I'm adept at lightning jutsu. Do you know what'll happen to you if you keep up that impudence?" he threatened.

Han Wu sighed. "What do you want?"

"I want your soul points, idiot. Here, soul points are life. Having more equates to being wealthier, and it seems you're very rich indeed. Give me half your soul points, and I'll let you go. If not, we can just kill you, but we would lose more than 90% of your soul points in the process."

Half of the total soul points was the largest transaction allowed in the Soul Kingdom. It was a rule intended to protect the weaker souls. Nevertheless, the threat did little to intimidate Han Wu, and he just stood there in silent judgment.

"Oi, our leader is talking to you. Are you dumb?" A smaller lackey shoved Han Wu in an attempt to suck up to his boss.

Han Wu dispersed the lackey's soul with a single slap and obtained two soul points in the process, bringing him to a total of 489.

Furious, the large soul activated his signature B-rated Ninjutsu, Lightning Style: Lightning Strike. "How dare you kill my lackey. Die!"

When the larger soul used his hand seals, his body became slightly transparent. Though the change was subtle, Han Wu could still sense that something fundamental had shifted. It seemed using Ninjutsu here required one to exhaust their own soul points.

Purple lightning crackled on the palms of the large soul as he smiled meanly. “Are you afraid now? Too late! Die.”

Powerful lightning surged toward Han Wu. Simply angling his body slightly to the side allowed Han Wu to avoid it with ease. His Divine Soul could move exceptionally fast in the Soul Kingdom, but wanting to test what it felt like to be attacked here, he tentatively extended a finger to touch the lightning.

The lightning shocked Han Wu and charred his soul. The finger that he used to touch the lightning was gone, but Han Wu retained his consciousness.

As he stared at his missing finger, a strange sensation guided him to use his soul points to restore it. 3 soul points later, his finger had regrown. He then noticed that he had actually lost a total of 8 points from that lightning attack. It had taken 3 points to restore his finger, and 5 to heal his Divine Soul.

The large soul laughed wickedly. “Are you afraid yet? Give me your soul points and don’t force me to attack again!”

Having learned the information he needed, Han Wu no longer stayed still. He swiftly completed the hand seals for his Sage Jutsu, Water Style: Black Water Clone.

A clone that looked identical to him appeared and relentlessly attacked the lackeys. It seemed that the corrosive properties of black water were enhanced in the Soul Kingdom. Those who came in contact with the black water shrieked in pain as if burned by sulfuric acid, and their souls were significantly damaged.

Han Wu tore some lackeys apart with his bare hands to restore his soul points. Meanwhile, the black water clone followed his command to take down the large soul.

“Wait, I give up. Please let me go,” the large soul begged, realizing he had antagonized a foe he couldn’t win against.

Unfortunately for him, Han Wu wasn’t one to forgive so easily.

“Give me half your soul points, and I’ll let you go,” Han Wu said, repeating the large soul’s own words back to him.

The large soul wanted to live, so he hastily agreed. Transferring soul points required physical contact. Han Wu’s fist touched the large soul, and half his soul points were transferred to Han Wu.

Gaining 30 soul points felt as though it had strengthened his Divine Soul. Han Wu mulled this over. What would happen if he collected more?

Han Wu peered over at where the lackeys were silently kneeling on the ground, hoping to avoid Han Wu's notice.

"Give me half of your soul points," Han Wu demanded. "Don't make me go over there!"

The scared lackeys immediately gave them half of their soul points. They couldn't defeat him, so they had no choice but to obey. Basically, the rule of the jungle applied here.

After absorbing their soul points, Han Wu grew stronger, and the thread connecting him to Jing Jing solidified as well.

At that moment, he heard a voice.

"God, is that you?" Jing Jing asked.

"Yes, I'm here."

"God, come quick. We have trouble."

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 671

Chapter 671 - Sundering

Back on the flying ship, Han Wu's Machine God Avatar was working on increasing the flying ship's speed with Kerry. This upgrade would allow the flying ship to travel 40% faster than before.

Suddenly, the Machine God Avatar sensed something.

"What's wrong? Did you sense something bad?" Kerry asked.

The Machine God Avatar flashed an elegantly standard smile that showed eight pearly white teeth. While in Han Wu's divine realm, he had learned that this gesture would bring his friends closer to him.

“The transmigrated Divine Soul found Jing Jing and Qin Shuang. There’s a bit of trouble, but he can deal with it.”

Kerry was glad that Han Wu turned out to be right. If not for him, Qin Shuang and the others would’ve been gone for good. With the transmigrated Divine Soul guiding them, they could head straight to the source in the Giant Shadow Civilization. Everything was looking good.

The news soon spread to the rest of the ship. When Sun Qingnian got the message, he quickly crawled out of bed. Beside him lay a beautiful lady. If Han Wu were here, he would’ve recognized the lady as none other than Lina, their prep class teacher from before they had officially enrolled in the Imperial College.

The Imperial College had also assigned her to this mission, and Sun Qingnian got to fulfill the dream he had from their prep class days.

“Be careful while leaving,” Lina reminded, rubbing her eyes. “I don’t want anyone figuring out our relationship.”

“Don’t worry, baby, I’ll be careful.”

“Call me teacher when we are outside,” she corrected.

“I understand, baby.” Sun Qingnian assured her, putting on his clothes and carefully opening the door before scurrying away.

With that, Lina went back to sleep.

Unfortunately, this new information made little difference to the group, as they were still extremely far from the Giant Shadow Civilization and would need a long time to get there.

Back in the Giant Shadow Civilization, the giants had destroyed the Giant Wood Village, sparking a full-fledged war between the giants and the ninjas. The remaining seven ninja villages allied to defeat the giant army.

Meanwhile, Hanwu, the mastermind behind the war, had gone to the Giant Kingdom, the birthplace of the nine Giant Sages. Due to various reasons, only the Progenitor Giant remained. The others had left to find their own places to thrive. Their recent victory over Giant Wood Village, however, prompted a gathering of the Giant Sages.

In the massive palace, Hanwu and the Progenitor Giant sat opposite each other. Hanwu looked positively tiny compared to the massive Progenitor Giant, but the pressure exuding from him was no weaker.

This was actually because the other eight Giant Sages besides the Progenitor Giant were all in Hanwu’s body at this moment.

“Progenitor, victory is at hand. What are you worried about?”

The Progenitor Giant glared contemptuously at Hanwu’s tiny body. “The glory of the giants cannot be achieved with that deplorable body.”

“This is the body of a human, true, but we are in total control. It can be considered as one of the giants now.”

“I cannot agree to such a distorted view. Giants should be the ones to solve the matter of giants. I don’t think this is a good time to conquer the civilization, and I will not activate our final weapon, Sundering, just because of your immature suggestions.”

The eight Giant Sages in Hanwu held a brief discussion and soon agreed to seal the Progenitor Giant in Hanwu’s body with them. Once the nine Giant Sages shared a body, the rest of them could activate the Progenitor Giant’s authority, even without its cooperation.

“In that case, let’s solve this like a giant.” Hanwu stood up and completed a series of seals. The power of the eight Giant Sages turned his body into a hundred-meter-tall giant.

Angered, the Progenitor Giant ordered all the witless giants in the kingdom to turn into Giant Protectors and fight against the rebel. The result was a tragic loss. The combined might of the eight Giant Sages was simply too much for them to overcome.

After defeating the Giant Protectors, the eight Giant Sages manipulated the Four Guardians Seal to drag the Progenitor Giant in, turning it into their neighbour. The addition caused Hanwu’s pressure to increase even further.

“Stomp out civilization!” Hanwu commanded.

The massive outer walls of the Giant Kingdom crumbled to reveal an army of sixty-meter-tall witless giants.

These were the giants’ strongest trump card, Sundering. The giants’ unified steps sounded like war drums, striking fear in the hearts of their enemies. Their footsteps sundered the very earth itself.

Hundreds of thousands of giants stepped into the sea. Their high body heat evaporated the water, and everything dried up around them. They wouldn’t stop until only giants remained in this civilization.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 672

Chapter 672 - Absurd Defense

Back in the Soul Kingdom, Han Wu had received Jing Jing's message and was rushing toward her. As the distance between them closed, the thread became thicker, allowing her to send more information to him.

It seemed the Soul Kingdom was actually Huangquan's Microcosm. Everything in this place had been turned into souls, and only souls could live here.

Every soul living in residence had to pay tax to Huangquan. Stronger souls had to pay more, and they often ended up targeting the soul points of the weaker souls just so they could stay for longer.

Survival had not been an issue for Jing Jing and Qin Shuang, but their excellence caused them to stand out.

As a skeleton, Jing Jing had kept her use of osteomancy even after turning into a soul. In the Soul Kingdom, where every soul was fragile, osteomancy was like a handgun against defenseless humans. It was rather overpowered.

The flashiness of Qin Shuang's lightning had also gained its fair share of popularity, and many souls sought their powers. Even the officials in charge of collecting taxes wanted them as well.

However, there were rules in place. Officials couldn't attack them directly, so they instead increased the tax to reduce their strength. When Han Wu learned this, he was naturally furious. He swore to kill all who dared to touch them!

Han Wu's solid Divine Soul moved extremely fast and soon neared their location. Many souls were gathered in the area. Using Oversight, he confirmed that the souls had Jing Jing and Qin Shuang surrounded, wielding various weapons like cocky street hooligans.

Fortunately, Han Wu was even more of a hooligan than they were.

Grabbing a random soul from the back, he destroyed them with a single slap. The soul was so weak that it only gave him two soul points. Regardless, Han Wu continued to attack. The solidity of his Divine Soul granted him speed and strength that surpassed the others, allowing him to defeat many souls in one go.

Jing Jing sensed Han Wu's arrival through the thread of faith and told the good news to Qin Shuang. Qin Shuang's lightning reflexively flared from her joy, killing the three souls in front of her.

The leader of the group was angered at her assault. Still, he needed to keep everything under control, so he sent his deputy to deal with the ruckus at the back.

Upon heading to the back of the group, the deputy was horrified to see Han Wu killing souls like they were nothing. Han Wu didn't even use any special Skills or abilities, simply slaughtering them with his bare hands.

Han Wu's power shocked the deputy. It was useless to send lackeys to take on a soul as powerful as the deputy himself, so he shouted for them to retreat while he fought Han Wu head-on.

The deputy took off his clothes to reveal his muscular torso lined with a tattoo of a fierce, venomous snake. Every movement caused the snake tattoo to writhe as if it were alive.

"Brother, I am the deputy of the Venomous Snake Sect," the deputy introduced. "Who are you?"

This clarification was a measure to prevent infighting amongst allies and to prevent him from slighting someone he couldn't afford to offend.

Han Wu was neither. "I'm no one. I just want to help the weak when I can."

The deputy frowned, internally labelling Han Wu a reckless but powerful individual.

"Brother, what if we struck a deal?" proposed the deputy. "I'll pretend I saw nothing. Turn around, and we won't charge you for the damage you did."

Han Wu shook his head. "The beauties need me to save them. I am justice, and I will not let it slide."

The deputy groaned. Justice? You just want their bodies!

"Then there's nothing to talk about." Finally losing his patience, the deputy attacked.

Although both Han Wu and the deputy had powerful moves, Han Wu actually started on the back foot. However, as the battle continued, the deputy gradually came to realize the terror that was Han Wu.

Han Wu's soul was strong beyond belief. A regular soul simply couldn't compare to a Divine Soul. After all, Han Wu had spent 50,000 Divine Essence on it!

Several clashes soon saw the deputy wounded and weakened.

Still, he refused to give in and continued to fight Han Wu in close range. When Han Wu was distracted, he bounced his chest muscles, and the tattoo of the snake came alive, biting Han Wu. Having accomplished his goal, the deputy backed off.

“This is the Five-Step Soul Snake. Its venom can kill you in five seconds!”

Han Wu calmly pulled the snake off his body. The deputy froze, his laughter abruptly cutting off when he realized there was no mark of a snake bite on Han Wu.

The deputy stared as the snake spat out two sharp objects. Han Wu’s durable body had snapped its fangs! Horror settled in the pit of the deputy’s stomach.

Han Wu chuckled. “You rascal, you’re more cunning than I expected.”

“Wait, don’t come any closer!” the deputy cried, body trembling.

Unfortunately for him, his pleas fell on deaf ears. Han Wu landed several punches on his face, dispersing his soul. The eight points Han Wu gained from his death showed that the deputy was actually powerful.

The deputy’s soul also dropped a luminous orb. Han Wu picked it up and saw that it was the method to nurture the Five-Step Soul Snake. It was a dirty move, but undeniably useful.

Han Wu couldn’t use it, nor did he want to, but he kept it regardless. When the other lackeys saw Han Wu kill their deputy, they immediately started backing up. Ignoring them, Han Wu approached the boss, who was still facing away.

The boss of the Venomous Snake Sect had a tattoo of two even fiercer snakes—one python and one cobra. As if sensing a chill at his back, he turned around to see Han Wu behind him.

Glancing around in bewilderment, he asked, “Where’s my deputy? Where has he gone?’

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 673 - Let Me Send You Off!

None of the lackeys answered him. Han Wu didn’t say anything either, simply grabbing the boss’s collar and slapping him senseless. The boss was in shock.

The boss’s soul was extremely tough. Although not as tough as Han Wu’s, it still wasn’t something he could defeat within a short period of time, and the boss snapped out of it fairly quickly.

“You dare to hit me, and in front of my lackeys at that? Do you think my reputation means nothing to me? You’re dead!”

The boss flew into a rage. His python tattoo came alive, unhinging its jaw to devour Han Wu and thrashing in the air as it tried to swallow him whole.

Neither Jing Jing nor Qin Shuang could react to its swift attack.

“Don’t think you’ll make it out of this alive either!” The boss threatened the two girls while manipulating the python.

Though tense, Qin Shuang readied herself to save Han Wu, even at the cost of her own life.

Jing Jing pulled her aside and calmed her down. “My God wouldn’t be my God if he can’t even deal with a minor problem like this.”

Half of Han Wu’s Divine Soul was stuck inside the python, unable to break free with just his strength. At this critical moment, he used Black Water Clone, causing clones to appear in the mouth of the python.

The python crushed them with its jaw, and the resulting black water flowed down into its body. The corrosive properties of the black water eroded its guts, allowing Han Wu to break free. While physically fine, Han Wu was mentally scarred from the experience, and he was left feeling nauseated from the whole thing.

The boss was stunned that his technique had been disabled so easily. Spending more soul points to summon an even larger python, he tried again.

“I’ll swallow you whole this time!”

Han Wu retched. “What else can you do besides tainting my body with snake spit?”

Furious, the boss ordered the python to attack, but Jing Jing and Qin Shuang were ready this time. They fired a bone spear filled with lightning energy, pinning the python to the ground.

Crackling lightning surged through both the python and the boss. The boss of the Venomous Snake Sect was charred black before fainting. When the lackeys saw their boss had been defeated, they immediately fled, fearing they would be next.

Han Wu ran up to the two girls and hugged them. “I’m so glad both of you are fine.”

Relieved elation stirred within the two girls. They felt like a ship finding its harbor when they saw Han Wu—a reliable pillar that meant they no longer needed to worry anymore.

“The main group will arrive soon. As long as I’m here, they can easily detect where we are,” he informed.

But Qin Shuang couldn’t shake her worry. “Han Wu, we just defeated the Venomous Snake Sect. The officials responsible for collecting taxes in this region will never let us go. The Venomous Snake Sect is their fangs and claws.”

“Who won’t forgive whom?” Han Wu scoffed. “I’ll show them.”

Jing Jing smiled. Her God was truly the manliest. After the three talked a little, Han Wu glanced at the boss on the ground. The boss had actually woken up, but had not dared to twitch so much as a muscle and was simply waiting for them to leave.

Aware of this, Han Wu kicked the boss. “Stop pretending. You may only speak to answer my questions, and my questions only. You can leave after I’m done with you. But if I find out you lied, you’ll have to bear the consequences.”

The boss of the Venomous Snake Sect was a wily bastard. Turning to face Han Wu, he unhesitatingly knelt before him and vowed, “I’ll tell you everything that I know.”

Much to his confusion, Han Wu slapped him.

“Did I ask you anything?” Han Wu sneered. “I told you not to speak unless you’re answering my questions!”

The boss nodded.

Han Wu slapped him again. “I was talking to you. Why didn’t you reply?”

The boss held onto his cheek like a wronged wife, inwardly daydreaming of beating Han Wu to a pulp.

“Are you deaf? I’m talking to you.” Han Wu slapped his other cheek.

The boss held his cheeks, belatedly realizing that Han Wu didn’t need his cooperation at all. He just wanted to slap him.

“No, I’m not deaf,” replied the boss.

Han Wu nodded. “Answer my question. What relationship do you have with the officials here?”

The boss hesitated.

“Are you thinking about lying to me?” Han Wu slapped him once more.

“No,” the boss said meekly. Though upset and indignant after getting slapped so many times, there was nothing he could do. “The officials are my guards while we collect protection fees. We split the soul points three-seven to them.”

“They keep the 30%, and you keep 70%?”

The boss gave him an incredulous look.

Han Wu slapped him again. “You dare to show me disrespect?”

The boss sighed. He would rather Han Wu kill him than do this humiliation ritual. This was the first time he had ever felt this depth of despair. After a long interrogation, Han Wu finally obtained all the information he needed, and the boss’s face was as red as a baboon’s butt.

“I’ve told you everything I know. Can I leave now?” the boss begged, already planning to leave this place with his lackeys the moment he returned.

It was one thing to offend the officials. He could just pay them. Meanwhile, offending Han Wu meant likely losing his life. He had planned to hide far away from this place and never return.

Han Wu nodded. “You can leave. Here, let me send you off.”

With that, he crushed the boss’s neck, dissipating his soul. Han Wu absorbed a tenth of it and received 10 soul points. Two luminous orbs had also been left behind.

The first recorded the nurturing of the Spirit Python, and the second the Spirit Cobra. As long as one could absorb it, they could get the technique and merge it with their soul.

“Do you want them?” Han Wu asked the two girls.

Jing Jing shook her head as she didn’t like the spirit snakes. Qin Shuang, however, was interested.

“I can try to fuse it with my lightning,” she said, taking the orb containing the Spirit Cobra technique from Han Wu. “I could get a very good skill from it.”

Han Wu nodded. Then, thinking about his Black Water Clones, he muttered, “Let me try and merge the Spirit Python with the black water.”

Fortunately, Han Wu still had some upgrade points left over.

Chapter 674 - Descendant of Major Gods

Jing Jing and Qin Shuang guided Han Wu to a temporary shelter that they had built. Several other souls from the Divine Civilization were also there. These were the souls that had fallen prey to the Reaper Seal while invading the Heaven Stair Civilization.

Han Wu didn't recognize them, but they did him. After all, Han Wu was famous in the Imperial College. However, they thought Han Wu had fallen prey to the Reaper Seal instead of being here to rescue them.

"Even a genius ended up like us, trapped here without hope of escaping."

"Quiet. He's looking here."

"So what? What can he do to me?"

Han Wu checked his surroundings, including the status of the other souls. Everyone present seemed to assume that no one could escape from the Soul Kingdom.

When Jing Jing saw him looking at them, she said coldly, "They're nothing. There's no need to take care of them."

Han Wu shot her a helpless glance. She hadn't changed at all in the time they had been apart. The only one she cared for was Han Wu. It was only because Han Wu worried for Qin Shuang that Jing Jing took care of her. If not, Jing Jing could've easily escaped the Reaper Seal with her strong soul instead of staying behind.

Still, Han Wu nodded. He wasn't a social butterfly, and none of the other souls were interested in talking to him either, so he didn't feel particularly obligated to help them.

As he was about to enter Jing Jing and Qin Shuang's residence, someone stopped him. "Who told you guys to come back? Get out of this shelter!"

Han Wu frowned and asked Jing Jing, "Who is he?"

"Someone who has a death wish," Jing Jing sneered. "Unfortunately, she doesn't let me kill him."

Han Wu turned to look at Qin Shuang.

Qin Shuang sighed. "We are all from the same college. Best not to go too far."

"He's just a descendant of a family with a Major God." Jing Jing scoffed.

Han Wu understood Qin Shuang's wariness. The problem wasn't the soul before them but his family background. A family with a Major God outmatched Qin Shuang's family. So, for the sake of her family, she had to restrain herself.

Though Han Wu understood her dilemma, he didn't agree with her actions. Allowing someone to do as they please only brought more outrageous requests in the future. The best course of action was to take them down a peg.

Without wasting another second, Han Wu slapped the guy. He was so strong that even a light hit sent the guy headplanting into the ground.

Jing Jing's eyes lit up. This was the God she had worshiped all her life, the man she admired from the bottom of her heart!

Qin Shuang was stunned, but then she beamed as if her worries had disappeared. She had wanted to do that so badly last time.

"Who are you to attack me? Do you know who I am? Do you know who my uncle is? Do you know who my grandfather is? Do you know how strong my family is?" the guy threatened, but didn't retaliate.

Han Wu scoffed. "I don't know who your father, uncle, grandfather, or even your family is. But do you know who I am?"

"Why should I care?" the guy sneered, failing to realize the impending consequence of his answer.

Han Wu chuckled and slapped that guy again. The fact that he didn't know Han Wu meant he could whack him without any repercussions.

The guy tried to retaliate, but he was no match for Han Wu's speed. In the end, Han Wu only stopped because the guy fainted. Since they were from the same college, he didn't want to destroy his soul, so he decided to take half his soul points as punishment. Han Wu regarded this as him being kind-hearted.

His concern even extended to worrying about the guy sleeping on the cold, hard ground, so he considerately tossed him into a mud pool. Patting the dust off his hands, he followed Jing Jing and Qin Shuang into their home.

The other souls were stunned after what they had witnessed.

"That's amazing. He actually beat Butcher's nephew like a dog. I've never seen anything like that before!"

"If I have a God King as my mentor, I would do the same too!"

“He’s the owner of the Blood Coliseum. That alone is enough for the God Kings to respect him. For Han Wu to personally punish Hei Qi is a blessing for Hei Qi’s family.”

“Wait, be quiet. Hei Qi is waking up. Let’s just pretend we saw nothing. Let’s go.”

As the onlookers said, Hei Qi had, in fact, roused and was furious when he realized he had been thrown into a pool of mud.

“You bastard. I’m going to kill you!” he roared, angrily rushing to the house of the two girls.

Five of Han Wu’s Black Water Clones stood guard at the door, shooting him taunting looks as if goading him to try.

Hei Qi’s cheeks burned at the reminder of Han Wu slapping him unconscious.

“*Hmph*! Just you wait. I’ll settle this score, or I won’t be able to call myself the descendant of the War household,” he vowed before storming off.

Inside the house, Han Wu was inquiring about Hei Qi. “Why is he targeting you two?”

“It’s because of our special powers.” Qin Shuang sighed. “The officials responsible for collecting the taxes want them, and one of the officials said we’ll have to pay extra taxes for as long as we’re here. The Venomous Snake Sect belonged to that official. They were trying to force us to give up our powers.”

“God, what will you do?” Jing Jing asked expectantly.

“Well, if we can’t solve the problem,” Han Wu said thoughtfully, “we can always just deal with the problem maker directly. I think that official in particular is problematic, don’t you?”

Jing Jing nodded. “I agree, God.”

“Han Wu, don’t be rash,” Qin Shuang urged out of worry for his safety. “The officials all have Huangquan’s protection. You’ll attract his attention if you kill them, and no one here can stop him.”

“But my God is the strongest,” Jing Jing rebuked, dissatisfied with the implication that Han Wu couldn’t handle this.

“Jing Jing, that’s only true in the outside world. I’m sure Han Wu fears no one outside, but now we’re in Huangquan’s Soul Kingdom, and Han Wu hasn’t descended here with his whole soul. We can’t win right now.”

After carefully considering their opinions, Han Wu said, “Let’s wait for the official to act. There will always be a solution.”

: Chapter 675

Chapter 675 - Official Sha Xin

It was midnight when the clash of cymbals and drums shattered the silence.

A man in white robes descended into the region, followed by a group of lackeys dressed in black. He was Sha Xin, the official in charge of this territory. He loved collecting various powerful techniques, Skills, and abilities. If something met his standards, he coveted it.

The moment he stepped into the region, he caught the scent of a new soul. “This scent... It smells good. A high-quality soul. In that case, this new arrival must pay higher taxes.”

At the sound of the cymbals, the souls filed out of their rooms and lined up to pay. Over time, everyone here had learned that if they failed to pay, Sha Xin would invent a pretext to kill them. The punishment was severe. Anyone who wished to live peacefully had to follow his orders.

Sha Xin’s gaze fell on Qin Shuang and Jing Jing at the back, and his expression darkened. “All souls here must pay an additional 10 soul points.”

Under normal circumstances, the other souls would grumble to show their dissatisfaction, but it was different today. Jing Jing and Qin Shuang had brought back a certain someone, and everyone had seen Hei Qi’s swollen face. They understood the price of careless words.

Sha Xin was somewhat confused at their behavior. He didn’t understand why the geniuses from the same civilization had grown so quiet today.

Sha Xin approached Qin Shuang and Jing Jing. “Have you two made your decision? If you give me your powers, I will compensate you with extra soul points. I will also reduce the taxes for everyone here. Why resist?”

Jing Jing scoffed but said nothing. Qin Shuang turned her head and ignored him.

As an official, Sha Xin enjoyed Huangquan’s protection and could adjust tax rates at will. At the same time, however, he remained bound by one rule. He couldn't directly harm any soul that had paid its taxes. That constraint forced him to rely on deception and pressure rather than brute force to obtain their powers.

The two remained still, and Sha Xin scoffed. “Let me see how long you can last.”

He then turned his attention to Han Wu. The scent confirmed that he was the newcomer. “You must be the new soul. You have to pay yesterday's tax too. Cough up 40 soul points.”

An ordinary soul usually possessed 30 to 40 soul points. The powerful ones, like the boss of the Venomous Snake Sect, had 120 soul points.

For most souls, a demand for 40 soul points amounted to a death sentence. As their soul points diminished, their forms turned translucent and their power waned. Without power, they couldn’t seize soul points from others.

This process created a vicious cycle that weakened them further until their soul points reached the single digits. At that point, the official would drag the weakened soul away and force it into manual labor to recover their soul points.

Han Wu could afford the payment. He had encountered numerous battles and had collected 550 soul points. That amount meant little to him, but he hated Sha Xin’s attempt to strong-arm him.

Qin Shuang signalled with her eyes for him not to do anything rash. Han Wu was only a Divine Soul right now and likely couldn’t be a match for Sha Xin.

In the end, Han Wu paid the soul points.

Sha Xin immediately stepped closer. “I caught the scent of something delicious. What did you do to make your soul so solid? If you tell me, I am willing to give you a large sum of soul points.”

Han Wu shook his head. He knew why his soul was so strong. He was already a Major God and a World life form, so his soul was naturally superior to others. In addition, he had used 50,000 Divine Essence to form this Divine Soul. That level of energy was enough to turn carbon into adamantine, much less a tenth of his soul.

When Han Wu declined, Sha Xin changed the subject. “I can sense some powerful techniques within your soul. If you are willing to sell them, I will pay you as well.”

That caught Han Wu’s interest. “Which technique are you referring to?”

Sha Xin recognized the change in his tone. “I smell a powerful jutsu on you. You can sell it to me. I think I caught the scent of a power that you cannot use here too. Its quality seems high. I am willing to collect both.”

“I can’t sell you the power, but I can sell you some techniques.” Han Wu would never part with his own power. It was one of the reasons that his soul was tethered there.

Sha Xin sighed in slight disappointment. At least, he wouldn't return empty-handed. In the end, he paid 80 soul points for Vortex Collapse Fist and Slashing Steel Palm. Even though these two were Taijutsu and difficult to use in the Soul Kingdom, that did not diminish their value to him. The two jutsu turned into luminous orbs, which Sha Xin extracted from Han Wu.

Once the extraction was complete, Han Wu completely forgot how to use them. Sha Xin looked pleased once he received the two orbs.

Meanwhile, Han Wu had discovered a way to get rich and secure his survival.

"I wonder if you would be interested in other powerful techniques," Han Wu said. "I have many. I can also upgrade them to their more powerful forms for you."

"Are you sure?" Sha Xin asked, intrigued.

"What would I gain from lying to you?" Han Wu shot back.

Sha Xin nodded, persuaded. However, for the sake of safety, he didn't reveal his final trump card. Instead, he used another. "I already know that you were the one who killed the deputy and the boss of the Venomous Snake Sect.

"I actually intended to punish you for disrupting the Soul Kingdom's peace and sentence you all to mining in its heart. But, if you can pay me 200 soul points, I will consider that this never happened before. You may substitute techniques or other Skills in place of soul points."

This was a disgusting ploy to get what he wanted for free.

Han Wu burned with anger, but he knew he shouldn't attack now. I will let you preen a little longer. Once my true self arrives, I will reclaim what's mine and more. Ten times more.

Naturally, Han Wu kept the thought to himself and said evenly, "Sure. When you return to collect taxes next time, I will offer some techniques that satisfy you."

"Hahaha! You brat, not bad. Not bad at all. You know how to play along." Sha Xin patted Han Wu's shoulder, then left with his lackeys as the clash of cymbals and drums receded into the distance.

The others had never seen Sha Xin in such high spirits and looked at Han Wu in confusion. As long as Sha Xin stayed pleased and stopped raising taxes on a whim, it wouldn't be an issue for them to survive.

Jealous of their attention, Jing Jing stepped forward and declared her claim. "What are you guys looking at? My God belongs to me alone."

At her words, the gathered souls dispersed.

Qin Shuang turned to Han Wu. “Do you have a way to deal with the officials?”

Han Wu smiled. “Of course.”

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 676

Chapter 676 - Submit, or Die

Han Wu took Jing Jing and Qin Shuang to farm during the day and traded upgraded techniques and Skills to Sha Xin at night. He upgraded the Skills with Duel’s upgrade points, and the steady exchanges caused his soul points to rise rapidly.

As his total increased, he realized that soul points could strengthen his soul as well. After several days, Han Wu easily reached 1,000 soul points. Drawing on the accumulated power, he entered a profound state, and his senses were enhanced. He didn’t need to use Oversight to perceive his surroundings.

Through this heightened perception, he sensed a vast mass of soul beneath the Soul Kingdom. The massive mass was releasing tiny pulses of Spiritual Energy at intervals. Any soul that absorbed the energy would grow stronger. However, ordinary souls didn’t have extraordinary senses, so they couldn’t perceive and absorb much.

Han Wu’s senses were sharper, and with a little guidance, he could absorb the energy at a rate a hundred times greater than that of an ordinary soul. The energy was pure and free of consciousness. It wouldn’t tarnish his soul at all.

Curious about the massive soul cluster beneath the kingdom, he asked Sha Xin during one of their trades.

Sha Xin couldn’t contain his joy and pulled him aside, asking him several questions. Han Wu purposely answered vaguely, yet Sha Xin remained elated. After that, he began appearing without warning and offering higher prices for the techniques, enabling Han Wu to accumulate even more soul points.

Han Wu wasn’t an idiot; he knew that there was no free lunch in this world. Nonetheless, he accepted the soul points and shared them with Jing Jing and Qin Shuang. The three

advanced together so that, if Sha Xin ever turned on them, they could at least help each other.

Six years passed, and the trio reached the threshold of 9,999 soul points. The number had already filled the interface on their arms.

Sha Xin grew even more animated and promptly supplied additional soul points for them to absorb. Under his watchful gaze, Han Wu didn't dare refuse.

As they absorbed the new soul points, their totals crossed the final limit, and their souls were enhanced once more. Their senses expanded to a brand new level, and they could now perceive the entire Soul Kingdom. Their senses finally connected with Huangquan's consciousness.

In that instant, they saw the Soul Kingdom's true form and froze in shock. The kingdom was actually a massive soul!

Its outline resembled the illusion of Huangquan that Hakurou had summoned last time, yet this one was thousands of times larger. The clump of soul energy that Han Wu had sensed beneath the kingdom was Huangquan's stomach. It was the food he consumed!

Han Wu could also tell that Huangquan was still feeding. He was devouring the Giant Shadow Civilization, which dwarfed even him in scale.

Other life forms of varying shapes and sizes fed upon it as well. The strongest one among them was a giant!

At last, Han Wu finally learned why the Giant Shadow Civilization had attracted so many civilizations here. It was itself a massive vein of Spirit Stones!

Huangquan was busy consuming the ore of Spirit Stones, but the energy extracted directly from the stones lacked sufficient purity. That was why he had deployed his believers to utilize the Reaper Seal to harvest souls from various civilizations and confine them within his Soul Kingdom. The souls absorbed the Spiritual Energy from the stones and converted it into soul points. His officials then collected the soul points. In that compressed form, Spiritual Energy became a more efficient source of power, which Huangquan used to strengthen himself.

Han Wu grasped the Soul Kingdom's mechanism now. What he didn't understand was why Sha Xin had supplied him with so many soul points to enhance his soul.

By then, Sha Xin was already smiling like a maniac. "I did it! Lord Huangquan, I've nurtured three fruits for you! You must honor our contract and grant me my freedom!"

"Fruits? Sha Xin, what is the meaning of this?" Han Wu demanded.

Sha Xin was so happy that he was willing to divulge the details to him. “You still don’t understand? You are the fruits that I’ve been nurturing all this time. There’s a hidden law in the Soul Kingdom.

“Anyone dragged here is forced to sign a contract with Lord Huangquan, whether they realize it or not. No souls can leave. Each becomes a cog in the refinement of Spiritual Energy for Lord Huangquan.

“But there are exceptions, and that’s where you come in. High-quality souls like you can sense the Soul Kingdom’s core and absorb a lot of Spiritual Energy. That was why I fed you.

“Once you reach 10,000 soul points, you have two options. You can become a fruit for Lord Huangquan to consume and merge into his power. Or you can become his servant, as I did, and work for him until you nurture the next fruit.

“Today, I’ve finally accomplished this mission. I nurtured three fruits and exceeded the mission Lord Huangquan gave me. I am finally free!”

Sha Xin was howling from the bottom of his heart. Meanwhile, Han Wu’s face hardened. He had never anticipated such a scheme.

As if in response to Sha Xin’s cries, Huangquan descended into his Soul Kingdom. His solid soul manifested before the trio, and the pure Soul Energy suppressed them. They couldn’t fight back.

“Submit, or die? Only one may submit to me.” His voice echoed through them.

They had two choices, but only one could become his slave. The moment one submitted, the other two would die.

Han Wu scanned his surroundings with a hard, focused gaze, searching for another path of escape.

Qin Shuang and Jing Jing looked at each other and made their decision.

“I choose death.”

“I choose death!”

Under Huangquan’s pressure, they claimed two of the three choices. Only one option remained for Han Wu: submission. They had chosen death so he could survive.

“No, you two cannot die!” He had come to rescue them. How could he let them sacrifice themselves for him?

“Han Wu, this is the best choice. Even if I die, I will forever live in your heart, right?” Qin Shuang smiled, determined to leave him with the image of her at her most beautiful.

Jing Jing’s reply was simpler. “I will submit to only one God.”

Huangquan extended his huge hand to capture them. Since they had chosen death, they would become his sustenance.

Han Wu grabbed the two girls and used Swap, forcing as much distance as possible between them and Huangquan.

“I mean it. No one dies here today,” Han Wu said.

Sha Xin laughed. “Lord Huangquan is the sky itself in the Soul Kingdom. Your struggle is just a waste of time.”

“I know that he’s unbeatable in the Soul Kingdom,” Han Wu said. “But what about outside?”

At that instant, several powerful Divine Authorities manifested above the Soul Kingdom’s sky.

Jing Jing and Qin Shuang were stunned. They sensed Han Wu’s Divine Authorities descending from above!

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 677

Chapter 677 - Return Home

Outside of the Giant Shadow Civilization, the Divine Civilization’s ship drifted in the void.

Xu Hai studied the scene outside with admiration. “Who could’ve ever thought that the Giant Shadow Civilization was sitting on such a huge vein of Spirit Stones? Nature is truly amazing.”

The other lecturers and students could barely contain themselves. Before them lay a massive Spirit Stone mine. Even claiming a small portion would make it worthwhile. Moreover, they had come to invade another civilization, which meant its unique resources would become theirs. By every measure, this excursion had already proven to be fruitful.

Meanwhile, Han Wu paid no heed to that right now. He was more worried about Qin Shuang and Jing Jing.

He turned to Xu Hai. “Sir, I will bring them back first.”

Sun Qingnian stepped forward at once. “Han Wu, let me come with you!”

He was a playboy, but he was a good friend. During the war with the Heaven Stair Civilization, he had failed to protect Qin Shuang and Jing Jing. That failure had turned into a mental barrier. This was his only chance to correct it.

Han Wu didn’t stop him and nodded. “Let’s go.”

Lina, still in her signature tight purple skirt, watched with concern. Han Wu was a World life form that could do almost anything, but Sun Qingnian wasn’t. If danger arose, it was uncertain whether Han Wu could protect him.

After some consideration, Lina discreetly turned her most trusted unit into a card and slipped it into Sun Qingnian’s hand. She patted his shoulder, then gave it a quick squeeze. “Qingnian, be absolutely careful.”

Only the two knew what she meant.

Sun Qingnian nodded and accepted the card. “I will be careful, ba— Ms. Lina!”

Lina’s heart almost jumped out of her throat when he nearly called her baby. If the students and lecturers discovered their relationship, she would have nowhere to hide. After all, Sun Qingnian’s official girlfriend was Shi Shan.

Even though Shi Shan was still recovering and would need time to regain her strength, the issue of their messy relationship remained unresolved. The thought frustrated Lina.

Han Wu noticed none of it. He turned to Sun Qingnian. “Let’s depart.”

“Let’s go!”

“You can enter my Microcosm first to draft the battle plan.” Han Wu drew Sun Qingnian into his Microcosm, then leapt out and shot straight toward Lord Huangquan.

He used his potent World aura to lock onto Huangquan and caused him to stop mid-bite. He had no idea why Han Wu would single him out.

The Spirit Stone mine is huge. He could just find another place and mine for a long time. Why fight with me?

As he was thinking of that, Han Wu appeared in front of him. Only then did Huangquan see his face clearly, and shock seized him. The young man looked identical to the fruit in his Soul Kingdom. Even their auras matched. The only difference lay in their powers. One was a World life form. The other wasn't.

Are they twins? he wondered.

Han Wu didn't give him time to think. He released his World pressure and attacked at once. At the same time, his Death Aura Ring appeared behind him, turning death aura into burning black clouds that coiled around him.

The nearby World life form from the Ghoul Civilization thought Han Wu looked young and easy to bully, so he stealthily approached Han Wu from behind. He could never have imagined that Han Wu was monitoring his surroundings with unwavering focus.

The moment he attacked, Han Wu suddenly turned around, locked eyes with him, and said calmly, "Explode your head."

He expended a large portion of his death aura to turn it into energy and activate his new technique, Proclamation of Death.

A pop echoed as the World life form's head exploded. Strands of death aura were peeled away from his corpse and streamed into Han Wu's black mark that resembled a planet tattoo. Karl, the Pluto, had branded him with it.

Han Wu didn't know what the mark was for, but as more death aura flowed into him, he could feel that a new Microcosm composed of death aura was forming inside. The process was slow, but it was actually forming.

He soon realized that Karl's brand provided a path for World life forms like him to grow. Compared to Stellar Plunder, this one absorbed the death aura of others to form Microcosms.

Huangquan felt a chill crawl up his spine when a fellow World life form died without warning. Even though he was stronger than the World life form that came from the Ghoul Civilization, the death aura radiating from Han Wu still made him tremble.

Outwardly, Huangquan remained calm. "Is there something you want from me?"

Han Wu nodded, his voice steady and resolute. "I'm here to kill you!"

Huangquan sensed the bloodlust behind the words and knew that Han Wu wasn't bluffing. Thus, he decided to attack first. On the surface, he was ready to clash with Han Wu. In truth, he drew his consciousness back to his Soul Kingdom to capture Han Wu's Divine Soul. He was smart and reasoned that the soul within the Soul Kingdom had to be linked

to the Han Wu before him. As long as he could capture it, he could threaten Han Wu. That was how he would exact his revenge.

Unfortunately, Huangquan didn't anticipate Han Wu's next move. While he was busy controlling his consciousness to capture the soul, Han Wu tossed his Microcosm forward and slammed it into Huangquan's own.

Huangquan almost laughed. He's too young. He doesn't even understand how World life forms fight. Microcosms are fragile, and he dares to cast his out so recklessly? Even if a tiny crack appears on the Microcosm from the impact, it will still harm him greatly!

Confident in the defensive measures he had placed on his abdomen, Huangquan expected to repel the attack with ease.

In the next instant, however, he was blasted backward.

Han Wu's Microcosm had successfully connected with Huangquan's Soul Kingdom.

Sun Qingnian, who had prepared himself for war, couldn't retain his excitement when the lands between the two Microcosms connected.

"Everyone, destroy that planet of souls!" he barked.

A massive swarm of locusts and ranks of Foxmen charged into the Soul Kingdom. Thousands of billions of locusts darkened the sky, their numbers so vast they seemed ready to devour the very sun itself.

The moment they collided with the defending forces, the locusts started eating the souls before them. Under the Law of Gluttony's effect, they could eat anything that had energy, including souls.

Han Wu grabbed the two girls and pulled them close. "Our escort has arrived. Time to return home!"

Qin Shuang was already crying tears of joy. "Let's go home!"

Jing Jing nodded. "Home."

She could already sense her corpse resting within Han Wu's Microcosm, waiting for her soul to return.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 678 - Within the Soul Kingdom

Sha Xin moved to stop them. He couldn't let the trio escape. They were the fruits he intended for Huangquan, and without them, he could never regain his freedom.

"None of you are leaving this place today." Sha Xin blocked them. A chaotic pressure coiled around his soul as a Divine Ring appeared, embedded with countless gemstones.

Han Wu could feel that the gemstones on the special Divine Ring were condensed orbs of techniques, Skills, and powers. Some of them were techniques he had sold to Sha Xin.

Sha Xin revealed his true strength as a World life form!

Han Wu grabbed the two girls and told them not to act rashly. They were no match for a World life form right now.

Sha Xin said coldly, "Stay here until the war is over."

The swarm of locusts reached that area. They spread across the horizon like rolling black clouds and blotted out the sun.

Sha Xin's Divine Ring flashed, and the gemstones lit up. Multiple powers and techniques erupted simultaneously: fireballs, water bullets, icicles, wind blades, and even clones.

Individually, they weren't strong, but Sha Xin had unleashed close to 10,000 attacks in a single burst. The leading wave of locusts was annihilated, but the next wave filled the gap almost instantly. They wanted to rescue their God, but Sha Xin's Divine Ring was special; it had no cooldown. As soon as the first barrage ended, a second followed without pause.

The locust army fell in droves. Han Wu felt a sharp ache in his chest as he watched his locusts sacrifice themselves for him. He ordered the swarm to stop attacking and decided to contact his powerful units that were close to him.

He extended his senses and located one of them nearby. It was none other than Steely, who was locked in combat with another official. Upon receiving Han Wu's command, Steely ignored the official and ran toward his God. The official wasn't going to let him go so easily and chased after him.

Sha Xin stared anxiously at the locusts in the air. More continued to gather, layer upon layer, until the Soul Kingdom's sky resembled a black sea. Yet none of the locusts descended. They were waiting for the powerful unit to help their God.

After taking in the sheer scale of the swarm, Sha Xin told the three to leave with him. He knew he was strong, but even he felt his confidence falter. The locusts were so numerous

that even a World life form was intimidated. Even if Sha Xin unleashed his full power and struck countless times per second, it would take at least several hours to thin the swarm.

Han Wu knew now wasn't the time to fight and pretended to agree. He moved slowly, stalling for time.

Sha Xin saw through him at once. Anger flared in his eyes. "I have three fruits, and I only need one to regain my freedom. Don't test my limits!"

Han Wu grew serious. Victory was within reach. He couldn't allow Sha Xin to injure either girl.

"I will cooperate with you," Han Wu said while urging Steely to hurry.

Outside the Soul Kingdom, Han Wu was fiercely fighting against Huangquan. He had used his Microcosm and managed to land a swift strike. The latter tore his Microcosm free and tossed Han Wu's to the side.

The Microcosm returned to Han Wu. A quick assessment told him that half of his army had entered Huangquan's Soul Kingdom during that brief contact.

"Not much, but it's better than nothing," Han Wu muttered.

Even half his army amounted to hundreds of billions. The troops were enough to defeat certain God Kings. Moreover, Sun Qingnian and most of Han Wu's powerful units were among them. Han Wu trusted them.

Huangquan sensed the invasion at once. Panic gripped him, but he couldn't do anything. Thankfully, the invading force included only a few World life forms.

He used his authority and issued a decree throughout the Soul Kingdom. With the entire kingdom under threat, he granted his officials special privileges to fight in the war. His own aura weakened by half. In return, close to half of his officials received a massive power boost that turned them into World life forms. Those officials who were already World life forms grew stronger still.

"Kill them!"

The empowered officials and the locust army clashed head-on.

At the same time, Sun Qingnian was inside the Soul Kingdom. He sat astride a Nine-Tail Fox, extending his senses to locate Han Wu's Divine Soul. Behind him stood a powerful Earthsunder Wood Elf, Lina's most powerful unit. Behind the Wood Elf, tree roots dragged a crystal coffin. Jing Jing's body lay inside, as if asleep.

“Sun Qingnian, don’t stop. Say goodbye to your weak self!” he murmured as he closed in on Han Wu’s Divine Soul.

It didn’t take long to find them. Sun Qingnian waved at them, and Sha Xin immediately attacked. None of the 10,000 techniques could kill him, but together they could inflict significant damage.

The barrage blasted Sun Qingnian and his Nine-Tail Fox backward. At the critical moment, the Wood Elf summoned a massive wooden shield to absorb the aftershock and protect Jing Jing’s body.

Jing Jing sensed her body nearby and looked at Han Wu. He understood her intent. She wanted to return to her body and unleash her full might, but she needed time.

Han Wu nodded. He had to buy that time. Using Swap, he teleported twice and pulled both girls away from Sha Xin.

Caught off guard, Sha Xin burned with anger as the trio slipped from his grasp. His Divine Ring activated and rotated wildly. Ten thousand attacks poured down like fireworks as he charged straight at Han Wu. Channeling a powerful Taijutsu, Sha Xin targeted Han Wu’s back and unleashed a punch that could destroy a World life form.

The strike came too fast and with too much force for Han Wu to use Swap again. The blow would hit his Divine Soul!

As he thought he would certainly die this time, a massive Obsidrum greatsword dropped from the sky and blocked Sha Xin’s fist. The collision detonated with a thunderous explosion as Sha Xin punched the Obsidrum greatsword.

The shockwave knocked the weaker life forms around them unconscious.

Enraged that anyone would dare block him, Sha Xin turned toward the new foe. He froze in surprise. He had never seen such a strange creature. A giant with 100 arms stood before him.

“My glorious God, Steely is here to save you!” Steely clapped his palms, and the massive Obsidrum greatsword turned into 100 smaller ones for him to grab.

“Obsidrum Judgement, Hurricane Slash!” Steely turned into a black tornado and charged straight at Sha Xin.

: Chapter 679

Chapter 679 - Deceive

High in the air, numerous black wind blades collided with 10,000 incoming attacks. The force of the clash was so powerful that the surrounding space started to fracture.

Steely held the advantage and would prevail if the fight continued.

Han Wu watched with pride. Steely, his first Heroic life form, had grown into an absolute powerhouse among World life forms. He felt like a father witnessing his son's achievement.

Currently, the Soul Kingdom was in turmoil. With Huangquan granting special privileges, the officials were no longer stuck to their assigned regions. They surged outward like prisoners freed from their cells and hunted any opponents they could find. They didn't care about life or death. They just wanted to find something to entertain themselves and stir their numbed hearts from endless years of confinement.

Soon, another World official joined Sha Xin. He glanced at Sha Xin, then spotted Qin Shuang and Han Wu. Excitement flared in his eyes. "Two mature fruits!"

Sha Xin pushed Steely back and warned, "Those are my fruits! Gui Yan, get away!"

Gui Yan didn't take offense. Instead, he chuckled cockily. "Who says they're your fruits? Is your name written on them? Do they reply to you if you call them?"

"You bastard!" Sha Xin burned with the urge to kill Gui Yan, but Steely's unblinking gaze held him in check.

Gui Yan feigned fear, then laughed again. "Oh! I'm so scared. Come kill me if you can. I might even thank you. We're both Huangquan's prisoners. Even though you are slightly stronger than me, you still shouldn't look down on me.

"I've seen the two fruits, so you should share them. Agree, and I will help you deal with that World life form. Refuse, and I'll just wait until you die and steal them while you're still reviving."

Sha Xin hesitated. Gui Yan was right, but the thought of dividing the fruits he had nurtured filled him with resentment.

Han Wu chose that moment to speak. "I believe I understand your situation. I have a proposal. Will you hear it?"

Gui Yan scoffed. "You're nothing but a mere fruit. Since when do you have a say in this?"

The words had barely left his mouth when he realized he had misspoken. Steely had shifted his gaze from Sha Xin and was glaring at him instead.

Han Wu gestured for Steely to not do anything rash for now. He needed to deceive the officials. “I think that Huangquan has misled both of you. If he imprisoned you for so long, what makes you think he intends to free you? Even if you hand over the fruits, he may never release you. Maybe, in his eyes, you are also delicious fruits.”

Sha Xin and Gui Yan frowned at the same time. The argument sounded divisive, yet uncomfortably plausible.

“We signed a contract with Huangquan. He can deceive us but can’t forge a contract.” Sha Xin argued.

Han Wu scoffed. “You can’t forge a contract, but does it state that he won’t harm you after you’re freed? It’s just a contract, and there’s always a chance for a loophole. Do you truly believe Huangquan is virtuous? Or would you rather stay here and serve him forever?”

Han Wu could see that he had planted seeds of doubt in Sha Xin and Gui Yan, so he decided to press the advantage. Whether his claims were true didn’t matter. What mattered was that they changed how they looked at Huangquan.

If they remained loyal, then they would dismiss Han Wu’s words as propaganda. However, if they resented Huangquan, the situation would change entirely. At the very least, they would have no need for them to fight.

Gui Yan was the first to snap. “That damned Huangquan!”

Did he trust Han Wu? Absolutely not.

Still, there was no harm in pretending to fall for Han Wu’s scheme. Even if Huangquan were to investigate this, he couldn’t pin the blame on Gui Yan. He could just claim that Han Wu was too powerful and that they had faced too many enemies.

Would it help to declare his distrust of Han Wu right now? Absolutely not. He would then have to fight Steely and his 100 Obsidrum greatswords.

Sha Xin had lived long enough to know better. He was no fool. He joined in, cursing Huangquan for being deceitful.

Han Wu’s smile widened. He loved working with smart people.

“Since you are victims of Huangquan’s deception, shouldn’t you gather the other officials and work together?” he asked.

Sha Xin and Gui Yan understood his intent, but they had their concerns. If they stopped the other officials from waging war, the Soul Kingdom would collapse swiftly. Whether Huangquan died here or not, another power would seize the entire Soul Kingdom. What kind of treatment would await them then?

Han Wu chuckled. “I will most likely seize the Soul Kingdom. Before that, we will sign a contract with one clause only: we will not fight each other. Anyone who breaks it will have their souls torn apart. How about it?”

Sha Xin and Gui Yan nodded. “Alright.”

Using Steely’s authority, Han Wu produced the upgraded contract devised by the Epistians and handed it to them. They reviewed it carefully, confirmed that no loopholes remained, and infused it with their Spiritual Energy.

Han Wu did the same, and the contract took effect at once. Its binding force filled Sha Xin and Gui Yan with relief. As long as Huangquan fell today, they would regain their freedom and soar to the skies like birds once more.

“Go inform the other officials of the good news,” Han Wu instructed. “I’m sure they will be eager to sign this contract.”

The sooner the officials stopped attacking, the more locusts he could save.

After sending them away, Han Wu sighed and looked up at the sky. “My turn now.”

Steely placed several materials into a traditional transport array.

The Soul Kingdom was still Huangquan’s domain, so the most complete and traditional array offered the safest means of departure. They would transport to Han Wu’s own divine realm.

As energy flowed between the materials and linked them together, the array activated.

Han Wu called for Qin Shuang, and they returned together to his divine realm.

Meanwhile, Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian were busy capturing souls and sealing them within their own divine realms. Souls of this caliber were rare resources, and they intended to secure as many as possible before the lecturers and students entered the Soul Kingdom to claim their share.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 680 - I am Your Retribution!

Han Wu and Qin Shuang returned to his divine realm in spirit form. The moment he arrived, Han Wu felt the familiar energy around him and yelled, “I am back!”

He then sensed his true self calling and smiled.

“Wait here. I will be back soon,” he told Qin Shuang.

Qin Shuang nodded, and Han Wu’s Divine Soul merged back with his true self alongside Undying and Duel. He was whole once more.

In the Soul Kingdom, his Divine Soul had accumulated 10,000 soul points, which transformed it at its very foundation. That change now manifested as a Divine Ring filled with Spiritual Energy behind him.

At the same time, another Microcosm emerged within his consciousness: the Soul Microcosm. With it, Han Wu gained the ability to convert energy into Spiritual Energy. Huangquan had relied on his spirit form numerous times to avoid Han Wu’s attacks. Now that Han Wu could use Spiritual Energy, the balance would change.

Within his consciousness, all the Microcosms gathered energy. The Mechanical Microcosm drew in pure energy, the Dead Microcosm collected death aura, and the Soul Microcosm absorbed Spiritual Energy.

Energy also flowed from the Microcosms of his units and friends. The Origin of Mutation’s Viral Microcosm transmitted Viral Energy, the Umbral Mouse’s Dark Microcosm supplied Dark Energy, and Steely’s Hurricane Microcosm sent Wind Energy.

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All these streams converged upon his original Microcosm, which then channeled the combined power to Han Wu. His Conversion Jurisdiction refined every trace into pure Spiritual Energy. With it, he formed a massive arm entirely of Spiritual Energy that surpassed Huangquan in size.

Under Huangquan’s fearful gaze, Han Wu brought the palm down as if swatting a fly. The blow gravely injured Huangquan, and he wanted to flee. He no longer cared about the Spirit Stones of the Giant Shadow Civilization, his Soul Kingdom, or even his believers. He intended to abandon everything to escape.

Han Wu wouldn’t allow it. “You vile evil God. How dare you send your believers to harvest souls everywhere. Have you ever considered the consequences?”

Han Wu raised the massive arm again, its shadow engulfing Huangquan.

Huangquan pleaded in despair, “Please don’t kill me. I swear my allegiance to you. We can sign a contract to ensure that—”

The arm descended, crushing Huangquan to pieces. After he died, Han Wu uttered slowly, “I am your retribution!”

His Conversion Jurisdiction manifested and started absorbing fragments of Huangquan’s essence. The energy then flowed into Han Wu’s brand new Soul Microcosm. With enough energy, it expanded rapidly until it matched the size of Huangquan’s Soul Kingdom. After that, the huge Soul Microcosm started absorbing surrounding souls to populate it.

With Huangquan’s death, the Soul Kingdom slowly faded. The powerful officials regained their freedom, yet their excitement was muted. After all, they were still spirits. Even those who had reached the World rank weren’t as powerful as true living beings. In the outside world, they were like walking treasure chests. Hiding within the Soul Kingdom offered greater safety.

That was when they noticed Han Wu’s new Soul Microcosm, which was currently absorbing nearby souls to populate it. Because it had just formed, it lacked strict rules or limitations. To the officials, it represented unexplored territory. They pushed Sha Xin to be their representative and urged him to petition Han Wu for permission to settle there.

Sha Xin desired freedom more than most. Still, the prospect of a stable refuge was appealing, so he approached Han Wu and proposed that the officials reside within the Soul Microcosm. They promised that they wouldn’t stay there for free. They offered their own Microcosms as the price for residence.

Han Wu observed that the Soul Kingdom had 189 officials, and thirty-seven of them were at the World rank. If he accepted them, he would gain thirty-seven Microcosms in one go.

For a World life form, additional Microcosms meant greater strength. Even though Han Wu walked the path of quality, he still envisioned a vast constellation of Microcosms in his consciousness.

Moreover, allowing the officials to stay in his Soul Microcosm presented practical benefits. Han Wu wouldn’t have to assign his own units to manage the Soul Microcosm. The officials could oversee its operations themselves. This arrangement would save Han Wu both time and resources.

After considering his options, he agreed. The displaced officials gathered their belongings and moved into their new home.

The moment they joined his side, Han Wu received thirty-eight new Microcosms in his consciousness. At the same time, his Soul Microcosm grew stronger, and its rate of soul absorption intensified. Some of the trapped souls in the Soul Kingdom or those that had survived the war were drawn into it and formally became a part of Han Wu.

Han Wu then realized that if the Soul Microcosm continued absorbing souls at this pace, it would become overpopulated. The prospect raised difficult questions. How should he deal with the souls after that? Crush the excess souls and extract their Spiritual Energy? Or have them compete and nurture only the strongest?

He dismissed both options. His Reincarnation provided a better solution. He could establish a reincarnation system that allowed powerful souls to enter Han Wu's original Microcosm and be reborn as true, living life forms.

This approach surpassed simple transmigration, though the two concepts were similar. It could solve the Soul Microcosm's overpopulation issue while bolstering Han Wu's forces. The plan achieved two goals at once.

Meanwhile, the Soul Microcosm's officials could continue managing the new souls. When exhaustion set in, they could choose to reincarnate and experience the joy of having flesh and blood. After death, they could resume their duties.

Han Wu understood how to deploy them efficiently. Within the bounds of the rules, he intended to squeeze every ounce of value they possessed.

: Chapter 681

Chapter 681 - Sudden Wealth

Although the reincarnation system had been introduced, it still required further adjustments. Han Wu would also need to invest numerous resources. For now, however, he had to return to the Divine Civilization first.

Both Huangquan and the Soul Kingdom were history, but they had only been the appetizers. The real feast lay in the Giant Shadow Civilization's Spirit Stone mine. Everyone present had already witnessed its immense wealth. How could anyone resist claiming a share?

Xu Hai and the other lecturers were already invading the Giant Shadow Civilization, though they faced fierce retaliation from its native life forms. Sun Qingnian and Jing Jing had also dispatched their armies from the Soul Kingdom to claim their portion.

Realizing that he was likely too late, Han Wu quickly summoned his troops to invade. The huge swarm of locusts, accompanied by his armies of various beasts, surged into the civilization.

Through the eyes of his units, he noticed that much had changed. In the past, the ninjas and the giants had been the two dominant powers, yet the war had never escalated to the point where the smaller factions couldn't survive.

Now, however, the giants held the advantage. The ninja villages had no choice but to hide on a remote island, where they struggled to survive on the brink of collapse. At any moment, the giants across the sea could descend upon them and wipe them out.

Han Wu was certain that it wouldn't take long before the giants stomped the tiny island beneath their feet.

Since when did the giants grow so powerful? He recalled that Rogue had pressured them heavily in the past.

As more of his locusts spread throughout the Giant Shadow Civilization, Han Wu gathered additional information. The giants had become so powerful because the nine Giant Sages had fused into a single body and activated Sundering.

The ninjas couldn't withstand their stampede and had been driven back. Han Wu wanted to gather more information when a thunderous voice suddenly exploded in the minds of everyone from the Divine Civilization. The powerful Will of the Civilization was expelling them.

"Get out of my civilization!" The roar resounded with overwhelming force. Many units couldn't withstand its power and exploded.

Those who had sent their units there suffered heavy losses and were forced to retreat. Unexpectedly, there was one exception. None of Han Wu's units were harmed. Even the weakest locust hopped about as if nothing had happened.

The others were utterly baffled. Why had their units been affected while Han Wu's remained unharmed? How had his units survived the Will's attack? Had he concealed some secret from them?

Xu Hai questioned Han Wu, but the latter was equally confused. He didn't have any hidden advantage here. His units were made of flesh and blood, just like everyone else's. He had no idea how they had survived under the Will's might.

Still, he was now the only one from the Divine Civilization who could remain within the Giant Shadow Civilization. An enormous fortune had effectively fallen into his lap.

The others could only stare at the Giant Shadow Civilization with greedy eyes, but they could do nothing. They weren't Han Wu, so they couldn't compete for the Spirit Stones. Frustrated and furious, they vented their anger on the other World life forms invading the Giant Shadow Civilization. With Xu Hai aiding them, defeating them was an easy matter.

Meanwhile, Han Wu continued his investigation. Thanks to his huge number of units, he successfully created a gate linking the Giant Shadow Civilization to his divine realm and stationed his two newly ascended World life forms, Akanzor and Bart, to guard it. With them standing watch, he felt entirely at ease.

Afterward, he commanded the rest of his elite troops, such as Steely and Dark Locust, to explore the Giant Shadow Civilization with their respective teams. Their mission had two goals. They would continue the invasion while also searching for suitable locations to mine the Spirit Stones.

Han Wu then brought the Origin of Mutation and the Umbral Mouse to deal with the hardest issue. They would reclaim one of the two most powerful regions in the Giant Shadow Civilization: the island where the ninjas had taken refuge. Numerous ninjas from all eight villages had gathered there. For the moment, even the giants couldn't eliminate them.

As World life forms, the trio approached the island on foot. Before they even arrived, the pressure of their auras rolled across the island like waves. The Apprentices all fainted, while the Adepts struggled to remain conscious. Only the Masters and Shadows could maintain their consciousness and the ability to fight.

As if sensing the looming threat, every ninja above the Adept rank gathered along the beach for the final duel.

Before long, the two parties met. The ninjas were stunned to find that only three individuals had arrived. How could the trio threaten them so deeply? How powerful were they?

The Shadow of the Giant Wood Village recognized Han Wu and exclaimed, "You are Kokkai Hanwu! Didn't you go missing during the mission? How are you still alive?"

Han Wu chuckled. Kokkai Hanwu belonged to the past, a brief and insignificant chapter in his life.

"Things have changed," Han Wu said. "I will keep this brief. This civilization will fall, and I am here to give you a chance. Work under me, and I will take the Shadow Ninja Civilization under my wings, allowing it to survive. Resist, and you will die, and your civilization will end with you. Make your choice. Will you submit or resist?"

Darcy stood among the ninjas. Even though he knew he couldn't win, he held firmly to his beliefs. He would only submit to someone who had defeated him.

He met Han Wu's gaze with pride. "Do you think I would submit just because you said so?"

Han Wu sensed the resolve in his words and nodded. "Fine, let me show you my strength."

Han Wu formed a series of hand seals, and a huge mass of black water gathered behind him. It continued to grow until it formed a massive orb.

“Everyone, be careful! That’s the Kokkai family’s black water. It’s extremely corrosive!” the Shadow of the Giant Wood Village warned.

The other Shadows immediately used their strongest defensive jutsu to defend against the black water orb.

Han Wu ignored them and continued to shape the orb. Under his control, the orb changed into a massive python that swam through the sky. Its enormous frame encompassed the entire island beneath it.

The ninjas stared upward in shock. The black water python was so immense that all hope of resistance drained from them.

Han Wu spoke again, “Now, who wishes to submit, and who wishes to resist?”

His voice was incomparably hard to resist and powerful. To the ninjas, Han Wu was like a God now!

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 682 - Mastermind of the Giants

The Shadow of the Giant Wood Village was the first to respond. “I give up!”

Han Wu’s power had convinced him completely. At the same time, he was proud of Han Wu. In his mind, Han Wu still belonged to the Giant Wood Village, and he could become the new Shadow with his new strength. In that case, there was no harm in stepping aside for him.

The others soon followed, and Han Wu took note of them. Almost everyone surrendered, though a few still hesitated out of stubborn pride.

Han Wu looked at the three powerful ninjas. “You three. Will you surrender or resist?”

Given their auras, he could tell they were Sages, stronger even than the Shadows. None of them wanted to live under another’s command.

“Why must we surrender?” one of them asked. “Can’t we cooperate?”

“No, you are too weak,” Han Wu said bluntly.

The Sage’s expression darkened with anger. He had expected Han Wu to show him some leniency. Instead, Han Wu rejected him outright.

“Toad Sage, only weaklings would cooperate. Beasts stand on their own.” Another Sage chuckled and looked at Han Wu. “I am the White Scale Sage and will choose to resist. Let’s see what you can do to me.”

The moment he finished speaking, the Origin of Mutation disappeared from Han Wu’s side and reappeared beside the White Scale Sage. It drove a powerful kick into him and sent him flying.

The White Scale Sage laughed. “I wondered how strong you might be. It seems that you’re just bluffing.”

Everyone soon saw why. The White Scale Sage was covered in white scales, and his form bent and flexed as if he had no skeleton. His soft body absorbed the Origin of Mutation's powerful kick without suffering any damage.

The display gave the other two stubborn Sages a glimmer of hope. Even some of the ninjas who had already surrendered started to doubt themselves. They looked up at the massive black water serpent circling in the sky, and it no longer seemed as scary. Some even suspected that they were trapped in a Genjutsu and frantically tried to break free.

The Origin of Mutation chuckled. "Don't celebrate too early. You only survived one hit."

As it spoke, something appeared in its hand. It was a scale that had fallen off the White Scale Sage during the earlier kick.

The White Scale Sage's expression darkened like that of a venomous snake. "Your strength was only enough to break one of my scales."

The Origin of Mutation smiled, placed the scale in its mouth, and activated Gene Lock. Scales identical to the White Scale Sage's spread across its body, and the energy it radiated matched the Sage’s exactly. If anything, it felt slightly stronger.

The White Scale Sage assumed it was merely some powerful transformation technique and even mocked, "You think that looking like me means you can beat me? Dream on!"

"Beating you in this form does seem a bit difficult," the Origin of Mutation mumbled.

Then every white scale suddenly turned black. It activated Controlled Mutation and strengthened its frame without consuming its life expectancy. In this black-scale form, the Origin of Mutation became three to four times stronger than before.

The White Scale Sage sensed the danger immediately. Fear crept into his heart, and he started to search for a way to retreat without losing face.

Unfortunately for him, the Origin of Mutation had no intention of wasting time talking. It moved instantly and shattered the White Scale Sage's body with a single punch. Three punches later, the White Scale Sage was dead. Even someone as strong as him couldn't survive more than three seconds against the Origin of Mutation in its black-scale form.

Han Wu addressed the ninjas once more. "Who will submit, and who will resist?"

At that moment, no ninja dared to consider resistance. After all, the White Scale Sage, who had tried moments earlier, still lay there; his corpse hadn’t even grown cold yet.

Han Wu nodded with satisfaction. Even though the ninjas were already in a very weak position, they were still part of the Giant Shadow Civilization.

He had just secured the area and intended to confront the giants next when a thick layer of storm clouds rolled in from the distance. Steam billowed beneath them in such dense waves that it changed the sky’s color. Meanwhile, lightning flashed with terrifying force, as though the end of the world were approaching.

The Shadow of the Giant Wood Village rushed forward and explained, "The giants are provoking us again. They want to lure us out and wipe us all out. Hanwu, don't fall for it!"

"The giants? I was just about to go find them. They're coming to us now, which actually saves me a lot of time," Han Wu said with excitement.

He ignored the Shadow's warnings and appeared on the path where thousands of giants advanced. Towering figures marched straight into the sea. Their frames burned with such intense heat that the surrounding water boiled, killing vast numbers of sea creatures. Even those that weren't cooked alive soon disappeared beneath the thick clouds of steam rising from the heat.

Under those dark clouds, bolts of lightning formed and crashed down in relentless waves that destroyed every living thing in their path.

Han Wu couldn't help but feel impressed by the spectacle. He had to admit that it looked even more intimidating than his own entrance.

As he watched, a bolt of lightning struck him directly. Han Wu, however, remained completely unharmed.

This outcome seemed to anger the mastermind. They began controlling the clouds and summoned them above Han Wu. Moments later, thousands of lightning bolts rained down upon him.

The mastermind clearly intended to strike Han Wu down. Yet not a single bolt wounded him. Instead, Han Wu activated Conversion and shaped the lightning bolts into a massive hand.

"You want to strike me down? Then prepare to be crushed instead," Han Wu said in a low voice.

His words seemed to resonate through their souls and reach every living creature's ears.

Han Wu then swung the giant lightning hand and crushed the powerful Sundering giants one after another.

Lightning fell even faster, yet none of it affected him. He had Conversion, so all energy-based attacks were useless against him.

After collecting a large portion of the energy, he condensed it into a hundred-meter-tall lightning giant modeled after the giants themselves. As it moved, it crushed several Sundering giants on the spot.

The mastermind hiding in the rear could no longer hold back and stepped out.

Han Wu froze when he saw the other party—the mastermind was himself!

Han Wu was stunned when he saw the figure. He was certain that no extra clones of him existed anywhere in this world. Yet the mastermind standing before him looked exactly like him. It couldn't be that his parents, who had gone missing in the Chaotic Starfield, had somehow left him a younger brother in the Giant Shadow Civilization.

"Who are you?" Han Wu asked.

The mastermind's expression grew complicated at the question. Fear flickered across his face, followed by pride and indifference. There was also a faint trace of resentment beneath it all.

The Origin of Mutation and Umbral Mouse approached and noticed Han Wu standing among the giants.

"*Whoa*, am I seeing things? Why is Master everywhere?" The Umbral Mouse looked at Han Wu, then at the Origin of Mutation, and finally at the other Han Wu. Her brain struggled to process what she was seeing.

The Origin of Mutation chuckled. "Vessel, did you fool around in the Giant Shadow Civilization and make another copy of yourself?"

It was a casual remark, but it triggered a realization in Han Wu’s mind. In an instant, he understood where the other Han Wu had come from.

"You're Kokkai Hanwu!" Han Wu shouted.

Kokkai Hanwu finally spoke. "Then who are you? Why do you look like him?"

The *him* Kokkai Hanwu was referring to was, of course, his own body.

The nine Giant Sages had seized Kokkai Hanwu's flesh and blood, yet none of them considered themselves to be Kokkai Hanwu.

Han Wu's expression grew serious. From Kokkai Hanwu's words, he gathered several crucial clues. He could say with certainty that the body before him belonged to him, but the soul inside had been replaced. When he combined that realization with the fact that Kokkai Hanwu could control the Sundering giants, the answer became obvious.

Han Wu looked at Kokkai Hanwu and smiled kindly. To Kokkai Hanwu, however, that smile felt anything but kind. It was chilling.

"Stop making that face. Tell me, who exactly are you?" Kokkai Hanwu demanded.

Every move he made released a wave of pressure that Han Wu knew all too well. It was the pressure of the Will of the Civilization.

At that moment, everything became clear to Han Wu. That explained why the attacks of the Will of the Giant Shadow Civilization had spared his own units. The body the Will had seized originally belonged to him. Naturally, the pressure wouldn't hurt his own kin.

Everything now made perfect sense.

Han Wu’s mood brightened. "You don't know who I am? Then what should I call you? The Maw Giant? The Assault Giant? It seems that after being away for so long, the two of you have forgotten the rules I set!”

When Han Wu said that, the Maw and the Assault Giants occupying Kokkai Hanwu shivered uncontrollably.

"It's him. He's back. That demon is back!" the Maw Giant said with certainty.

"A mere human? What's there to fear?” the Armor Giant said confidently. Its strength ranked near the top among the nine Giant Sages. “If I make a move, I can crush him with one hand!"

The Maw and Assault Giants quickly signaled for him to stay quiet, afraid that Han Wu would somehow sense their thoughts.

"There's no need to be so afraid. All nine of us Giant Sages are here right now. Are we really going to lose to one tiny human?" the Giant Giant grumbled.

The Maw and Assault Giants immediately remembered their previous battle with Han Wu. At that time, he had taken them down as easily as if they were children.

However, the situation had changed. All nine Giant Sages had gathered together, and they had even merged with part of the Will of the Giant Shadow Civilization. They had to be the strongest force within this civilization.

The Maw and Assault Giants considered this carefully. It was time to confront their fear.

In the next moment, the nine Giant Sages united and unleashed the most powerful pressure the Giant Shadow Civilization could produce.

Under that pressure, the sea rolled backward and the dark clouds scattered from the sky. Energy gathered around Kokkai Hanwu and took shape, forming a giant that towered 10,000 meters into the sky.

The giant bore the combined features of the Giant Sages. Heavy armor covered its entire frame. Beneath it, powerful muscles released heat comparable to magma. Its arms were incredibly long, reaching past its knees. Thick bone plating protected both its claws and face.

The giant raised its hand. Endless Bone Energy gathered in its palm, forming a boulder weighing five tons, and it hurled the boulder. Midair, it shattered into countless fist-sized chunks of rock that rained down toward Han Wu and the others with unstoppable force.

"Is this your answer?" Han Wu asked calmly. "Then I suppose I must remind you what it's like to be under my control again."

Han Wu activated his Demon King Transformation. A wave of power spread outward and shattered the stone shrapnel before they could reach him.

This was only the beginning. Han Wu followed with Black Dragon King Transformation. A terrifying aura blanketed the entire sky and plunged it into complete darkness.

The ninjas on the island trembled in fear, especially the two Sages who had chosen not to fight earlier. If they had actually made a move, not even their corpses would have remained.

When Han Wu used Black Dragon King Transformation, the Umbral Mouse jumped into his shadow on her own and activated a series of support spells that elevated Han Wu’s strength to a new level.

Darkness stained the sea, the sky, the earth, and even the surrounding space. It engulfed the entire world.

The Nine Giant Sages felt the overwhelming aura and hesitated. They had believed that their fusion would make them invincible within their own territory, where every advantage favored them. They had never expected that Han Wu, who had just arrived, would be even more powerful.

Meanwhile, the Origin of Mutation had snuck away to the ninja island to watch the show and protect the surrendered ninjas from the aftershocks of the fight.

It chuckled, "Looks like someone's about to have a really bad day."

At that moment, a ninja crawled toward it, looking up with admiring eyes. "Hello, I'm a medical ninja named Nan. I love anatomy. I just wanted to ask... How did you transform yourself into the same state as the White Scale Sage just by eating one scale?"

The Origin of Mutation glanced at Nan and noticed that several of Nan's organs had been artificially grafted. Without any special ability, performing such procedures was incredibly difficult.

The discovery sparked a small measure of interest.

"Who performed the surgery on you?" the Origin of Mutation asked.

Nan’s excitement only grew. "I did! I used my own clones to perform surgery on myself. Pretty successful, right?" He looked at the Origin of Mutation as if he were speaking with a colleague.

The Origin of Mutation nodded slightly and said in a slightly disinterested tone, "Not bad. Are you interested in joining me?"

Nan’s eyes lit up even more. From the moment he saw the Origin of Mutation swallow a single scale and instantly gain the White Scale Sage's abilities, he knew he had just witnessed the very goal he had been chasing his whole life.

"Yes, I want to learn from you. From today onward, you're my master," Nan replied eagerly. His eyes shone with excitement.

"Good. If you want to learn from me, I must modify you first. I will turn you into a monster. You don’t mind, do you?"

Nan’s enthusiasm only intensified when he heard that.

Chapter 684 - Qin Shuang’s Revival

Han Wu’s aura continued to grow.

Kokkai Hanwu knew he couldn't allow Han Wu to grow any stronger, so he immediately invoked his authority as the Will of the Civilization to suppress him.

The Will represented the highest power within the civilization. No amount of raw strength could bypass its authority. Even a God King will have their power reduced under its influence.

However, Kokkai Hanwu had forgotten one thing. He was Han Wu as well.

The moment he made the decision to suppress Han Wu, the Will hesitated for a second. It had never expected Kokkai Hanwu to act with such ruthlessness that he would weaken himself even though the situation already worked against him.

In the end, the suppression descended. Under the Will, Han Wu's strength was forcibly reduced by 30%.

Meanwhile, Kokkai Hanwu's own strength had been lower than Han Wu's from the start, and his resistance to the Will was weaker. Under the same suppression, his strength was cut in half.

Just like that, the gap between them widened even further.

Kokkai Hanwu burned with anger. He wanted to weaken Han Wu, yet the Will had weakened him instead.

Just as Kokkai Hanwu was about to change the conditions and restore his own strength, Han Wu moved, bringing endless darkness with him. He swung his dragon claw forward toward Kokkai Hanwu's dantian.

Kokkai Hanwu tried to dodge, but he wasn’t used to controlling a 10,000-meter-tall body.

The strike landed. The dragon claw, charged with Corrosive Energy, tore through Kokkai Hanwu's armor and ripped into his flesh.

At the last moment, Kokkai Hanwu used Bone Energy and formed spikes that burst from the ground, forcing Han Wu back. Han Wu had nearly torn his stomach open.

Han Wu was covered in dragon scales, so the spikes did nothing to him. This time, he attacked from a different angle. His target was Kokkai Hanwu’s neck, the weak point of every giant in this civilization.

Kokkai Hanwu tried to defend himself while also searching for an opening to contact the Will of the Civilization. However, Han Wu's attacks were so relentless that he never got the chance to do so.

Kokkai Hanwu charged up and unleashed bone spikes that filled the entire area, but it still wasn't enough to buy him time. After all, Han Wu could fly in his Black Dragon King form.

After several bouts, Han Wu bit into Kokkai Hanwu’s nape. The latter had lost.

Considering how special Kokkai Hanwu was, Han Wu didn't finish him off. Instead, he sealed and threw him into his divine realm for research.

Without Kokkai Hanwu secretly commanding the giants, the situation in the Giant Shadow Civilization became much simpler. Under the assault of Han Wu's locust army, the vast majority of giants was devoured. The ninjas returned to their lands and became the masters of this civilization again. Their paradise had been restored.

Han Wu's next step was to merge with the Will of the Giant Shadow Civilization so that he could become the civilization’s true ruler.

The process would take a long time, so Han Wu decided to leave his main body behind. This also ensured the safety of his units mining the Spirit Stones. Still, a mine of this scale was too much for him to handle alone.

Xu Hai stepped in, and after discussing with Han Wu, they reached an agreement. Han Wu sold 30% of the Spirit Stone mine’s rights to Imperial College. In return, the college would provide stronger protection and supply materials to construct a long-range teleportation gate that would transport the crystals in the future.

Han Wu accepted the deal because it came from his master. Both sides ended up satisfied with the arrangement.

Once everything was settled, they boarded the ship. Han Wu split off an avatar that carried a part of his Divine Jurisdictions and Divine Powers to return to Imperial College with the ship. That way, he would continue his studies and restore Qin Shuang’s soul.

Han Wu and Jing Jing remained in the Giant Shadow Civilization to mine Spirit Stones and accelerate the absorption of the Will of the Civilization.

With the help of the ship thrusters developed by Kerry, the journey back was fast. It took only six years, which equaled about six days in the Divine Civilization.

After their return, Xu Hai compiled a full report and submitted it to his superiors. When the higher-ups learned that the group had returned with the souls of many students, they contacted their families and asked them to come retrieve their children.

Han Wu personally brought Qin Shuang's soul back to the Qin estate.

When Qin Shuang's parents heard the news, they burst into tears of joy. For the past few days, they had been overwhelmed with grief after losing their daughter. They had been unable to escape their despair.

The Qin family had also suffered quite a bit, as other families had taken advantage of the situation to stab them in the back because of what had happened to Qin Shuang. Now, however, as long as Qin Shuang returned, all of their problems would cease to exist.

"Why hasn't she come back yet? Why isn't she here yet...?" Qin Shuang's father, Qin Hai, paced anxiously in the courtyard. He waited desperately for his daughter to return.

Finally, the butler pushed open the door. "The young lady is back!"

Cheers erupted as a few members of the Qin family rushed out to see. They watched Han Wu walk into the courtyard, carrying a crystal ball that was temporarily holding Qin Shuang's soul.

"Good! That's great!" Qin Hai hurried over to meet them. Through the crystal ball, he saw the daughter that he had been thinking about day and night.

"My Qin Shuang, you're finally back." Qin Hai broke down again, crying with joy.

Han Wu said, "Uncle, let me place Qin Shuang's soul back into her body."

"Yes, hurry. She is in her room. I'll show you the way." Qin Hai wiped his tears and quickly led the way toward Qin Shuang's room.

When they arrived, Han Wu looked around the room. It was clear that someone had been cleaning it regularly.

Qin Shuang lay on the bed, as if she were merely asleep. Han Wu stepped to the bedside, lifted the crystal ball, and placed it gently against Qin Shuang's forehead. He released a thread of his power and guided her soul back into her body.

The act looked simple, but it actually required someone with an incredibly strong soul to accomplish.

Qin Hai and the others watched from the side with tense expressions.

Finally, Han Wu guided Qin Shuang's soul back, and she opened her eyes.

"My daughter is back, *hahaha*. My daughter is finally awake!" Qin Hai cried out happily. Excitement overwhelmed him, and he jumped in place and waved his arms around.

When the rest of the Qin family outside heard his shout, they erupted in celebration as well. With Qin Shuang here, their family would have two Gods protecting them, which made them stronger than ordinary families with only a single God.

"Thank you, Han Wu," Qin Shuang said gratefully. Without him, she would have died in the Soul Kingdom.

"It's what I should do," Han Wu said softly as he held her delicate hand. He didn't want to let go.

The Qin family members who witnessed this exchanged knowing smiles and silently left her room, giving them space to be alone.

Chapter 685 - Final Class of Second Year

Three days later, Han Wu and Qin Shuang returned to the college. She had completely recovered during those three days and had even absorbed the Annihilating Lightning Gene Catalyst that Han Wu had saved for her.

After consuming it, her lightning powers became stronger and showed signs of evolving into a Divine Jurisdiction. She was certain that once she fully absorbed the Gene Catalyst, she would become a Major God too. Her family would then rise to the status of a Major God family.

Han Wu hadn't been idle either. He refined and merged the Spirit Stones mined from the GIant Shadow Civilization and condensed them into Spirit Crystals that Major God and God Kings could use.

He distributed several crystals to his master and to a number of allied God Kings. Xu Hai, Death, Darkness, Blaze, and even Aisha in the distant Angel Civilization each received Spirit Crystals. All of them praised their remarkable quality.

Commerce received one as well. As a trader, he immediately recognized its value and refined craftsmanship. He was about to thank Han Wu and send him a 1,000-word letter of gratitude when Han Wu called him.

Han Wu wanted to sell that crystal to Commerce for the modest price of 400 Divine Essence, even though its true value far exceeded that amount.

After the call ended, Commerce looked at the Spirit Crystal in his hands with mixed feelings. He had wasted his gratitude, but paying only 400 Divine Essence for such a treasure was still an excellent deal.

Coincidentally, Jia Gui had been searching for him to help him restore his Core.

Commerce decided to assist him by selling the Spirit Crystal to him for 800 Divine Essence. He would simply explain that it was a necessary ingredient for restoring the Core, and Jia Gui would certainly buy it. As he considered how easily he could recover his investment and even double his profit, another thought emerged. If he secured the exclusive right to purchase Spirit Crystals, he could make an enormous fortune. He quickly called Han Wu to discuss the possibility.

The Giant Shadow Civilization had not only provided Han Wu with Spirit Stones but also Ninjutsu and Kokkai Hanwu. The Epistians spent three entire realm years researching Kokkai Hanwu and achieved promising results.

First, they extracted Kokkai Hanwu's spinal fluid. The substance could turn any race into giants. However, the transformation severely damaged the brain and caused various symptoms, such as brain shrinkage and impaired cognition. Most subjects would become idiots.

Han Wu handed it to the Origin of Mutation for further research. He hoped it could turn it into something that was similar to the Angel Elixirs. Even the side effects interested him. He could potentially use it on locusts and turn them into giants.

He wasn’t worried about the locusts becoming unintelligent. Common locusts didn't have any intelligence to begin with. They moved instinctively and followed his commands. The transformation would not change that.

The Epistians also developed a new jutsu after studying the Four Guardians Seal. The original technique could seal a stronger life form inside a weaker one. During that time, the stronger life form’s energy would slowly erode the seal, and the leaked energy would nourish the weaker host.

The Epistians improved it. The new version restricted the target to one rank above the user. In exchange, the seal could capture its target more easily regardless of their status. Even during combat, the seal's chains could coil around the target and drag it into the user's body. The new Four Guardians Seal also introduced a mutual destruction feature. If the user died while the target was sealed, the target would die as well.

Han Wu appreciated this function. It provided greater precision than Self-Detonation. Unfortunately, it still required hand seals. Otherwise, he would’ve allowed all of the locusts to learn it.

Han Wu also started developing the Soul Microcosm. The officials showed interest and joined the project, which saved him considerable effort. Still, it would take some time before the Microcosm reached the form he envisioned. He could take his time.

After a long time, Han Wu had his final class of the second year. Once it ended, he would become a third-year student. The college no longer interested him much. With his current power, he could obtain many resources simply by invading another civilization.

Today, however, was different. Saliya had insisted that he attended class no matter what. Naturally, Han Wu complied.

Students filled the classroom. Many greeted him as he entered. These were the same students who had been dragged into the Soul Kingdom. Without Han Wu, they would have died.

They expressed their deepest gratitude, but Han Wu only nodded. He had saved them while rescuing Jing Jing and Qin Shuang. To him, the act had not been extraordinary. Moreover, their families had already thanked him with gifts, so he owed them nothing.

One exception remained, however: Hei Qi. The War family had taken him back without offering even a word of thanks, much less a gift.

Hei Qi was glaring at Han Wu despite having been rescued.

Han Wu had no idea what Hei Qi was thinking, and he didn't care. Hei Qi was a weakling. There was no reason to lower himself.

Qin Shuang stood up and waved at him. "Han Wu, over here!"

Han Wu walked to her and sat beside her.

She took a lunch box out of her divine realm. "You haven't eaten, right? Here, this is for you."

As a Major God, Han Wu had no need to eat, but he would never refuse her cooking. He ate something that resembled stir-fried potato shreds, and a sharp burst of ginger shot straight through his senses.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Shredded ginger and potatoes. How is it?"

Han Wu gave her a thumbs up with difficulty. "Good, but there's just one small problem that you need to fix."

"What is it?" Qin Shuang immediately took out a notebook to record the suggestion.

"Next time, remember to add the potatoes," he replied.

Chapter 686 - The Divine Weapon Civilization

When Saliya rushed into class, the other students immediately straightened up, eager to hear her announcement.

Saliya's eyes scanned the classroom. Upon landing on Han Wu, she let out a sigh of relief. She had been worried he wouldn't show. A rare opportunity had presented itself, and if Han Wu could once again pull through, he would receive tremendous gain.

"Students, the next major class is extremely important, and I hope all of you will take it seriously. Our next major class will be in the Divine Weapon Civilization!"

Some students were ignorant of the significance of her words, but those knowledgeable about the Divine Weapon Civilization grew visibly excited.

"What's special about the Divine Weapon Civilization?" Han Wu asked Qin Shuang.

Before she could respond, Sun Qingnian, seated just behind them, answered, "Han Wu, don't you know? This is what you get for skipping class and not learning the basics."

"Ok, scholar Sun," Han Wu said with a roll of his eyes. "Want to tell me what the Divine Weapon Civilization is?"

Sun Qingnian cleared his throat. "Since you're asking so earnestly, I, being the merciful person that I am, will graciously explain. Listen carefully. The Divine Weapon Civilization is famed for its weapons. There are even records about a powerful weapon with a one-of-a-kind Armament Spirit that can destroy an entire civilization on its own.

"Apparently, the ranking system of the Divine Civilization's weapons actually originated from the Divine Weapon Civilization as well. I've also heard from a friend—Li—that the Divine Weapon Civilization rarely accepts guests from other civilizations.

"The only time they do is when an exceptionally powerful Armament Spirit is about to be born. They send out invitations to various civilizations in hopes that the Armament Spirit will find an owner," Sun Qingnian explained.

Han Wu noted down everything he learned. This was the first time he had heard of a weapon that could shatter a civilization.

Saliya clapped to call for the chattering students' attention and gestured for them to stop talking. "I'm sure that everyone here has now searched up information on the Divine Weapon Civilization, and you would be right to assume that this invite is because an exceptionally powerful Armament Spirit is going to appear. The Divine Weapon Civilization is inviting us to their ceremony in hopes that the newly-born Armament Spirit can find a suitable owner."

The students were thrilled at the confirmation. Most doubted they would be chosen, but they still felt it would be worth seeing the Armament Spirit with their own eyes.

Saliya's tone changed sharply as she continued, "But there's a limit to how many people can participate. Only a hundred slots have been set aside for the second-year students. Excluding those not on campus, we still have 532 students. So, the college will require you all to undergo a small test to select the participants."

Saliya waved her hands, and everyone was transported to a field. Before each of them stood a stone as tall as the students themselves.

"What you see in front of you is a special whetstone," Saliya explained. "It's extremely durable and tough."

With another wave of her arm, long swords appeared before each student. The blades were blunt, dulled to the point that they couldn't harm anyone.

"These swords are called Light Tap. Hold it and visualize your core race. It will transform based on your units. You must then use it to destroy the whetstone. The first hundred students to succeed will get to go to the Divine Weapon Civilization."

Everyone quickly grabbed their respective Light Taps and visualized their core race. As explained, the swords changed according to the students' core races. Some burst into flames or crackled with lightning, while others changed size and shape, even morphing into different weapons entirely, like spears, shields, or a Desert Eagle.

Han Wu held onto Light Tap and visualized his core race: the locust.

In response, his Light Tap shrank from its original hundred-centimeter length to a mere ten-centimeter blade. The presence of the locust emanated from the small weapon.

"Is this even possible?" Han Wu wondered aloud, swinging the blade at the whetstone.

The deafening scrape of metal on stone screeched out, but all that remained on the whetstone was a white mark. He had barely scratched it!

Han Wu was speechless. The weapon of his core race was so weak! This was akin to using an apple peeler!

Suddenly, cheers rang out. Hei Qi had successfully broken his whetstone—the first of the students to do it. He held a long, black sword, having destroyed the whetstone in a single hit.

A second, third, and fourth success came soon after. Each had done it with weapons shaped based on their core race, emanating part of their core race's power.

Seeing this, Han Wu decided to change tactics. Instead of visualizing his locusts as a whole, he specifically visualized Dark Locust. A suffocating Dark Energy permeated from the small blade. Though the size of the blade hadn't changed, it had become infused with Dark Locust's presence.

Han Wu swiped it across the whetstone. A measly ten-centimeter deep gash was left in its wake. However, that didn't account for the Dark Energy corroding into the whetstone.

Three seconds later, the whetstone broke apart. Han Wu had placed eighty-ninth, which fortunately meant he got to go to Divine Weapon Civilization.

As for his friends, Qin Shuang had placed twenty-first, and Sun Qingnian thirty-sixth.

The trio exchanged smiles, eager to go on another adventure together again.

Chapter 687 - Divine Weapon Atlas

After the selection, the remaining students were given another test to evaluate their final score for the year. The selected students, on the other hand, were transported to another space.

Other students from other colleges as well as those from the Imperial College were all gathered there. Han Wu even saw Xu Mengmeng from the Demonic Imperial College. The two had once fought in the Blood Coliseum and had shared data about nurturing units.

Xu Mengmeng also spotted him and waved at him happily. Beside her stood her two friends, Firewind and White Ice, who nodded at Han Wu in acknowledgement.

There were also students from other colleges besides the Demonic Imperial College. Among these was a group that appeared to be from the Warfare College. Seeing them, Hei Qi detached himself from the Imperial College group to chat with the leader of the Warfare College group, turning to glance at Han Wu from time to time.

"That runt, Hei Qi, seems like he's up to something," Sun Qingnian warned. "Han Wu, be careful."

Qin Shuang nodded. “I think he still resents you for what you did during the Soul Kingdom and wants to take revenge.”

“Probably,” Han Wu agreed. “He didn’t even thank me for saving him. What a discourteous idiot. If he tries anything against me, I’ll smack him so badly his parents won’t recognize his face.”

“That’s quite the threat.” Sun Qingnian chuckled. “Jokes aside though, the War family is a tricky bunch to deal with. They always come one after another. You beat the small one, and the old one pops out to avenge them.”

The group glanced over at Hei Qi in the distance. Based on his animated gesturing, it seemed Sun Qingnian was most likely right.

“I’ll be careful, but I’m not afraid of problems like this,” Han Wu assured.

Soon the rest of the students arrived. Once everyone was present, the Divine Civilization representative for the alliance of colleges stepped up to announce the rules.

“Everyone, I welcome you here. I am representative Luo Yun, chairman of the alliance.” The pressure of a God King permeated the area with his words, subtly suppressing the 10,000 students into silence. “We’ve received an invitation from the Divine Weapon Civilization and you are the ones lucky enough to be chosen to join the ceremony. While infighting is inevitable, I’m hoping you’ll keep it to a minimum as we’re all from the same home.

“I am of the mind that our priority is to gain as many resources for the Divine Civilization as possible during the ceremony, and I hope that everyone takes this mindset to heart. Now, let me announce the rules.”

With that, Luo Yun took out a paper.

“The Divine Weapon Civilization strives to make this fair. Before you enter the Divine Weapon Civilization, you need to spend 10 Divine Essence to form an avatar without any Divine Power or techniques. Once inside, the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization will guide you.

“As chairman of the alliance, I can tell you this. As long as you can endure until the end of the ceremony, you can obtain plenty of resources. I implore you to actively participate, but to keep infighting to a minimum. Now, any questions?”

One of the students sheepishly raised their hand. “Sir, I don’t have enough Divine Essence. What should I do?”

In truth, the student didn’t even have 1 Divine Essence, let alone 10.

On average, most students weren't even Demigods, and they typically used any Divine Essence they got on strengthening themselves. Moreover, 10 Divine Essence was a huge sum of money. Most students simply didn't have that much laying around.

Fortunately, the alliance had clearly thought of this.

"The alliance is loaning Divine Essence without interest for students to complete the test," Luo Yun responded.

Another member of the alliance chimed in, "If you don't want to borrow 10 Divine Essence from us, you can also choose to sell your slot. We're willing to purchase it for 15 Divine Essence so others may enter the Divine Weapon Civilization in your place."

Many students wanted to sell their slots. It was highly likely that they wouldn't get anything from the ceremony even if they spent 10 Divine Essence, so they chose to get 15 Divine Essence for free instead.

For those weaker or lacking confidence, the latter seemed the better choice. However, Han Wu couldn't help but frown, silently admonishing them for their naïveté. The chairman already said that this was a rare chance to enter the Divine Weapon Civilization.

The gold was literally at their feet but they couldn't see it. Then again, it wasn't like he didn't understand where they were coming from. Not every student was rich like him. Some of the more average students were still working hard to become a Demigod.

For them, 15 Divine Essence was a huge sum of money that could help them ascend into a perfect Demigod. One's view of which was the better choice depended on their circumstances.

As a result, many sold their slots, and some of the wealthier students bought them up and entered the space. Thus, the number of participants remained unchanged at 10,000 in the end. Once all the participants were confirmed, the chairman tore the invitation and a white light enveloped the 10,000 students.

Han Wu found himself transported into the avatar he had spent 10 Divine Essence to forge. The Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization's voice sounded in his mind.

[Name: Han Wu. Welcome to the Divine Weapon Civilization. The Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization is scanning the species of your core race to activate your Divine Weapon Atlas...]

[Current Progress: 1%... 1%... 1%...]

[Error. Awakening failed.]

[Troubleshooting error. Error found. Core race species numbers at 58... 739... 832... 839...]

[To awaken your Divine Weapon Atlas, choose one solution]

[1: Choose 1000 species to be added to the atlas. Each Divine Weapon will receive a Faith grade effect upon unlocking it for the first time.]

[2: Choose 100 species to be added to the atlas. Each Divine Weapon will receive a Divine grade effect upon unlocking it for the first time.]

[3: Choose 10 species to be added into the atlas. Each Divine Weapon will receive a God grade effect upon unlocking it for the first time.]

Caught off guard, Han Wu was at a loss for what to choose. His core race were the locusts, but due to Random Evolution, half had turned into other species. Unexpectedly, despite changing species, they still counted as his core race.

After some careful consideration, he chose the third option. While he didn't know what a Divine Weapon Atlas was, he was well aware that God equipment was exceptionally powerful.

[Divine Weapon Atlas unlocked!]

: Chapter 688

Chapter 688 - Small Locust Blade

An exquisite atlas appeared in Han Wu's mind. Engraved on the cover were the eighteen most common weapons, including the blade, spear, sword, halberd, axe, hook, trident, and more.

Han Wu tried to will it open, but only managed to flip one page. A Divine Weapon was recorded on that first page.

[Small Locust Blade]

[Common Equipment]

[Rank: 1]

[Durability: 10/10]

[Effects: None (waiting to be unlocked)]

[Skills: None]

[Description: Formed from the core race, the locusts. Its unassuming appearance hides unlimited potential]

Han Wu tried summoning it, and it appeared in his hand. It resembled the small blade he had used in the test to enter the Divine Weapon Civilization—ten centimeters long, thin as an insect wing, and fairly sharp. The only notable thing about it was its lightness.

Then, three effect options for the blade appeared.

[1: Telekinesis (God): Can use your willpower to control it]

[2: Track (God): 100% hit rate]

[3: Bloodthirsty (God): Can absorb blood to improve power]

Each effect was strong, but the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization only allowed him to choose one. The material, shape, size, and other aspects were enough for Han Wu to determine that his weapon was weak. He couldn't even cut up vegetables with it.

That negated the second option in his mind. Even if the blade always hit, it mattered little when it wouldn't deal much damage.

The third option seemed promising, as absorbing blood naturally improved the weapon's damage. However, the blade was a mere ten centimeters long. Han Wu would have to be really close to hit his enemy. His 10 Divine Essence was already weak, and his weapon was even weaker. Melee simply wasn't an option.

Thus, the only option left was the first. The effect itself was average, but versatile, and complemented the blade's small size at this point. Mind made up, he chose the first option.

The blade didn't outwardly change, but it felt as though it had become an extension of his arm. At his behest, the blade could fly faster than the speed of sound. He tried attacking something with it. The blade silently shot out at full speed and effortlessly sliced through a branch as thick as an arm.

The speed had increased its damage, but its durability had dropped to 8/10. Han Wu was speechless. This was the first time he had seen a Divine Weapon so fragile that it limited the number of times he could attack.

At most, he could only use it four more times. What would happen once the durability was used up? He tried asking the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization. Surprisingly, it replied.

[Divine Weapon will shatter once durability is exhausted. It will take time to remake one. The time taken depends on the quality and various aspects of the Divine Weapon. (Today's quota for questions: 2)]

This whole situation was ludicrous. He unknowingly had only five chances to attack and had used up one just now, leaving him with four. This meant he would have to be exceptionally cautious in the future.

Checking his surroundings, he saw that this was a primordial forest.

"Divine Weapon Civilization, what should I do, or what is my mission?"

[Survive! You can only leave the Divine Weapon Civilization when the Armament Spirit recognizes someone as its owner. (Today's quota for questions: 1)]

Han Wu was baffled. That was an absurdly loose goal. Deciding to save his final question, he explored his environment a little. Traveling in other civilizations was practically the norm for him, and he had rich experience in surviving in the wilderness.

If he wanted to survive, his priority was food and water. While his original body didn't require sustenance for long periods, he doubted the same applied to this 10 Divine Essence avatar.

Checking through the surrounding vegetation, he carefully identified any wild vegetables that looked edible. Suddenly, the crunch of leaves came from behind him. Whipping around, he saw a rabbit.

He took a deep breath. Then, he shot out his blade at full speed, precisely controlling it to lop the rabbit's head straight off.

Dinner is served. Han Wu smiled.

A notification from the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization appeared.

[Absorbed a sliver of essence. Progress to unlock second Divine Weapon + 0.01%]

Han Wu almost fell from the shock. This basically meant he would have to kill 10,000 rabbits to unlock the rest of his Divine Weapons. However, his Small Locust Blade's durability was already at 6/10, meaning he could only use it three more times. In other words, he was basically forced to find an alternative way to unlock his Divine Weapons.

Sighing, he collected the rabbit's corpse, noting with further annoyance that there were no other special drops besides the body itself. He was truly starting on hell mode, but at least he wouldn't starve tonight.

He skinned the rabbit using the Small Locust Blade, and the durability dropped by another point. This was truly the worst.

When he wanted to use his Small Locust Blade to shave a stick so he could skewer the wild rabbit meat, he had to remind himself to stop. If he did that, his blade would truly shatter into pieces.

Through unconventional means that didn't involve using the blade, Han Wu eventually managed to cook the rabbit. The taste was average, but at least he wouldn't starve.

After his meal, he left camp to find some berries as dessert. When he returned, several fist-sized beetles were eating the discarded head of the rabbit, easily chewing through the rabbit's skull with their sharp mandibles.

Han Wu gulped. The life forms here were quite scary. If the beetles were to bite him, he reckoned that his bones would likely snap.

As he was thinking this, some beetles flew towards him. Han Wu wanted to use his Small Locust Blade to kill them, but fearing it would shatter, decided to use a stick to crush them instead.

He absorbed their essence, but the progress to unlock the next weapon remained distant. If this continued, the other participants would surely leave him in the dust. He chose to ask his last question for the day.

"Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization, how do I increase the rank of my Small Locust Blade?"

[You can absorb the exoskeleton of insects, ores, or related materials to upgrade it. (Today's quota for questions:0)]

Han Wu's eyes lit up. There were insect exoskeletons right in front of him! He gently touched the exoskeletons with his Small Locust Blade, and several dots of light appeared before entering the blade.

With that, his Small Locust Blade leveled up to rank 2. Its durability was restored and even increased to 11/11.

A light bulb went off in Han Wu's head. The night had only just begun.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 689 - Explosive Locust Blade

Han Wu gathered firewood and started a fire. Holding a wooden club, he waited for insects to be drawn to the light. As expected, many soon appeared, some as large as fists.

He killed them with the club and absorbed them with his Small Locust Blade. After one night, his blade had reached rank 5. Each upgrade increased both its strength and durability. The progress was slow, but at least it was steady.

While he continued killing insects, he heard another life form approaching at high speed. It was a wolf. Encounters like this were common in primordial forests. Wolves were nocturnal hunters that traveled in packs, and they were notoriously vicious.

Han Wu spotted their glowing green eyes in the distance and climbed a tree. The wolves soon arrived and circled below, waiting for him to fall so that they could turn him into their dinner.

Han Wu clung tightly to the branch, but his strength slowly drained. Unsure how long he could hold on, he brandished his Small Locust Blade and attacked. To preserve its durability, he carefully controlled it and aimed only for the wolves' abdomens. That way, its durability fell by one per kill. By the time he killed them all, his Locust Blade still had durability remaining and didn't shatter.

Han Wu was both pleased and disappointed. The wolves yielded far more essence than rabbits and insects. It was enough to unlock the second Divine Weapon in his atlas.

Han Wu flipped the page and almost fell from shock. The second Divine Weapon looked similar to the Small Locust Blade but carried a more yellowish hue.

[Explosive Locust Blade]

[Faith Equipment]

[Rank: 1]

[Durability: 1/1]

[Effect: None (Waiting to be unlocked)]

[Skill: Self-Detonation]

[Description: Formed from the Bomber Locust. Contains explosive power.]

After reading the description, Han Wu smiled bitterly. A Faith equipment with Self-Detonation sounded powerful, but its durability was only 1! It was a single-use weapon! Once it exploded, he would have to wait for it to reform. It was even stranger than the Small Locust Blade.

The Divine Weapon Atlas would drive Han Wu crazy. He could only hope that the ten Divine Weapons inside weren't simply different variations of the Small Locust Blade. Otherwise, escaping the jungle would be impossible, let alone passing this test.

Han Wu hoped that the available effects would somehow save the Divine Weapon. Clinging to that sliver of hope, he checked the effects.

[1: EMP (God). Changes explosion into an EMP with a wide range of effects.]

[2: Rapid Reformation (God). Increases reformation speed after durability is exhausted.]

[3: Crush (God). Enhances explosion with the Crush effect.]

Han Wu chose the second option without thinking. The first and third options differed, but they both enhanced Self-Detonation's power. He was certain they would enhance the explosion's damage, but he needed a Divine Weapon that could attack more frequently. Only the second option met his needs. It would allow him to turn his Explosive Locust Blade into a weapon he could use continuously.

After confirming the effect, he threw the Explosive Locust Blade at a boulder about his height. The blade stabbed into the boulder and exploded. With a loud blast, a third of the boulder vanished. The Explosive Locust Blade was as powerful as a hand grenade, which was more than enough to help him escape the jungle.

After confirming the strength of the explosion, he turned his attention to how long it would take for the Explosive Locust Blade to reform.

Han Wu waited for one second, and it reformed. He was satisfied with the result. Since it was only rank 1, some of its parameters were naturally low. Still, he could do more now with it. Against larger beasts, he could throw the Explosive Locust Blade while controlling the Small Locust Blade to deliver the killing strike. The combination worked well.

Soon, the second day arrived, and he received three more chances to ask questions. This time, he asked about how to upgrade his Explosive Locust Blade.

[Sulfur, gunpowder, and certain rare ores can upgrade it. (Today's quota for questions: 2)]

Han Wu smiled bitterly at the answer. Where could he find those materials? First, he had to exit the jungle.

Han Wu picked a direction and killed anything he encountered. The essence was minimal, but it was better than nothing.

Eventually, he came across a wooden hut and quickly raised his guard. In a foreign civilization, anyone without sufficient strength or a reliable disguise needed to avoid revealing themselves to the natives. The risk of death was too high.

Then another thought occurred to him. He had technically been invited by the Divine Weapon Civilization. Even his avatar was formed by the Divine Essence, so perhaps he wouldn't be discovered so easily. Keeping that in mind, he approached the hut with caution.

At that moment, a burly man walked out. He wore a beast hide and carried a black axe. It appeared that he was about to leave for something.

Han Wu slowly got closer.

As an excellent hunter, the man immediately sensed that something was wrong. He could tell that Han Wu wasn't a native.

"You must be an outsider who came here for the Armament Spirit, right?" the man asked.

Han Wu was stunned that the man identified him with a single glance. Since he had already been exposed, he decided not to hide it and nodded. "I am indeed here for it."

The man laughed. "Then you came to the wrong place. Leave here, head to the village, and get a recommendation from there before you head toward the Divine Weapon City."

Han Wu was confused. Was the process that simple?

The man continued, "Every ten years or so, outsiders appear here to seek the Armament Spirit. We are already used to it."

Han Wu lowered his guard slightly. "Could you tell me where the village is?"

"Of course. Come here. Walk along this road, head forward for about five kilometers, then..." The man seized the moment while Han Wu was distracted and suddenly swung his black axe at him.

Han Wu's avatar was less agile than his original body, so he couldn't evade completely. He summoned the Small Locust Blade to block the axe midair before stepping back several paces.

"Weren't you going to show me the way? Why are you attacking me?" Han Wu demanded. If he had been less cautious, his head would have rolled.

“You outsider! Don’t you dare think about sullying our treasure. Die!” the man roared and tossed the black axe at him

Han Wu calmly used his Small Locust Blade to block it while tossing the Explosive Locust Blade toward the hunter.

The hunter wasn’t afraid of such a tiny blade. Convinced it could not even pierce his skin, he reached out and grabbed it.

The hunter succeeded and sneered. “Have outsiders become so weak that this rubbish is all they can wave in front of me?”

Han Wu didn’t reply. He laughed coldly and activated the Explosive Locust Blade’s Self-Detonation. The blade detonated in the hunter’s hand.

Han Wu saw that the hunter had lost his right hand, though the rest of his body remained intact. The Explosive Locust Blade still had limits to its damage.

“You blasted outsider!” the hunter roared. “How dare you hurt me. I will cut off your head!”

Enduring the pain, he summoned his axe back to his left hand and swung it, sending a wind blade. Han Wu evaded the attack and tossed the reformed Explosive Locust Blade. This move was only a feint. At the same time, he controlled the Small Locust Blade and aimed it at the side of the hunter’s throat.

The hunter fell into the trap. After the earlier explosion, he tried to avoid the Explosive Locust Blade and failed to notice Han Wu’s true attack. As a result, the Small Locust Blade stabbed through his throat with ease. The hunter collapsed to the ground in pain and glared viciously at Han Wu before dying.

Once he confirmed that he was dead, Han Wu used the Explosive Locust Blade to blow off the hunter’s head before approaching the corpse.

“Never thought the natives here would be so hostile,” Han Wu muttered. “Maybe that’s why Luo Yun told us to fight the others, not each other. Our enemies are everywhere. It will be difficult to win if we don’t work together.”

He then looked at the black axe. According to the Divine Weapon Atlas, both of his weapons could absorb the power within the axe. Given the likelihood of fiercer battles ahead, the Small Locust Blade and its effect offered far greater versatility. Thus, he had the Small Locust Blade absorb it.

The process ended quickly, and the Small Locust Blade advanced to rank 15. Not only did its durability reach 25/25, but it also gained a new skill.

[Blade Pressure: Fires a sharpened pressure wave that attacks enemies. Damage is proportional to rank.]

“Not bad.” He studied it with satisfaction before turning his attention to the wooden hut. The hunter had been living there, so something valuable had to be inside.

Chapter 690 - Bandits of Black Wind Caves

In the hut, Han Wu found two ores, some jerky, and a manual titled Mountain Splitter, intended for axe users.

The ores were compatible with his Explosive Locust Blade, so he absorbed them. As for the axe manual, he didn’t have an axe and couldn’t learn it for now. Still, he knew that it had to be a secret manual within this civilization. He would likely earn some money by selling it.

Han Wu packed the manual and jerky, changed into the hunter’s clothes, and set out toward the village the dead hunter had mentioned.

He hadn’t expected the information to be true, but a small village stood just five kilometers away.

Han Wu entered cautiously. The village seemed quiet, with only a couple of old men basking in the sunlight at the crossroads. He assumed that they were local farmers. He then recalled what the hunter had told him: he would need some form of recommendation before he could travel to Divine Weapon City.

Even if the information proved unreliable, he still decided to try. He asked the farmers at the crossroads where he could find the village chief.

One of the old men smiled and pointed him in the right direction. He followed the directions and soon reached the village chief’s house. Through the small fence, he saw a skinny middle-aged man walking out of the house. He was the village chief.

The village chief’s eyes were sharp. Han Wu’s clothes clearly belonged to the hunter. Since he was wearing them now, the hunter was most likely dead.

The village chief started trembling. After all, the hunter living in the mountain had hunted wolves and tigers before. *How could such a strong man die at the hands of this young man? How powerful is he?*

The village chief discreetly examined Han Wu and called out to him, “Good man, why are you here in the village? Is something wrong?”

Han Wu noticed the village chief’s suspiciously courteous tone and assumed that he had already guessed what had happened. Since the village chief said nothing, Han Wu decided not to break the illusion. It was best for both of them to feign ignorance.

“Chief, I want to go to Divine Weapon City. I’m here to request a recommendation from you,” Han Wu stated.

The village chief grew even more cautious now. Ten years had passed since the last Armament Spirit was born, which meant that a new wave of outsiders had likely been invited here. The chief had experienced this several times before.

He coughed. “I do have recommendations, but according to Divine Weapon City’s rules, you must first prove your strength. Only then can I grant one to you.”

“How can I prove it?”

“It won’t be difficult for you.” The village chief told him to wait while he retrieved a map of this village and its surrounding area. “I have three matters that need someone capable to resolve them. If you can solve even one, I will give you the recommendation.

“The first is to hunt a tiger in the eastern mountains. It appeared three months ago and has killed more than a dozen villagers on the village’s outskirts. We hired hunters, but none succeeded.

“The second is the fish monster in the western river. It has lived there for three years and has sunk numerous fishing boats. We are so scared that none of us dares to fish there anymore.

“The third is a group of bandits hiding in Black Wind Cave on the northern side. They are vicious and always come during harvest season to rob us. One of our villagers married just last year, but the bandits abducted and assaulted her in the cave!”

The village chief fumed as he spoke about the bandits.

Han Wu studied the map before asking, “I’m more curious about this recommendation now. What is it?”

The village chief worried that Han Wu would find the missions too difficult and try to take the recommendation by force. That way, he would obtain it without doing anything. He even suspected that Han Wu would simply kill him and take it.

He spoke with a slight stammer. “The recommendation is proof from our village stating that you have helped us eliminate a threat. In return, we acknowledge you as a villager here.”

Han Wu understood; it functioned like an identity card. Traveling without one would be difficult. He also wondered whether the recommendation included any anti-forgery measures.

He examined the map and noted that the river was closest to him, while the mountain was farthest away. To save time, he dismissed the tiger and ruled out the fish monster. His Divine Weapons didn’t work well underwater, and he couldn’t use his full power here.[1] Only the bandit mission remained.

He kept the map and replied, “I will eradicate the bandits then. Today.”

“Good, good.” The village chief wiped the imaginary sweat from his forehead, “Then I’ll wait for your good news. Please bring back the bandit leader’s head to exchange for the recommendation.”

The village chief took out a picture. “This is the bandit leader, Zhang Mazi.”

Han Wu took the picture and studied it. The crude sketch showed a spirited man whose face was covered in pockmarks. He couldn’t tell whether the man had a face full of pockmarks or whether the pockmarks themselves formed a face. Either way, he doubted that he would fail to recognize someone that ugly.

Han Wu stored the map and picture before departing. Only then did the village chief sigh with relief. “Thankfully, I could negotiate with him.”

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Following the map, Han Wu reached the cave after three hours on foot and heard the raucous peals of laughter from hundreds of meters away. The sounds of fighting, drinking, gambling, and women moaning echoed from within.

“What a deplorable place. Time to deliver justice today.” Han Wu sighed and approached the cave.

One of the gambling bandits noticed Han Wu. “Hey, am I seeing this right? This is the first time someone has actually come to us.”

“Look at how clean he is. There aren’t many women left in the cave. Capture him so we can have some fun.”

“Deputy, are you for real? Thank you!”

“Don’t try to take him first. He’s mine.”

Four bandits rushed out to capture him.

Han Wu smiled, controlled his Small Locust Blade, and killed the four bandits without a sound. They collapsed to the ground, and blood pooled beneath their corpses.

The deputy finally realized what was happening. Han Wu was no sheep. He was a wolf!

“You dare kill my brothers? Everyone, attack!” he thundered.

The bandits swarmed out from the cave and followed the deputy to attack Han Wu.

Han Wu counted how many bandits carried Divine Weapons and grinned. He had chosen the correct mission. Once he finished dealing with them, he reckoned that he would unlock another Divine Weapon.

1. Never heard of blast fishing? ☜

: Chapter 691

Chapter 691 - Locust Soul Orb

Han Wu’s blade soundlessly flashed past the bandits, killing them one after another. Soon, only the deputy remained.

The deputy was using a fan that could unleash strong wind currents that worked both defensively as a shield and offensively as wind blades. Unfortunately for the deputy, it took a long time to unleash the gales, making them predictable. Han Wu easily maneuvered the blade around it, severing the deputy’s tendons.

As the deputy crashed to the ground, he shouted with all his might, “Boss, avenge us!”

His voice resounded like the wind itself. Han Wu quickly severed his neck with the Small Locust Blade. Its durability was low after killing so many bandits, and he quickly let it absorb the Divine Weapons on the ground to increase its rank and refresh its durability.

With his weapon restored, he rushed into the cave. His target was the leader, Zhang Mazi. A large blade came crashing down on him just as he entered the shadowy space. Unable to dodge the attack in time, he hastily used the Small Locust Blade to block it.

The Small Locust Blade suffered a big hit, and its durability dropped to the single digits. It wouldn't be able to withstand another blow like that. Carefully holding the Small Locust Blade behind him, he warily eyed his ambusher.

The burly man had a full beard of black hair and a face covered in pockmarks—reminiscent of a chimpanzee. In his hand was a large blade. Han Wu recognized the man immediately. This was the bandit leader, Zhang Mazi!

He had assumed that the picture was abstract art, but it seemed it was actually realism! Even if he weren't a bandit, people would've likely assumed him a fugitive on sight. There was no helping the evil look about him.

Zhang Mazi glared at Han Wu. He had actually arrived at the cave entrance long before his deputy's final cry and bore witness to his brothers' deaths. However, after seeing how Han Wu fought, he knew that he couldn't win head-on. Going out would be suicidal.

The only way for him to win was to ambush Han Wu. The best chance was when Han Wu first entered the cave, eyes still adjusting to the darkness. Unfortunately, Han Wu had his guard up, and Zhang Mazi had lost his chance.

"Hey man, let's talk," Zhang Mazi persuaded. "We don't need to fight. You're here for my bounty, right? How much is it worth? Tell you what, I can show you where we keep the money. You can take everything there."

Han Wu chuckled. Zhang Mazi had already sealed his fate with that ambush. Not seeing the need for words, Han Wu silently tossed out his Explosive Locust Blade.

Zhang Mazi tried to block it with his large blade, only for it to explode. The explosion blew him back, and Han Wu seized the opportunity to stab his chest with the Small Locust Blade. Zhang Mazi could be seen lying on the ground once the dust settled.

Han Wu stepped forward to grab the large blade, wanting to restore his Small Locust Blade's durability, only to abruptly stop. While the stab wound from the Small Locust Blade was likely fatal, the bandit had already proved cunning. Thus, Han Wu decided to be cautious and play it safe.

Controlling the Small Locust Blade, he tried to sever Zhang Mazi's head. The moment the blade neared his neck, the man shot up and swatted it away.

Clutched in his left hand was another dagger, drawn in preparation for Han Wu's approach. He hadn't expected Han Wu to be cautious enough to cut his head off before getting closer. Even so, the stab wound was deep, and he couldn't hold out for much longer. His abrupt movements only hastened his blood loss. After struggling to stay conscious for a few seconds, he fell lifelessly to the ground.

Fearing it was a trick once more, Han Wu directed the Small Locust Blade, which was now down to 3 points in durability, to sever the man's head. Only after ensuring Zhang Mazi was truly dead did Han Wu sigh in relief. The intense battle had left the Small Locust Blade with a mere 1 durability.

After collecting the Divine Weapons, he absorbed the Common ones into his Small Locust Blade to restore its durability by ranking up. The Faith equipment, such as the fan of the deputy and the blade of Zhang Mazi, were set aside to upgrade any future Divine Weapons.

Having gathered enough essence to unlock his third Divine Weapon, he flipped open the third page of his Divine Weapon Atlas.

"Please don't be another small blade. Please, I beg you."

[Locust Soul Orb]

[Faith Equipment]

[Rank: 1]

[Durability: 5/5]

[Effects: Soul Absorption (Faith), (Waiting to be unlocked)]

[Skills: None]

[Description: Formed from the Spirit Locust. Can be used to control souls.]

"Finally, it's not a small blade!"

Spirit Locusts were a new race that came from his recently obtained Soul Microcosm. This new Divine Weapon was clearly different from his Small Locust Blade and Explosive Locust Blade, and he eagerly moved on to choosing its effects.

[1: Intimidation (God): Intimidates any life form that is based on ghosts, demons, monsters, and spirits.]

[2: Spirit Cloak (God): Allows the user to manifest a spirit cloak that can mitigate spirit-based attacks]

[3: Soul Control (God): Allows the control of souls. Requires an object of the deceased as the medium]

The three options were good. The first two leaned more supportive, while the third was more adaptable in that it relied on the type of soul he controlled. If the controlled soul

excelled in support, the weapon would become supportive. If the soul excelled in attack, it became offensive.

Han Wu preferred the versatility of the third option and thus chose it. He then decided to test it out by absorbing the soul of Zhang Mazi. For the medium, he chose the man's large blade.

The soul of Zhang Mazi appeared with his sword. His apparition wore no expression as he waited faithfully for his orders. Han Wu nodded, pleased. It felt good to have an underling.

The responding feedback of the orb only made him happier. As a Faith equipment, it could control two souls at Faith grade or below. Han Wu chose to control the deputy using his fan. The deputy's soul appeared soon after. The two souls, one black and one white, stood beside him as dutiful guardians.

"Show me where you kept your treasures," Han Wu commanded.

The two souls obediently led the way.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 692 - Joys of the Common Man

There was a lot of treasure and several ores in the treasury. Han Wu used all three of his Divine Weapons to absorb the ores and upgrade them.

The Small Locust Blade reached rank 32, and its durability increased to 42. The Explosive Locust Blade reached rank 12, with its explosion radius expanding by 160%. The Locust Soul Orb reached rank 3, which raised its capacity to store Spiritual Energy by 115%. This also allowed the two souls to come out and fight for 11.5 minutes at a time.

This was all well and good, but the most valuable item to Han Wu inside the treasury was actually a gemstone.

[Gemstone: Tough (Common): Reduces the rate at which durability is lost. Find a blacksmith to embed this into a Divine Weapon to activate its effect.]

While only a Common gemstone, it paired well with his Small Locust Blade, and Han Wu made a mental note to ask the village chief about a nearby blacksmith later. Besides that, there was also plenty of food in the treasury, along with some of the abducted girls.

The girls were on the verge of emotional collapse after being tortured by the bandits day and night. If Han Wu's real body were here, he could've helped them wipe their memories so that they could return to their normal life. Unfortunately, there was little he could do with his avatar.

He gave them some money and food for their return, but the girls did not move. They had been tarnished, and going home was no different than a death sentence to them.

In the end, Han Wu didn't try to persuade them. This land was bound with strife, and he was only an outsider. There wasn't much he could do to help. So, taking the rest of the money and the head of Zhang Mazi, he returned to the village.

Upon returning, he immediately plopped Zhang Mazi's head onto the table. The chief jumped in fright. Zhang Mazi's menacing face could terrify children into silence.

After changing into a new pair of pants and calming down a little, the chief pulled out the recommendation. It was a small wooden plate that was completely black and surprisingly heavy too. Biting his finger, the chief dripped his blood onto the plate. The instant the blood came into contact with it, the black color dissipated, turning it into a regular wooden plate.

"Good man, drip your blood onto it," instructed the chief.

Han Wu did. A stream of information appeared once it absorbed his blood, including his name and place of living.

Astonishment filled Han Wu. The simple wooden plate had revealed his personal information with nothing more than his blood. The chief waved off his surprise, stating that he had seen officials in the city using their identification plates as shields to block attacks.

From this, Han Wu inferred that the plate was also a Divine Weapon. This meant it could have some hidden functions once upgraded. Unfortunately, it didn't actually belong to him, so he couldn't absorb materials to upgrade it, which was a true shame.

After accepting the plate, he briefly explained what he had found in the cave, including the food and girls. The chief's eyes grew wide before he practically knelt to thank him.

What was the most precious commodity during times of strife? Food, of course! They needed it to survive after all.

Women were also important for children. The chief assured Han Wu that he would treat the girls kindly and wouldn't make life difficult for them, especially given their terrible experiences with the bandits.

Relieved, Han Wu proceeded to inquire about a blacksmith. The chief patted his chest, proudly proclaiming he was a blacksmith himself.

Han Wu didn't believe him. He doubted that the skinny chief could carry a hammer. Still, the chief insisted that he could do it. So, having little other choice, Han Wu gave the gem and Small Locust Blade to him.

After two hours, the chief returned with the upgraded Small Locust Blade, a grain-sized translucent gemstone embedded at the base of the hilt.

Han Wu checked his Divine Weapon.

[Small Locust Blade]

[Common Equipment]

[Rank: 32]

[Durability: 40/40]

[Effects: Telekinesis (God), Tough (Common)]

[Skills: Blade Pressure]

[Description: Formed from the core race, the locust. Its unassuming appearance hides unlimited potential]

Han Wu noticed that the blade had gained the Tough effect, but its durability had dropped by two. Curious, he asked the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization about the matter.

[The first time a gemstone is equipped, there will be an adjustment, and the Divine Weapon will lose anywhere from 0 to 10 durability. (Today's question quota: 1)]

For the chief to have reduced the durability by only two showed his tremendous skill.

"Thank you, chief. How much do I owe you?" Han Wu asked.

The chief shook his head and declined the money, insisting that the information about the cave was already payment enough.

The food in the cave meant the village wouldn't starve this year. Moreover, having the girls meant welcoming new young ones in the near future. The chief smiled in satisfaction. For a minor character like him, this was the pinnacle of pride and joy.

Han Wu couldn’t help but see himself in the chief, except that he nurtured his own units instead of a village. Flashing the chief a smile of his own, Han Wu left, identification plate in hand.

The test of the Divine Weapon Civilization was more interesting than he expected.

: Chapter 693 - Clan

Chapter 693 - Clan

Wushuang City was one of the larger cities in the Divine Weapon Civilization and housed millions of people within it. Naturally, where there were people, there were clans and sects. Many clans and sects in the city clashed daily due to conflicting interests.

Among these was a new clan calling themselves War, formed for their namesake. Their three founding members were all from the Divine Civilization—the fourth year valedictorian and third year student of the Warfare College, Gan Xiangyu and Gong Jun, as well as a second year student of the Imperial College, Hei Qi.

At the moment, the three were fighting against another small clan in the city.

Gan Xiangyu danced about with his dragon spear. Dragon-shaped bursts of air flowed around him, killing anything it touched. Gong Jun was blasting the houses of the opposing clan away with his cannon. It was slow but powerful.

The two had killed half of the opposing clan members. Hei Qi singlehandedly slaughtered the other half.

Hei Qi swung his long, black blade, conjuring up illusions of demons. Heads rolled with every strike. In just thirty minutes, the three successfully massacred a clan of a hundred men.

Stabbing his blade into the corpse of the opposing clan head, Hei Qi sighed. “That feels good!”

The corpse was shrivelling up at a rapid pace, its power entering his body as he absorbed its essence.

Both Gan Xiangyu and Gong Jun had unlocked their third Divine Weapon. Hei Qi was absorbing more essence than them, and would’ve normally unlocked his fourth. However,

under the effects of an evil contract, he didn't receive a new Divine Weapon. Instead, the long sword in his hands flashed brighter.

"I upgraded it again. I knew killing people was the fastest route." Hei Qi's presence had changed with his sword upgrade, and wisps of evil aura seemed to leak out of him.

"Hei Qi, are you ok?" Gan Xiangyu asked, concerned. Being from the same circle, Hei Qi had often followed Gan Xiangyu around while they were children, and Gan Xiangyu thought of him as his brother.

"Brother Xiangyu, I'm feeling great!" Hei Qi replied, a hint of madness in his eyes.

Gan Xiangyu frowned. "Hei Qi, I suggest that you stop using the Evil God Contract that General Butcher gave you. If you continue like this, it'll eventually take over your mind. You'll become its puppet."

"Brother Xiangyu, don't worry about my willpower." Hei Qi beamed with confidence. "I can suppress the will of the evil god with ease."

Gan Xiangyu was unconvinced. It was clear that the evil god was already influencing Hei Qi. At this rate, the contract would gradually consume all his other Divine Weapons to strengthen the black sword.

After that, it wouldn't take long for Hei Qi's willpower to wane, leaving him vulnerable to the evil god's corruption. Gan Xiangyu truly couldn't comprehend why General Butcher would give Hei Qi this contract. It was equivalent to letting him shoot himself in the foot.

Gong Jun placed a hand on Gan Xiangyu's shoulder. A gesture of both dissuasion and comfort all in one. "Xiangyu, that's enough. We can't wake someone who's pretending to be asleep. Do you really think he'll listen to you?"

Gan Xiangyu was about to give in when something occurred to him. "He's only obsessed with strength because of that student Han Wu. If we kill Han Wu, maybe we can stop Hei Qi from falling further."

"I don't know how strong Han Wu is, but I heard rumors that he's quite powerful." Gong Jun hesitated.

"So what if he's strong in the Divine Civilization?" Gan Xiangyu scoffed. "We're in the Divine Weapon Civilization now. We've all been reset to the same starting line. How much stronger could he be right now?"

Gong Jun nodded. "You're right. Let's kill him. We have plenty of brothers on our side. Once we become famous, we can gather them before going to kill Han Wu. I doubt he can do anything against so many of us."

The Warfare College loved group battles. The lecturers at that college often admonished students for not using their strength in numbers to their advantage.

Gan Xiangyu stared at Hei Qi with concern in his eyes and quietly vowed, “Han Wu, no matter where you are, we will find you.”

Meanwhile, Han Wu had followed the chief’s direction to the closest town, Qixia Town. Night had already fallen by the time he reached there on foot.

“I need to get a horse next time. Walking is too slow with this avatar,” he grumbled.

The moment he entered the town, he immediately noticed something amiss: There was no one there. No one had lit any lights in their house, giving the entire town an eerie vibe.

Han Wu frowned. The chief had suggested this place precisely because there wasn’t supposed to be any danger, but it appeared that had recently changed.

Given his strength, he would be hard-pressed to escape if he ventured deeper into town unprepared and encountered a slew of enemies, so he opted to wait outside till dawn before coming back.

As he was about to leave, the chiming of bells echoed from the town gate. A group was walking into the town. Each of them wore white hats, white shirts, and rang the bells while scattering hell notes. They were also carrying a black coffin.

Worried, Han Wu summoned his two souls to protect him. The group entering the town resembled fake ghosts, but he actually had two real ones by his side.

Noticing Han Wu, the group walked over.

Han Wu summoned his weapons and prepared to fight. As the group approached, he noticed that all of them had ashen faces and radiated an eerie chill. They had all been dead for a long time.

They were an undead called Shamblers. Fortunately, there were only thirty of them, so Han Wu wasn’t too concerned. After all, he was an expert in skeleton wave warfare.

No one spoke. Han Wu blocked the road. The Shamblers did not move. This only lasted for ten seconds before scratching sounds came from inside the coffin.

Han Wu smiled. It seemed the owner of the Shamblers couldn’t stay still any longer. The coffin opened up to reveal a shriveled old man in black clothes.

“Who dares to block the path of my Profound Netherworld Cult?” The old man sneered. Then, seeing the two souls beside Han Wu, his tone changed. “Oh? You’re a kindred spirit. Why have you not greeted me? Which sect are you from?”

Han Wu scoffed. “Greet? As if.”

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 694 - The Profound Netherworld Cult

The old man’s face twisted with rage at Han Wu’s impertinent reply. Known as the old ghost of black mountain and elder of the Profound Netherworld Cult, he was used to being feared.

He expected to encounter someone who didn’t fear death on this day. That Han Wu dared to insult him was truly unbearable.

“You brat, you seek death!” the old man growled, ordering the Shamblers to attack.

Han Wu did the same with his souls.

As they were the first two underlings he had obtained in this civilization, he had given them names. Zhang Mazi, the bandit leader, was called Ah Da, and the deputy was called Ah Er.

Ah Da swung his blade while Ah Er whirled his fan to cut down the Shamblers. Some of the Shamblers lost their arms, but they didn’t care, attacking with gnashing teeth instead.

Biting would’ve worked against a regular target, but Ah Da was a soul, so the Shamblers just fell flat on their faces. Still, there were more of them than Ah Da and Ah Er could handle on their own, so Han Wu flung the Explosive Locust Blade at the nearest Shambler. It exploded, blowing a number of them to pieces.

Realizing he couldn’t control the exploded Shamblers, the old man turned serious. He had assumed that the Shamblers would be enough to deal with Han Wu. However, after seeing Han Wu unleash his explosive Divine Weapon, the old man decided to make use of his true power.

The old man took out one of his Divine Weapons, the Talisman Nail, and hurled it at Han Wu. The nail split into ten, blocking Han Wu’s paths of escape. If the nails struck someone, that person would fall under their control. The match would be over once they hit Han Wu.

Unfortunately for the old man, he had forgotten about Ah Er. Han Wu noticed the nails and ordered Ah Er to deflect them with his fan. The nails were either blown away or destroyed by the conjured wind. Han Wu then released his Small Locust Blade.

The blade silently shot out and stabbed into the chest of the old man. Strange, it didn't pierce through his flesh and became stuck in place instead.

"You want to ambush me? That's an amateur move." The old man grabbed the small blade and squeezed.

The durability of the blade fell rapidly. Noticing this, Han Wu hastily used Blade Pressure to attack the old man and successfully retrieved his weapon before it shattered.

Blade Pressure also shredded the old man's black robes to pieces, revealing a soft black under armour beneath. The armor exuded an eerie chill.

"Do you think I'm called the old ghost of black mountain because I control those Shamblers?" The old man laughed mockingly. "I have that title because of this solid armor and my unbreakable Nether Ghost Hands. Since you've seen my secrets, you've all but guaranteed your fate. Don't think about leaving this place alive."

With that, the old man leaped out of the coffin and charged at Han Wu.

The Small Locust Blade was close to being destroyed, so Han Wu instead called for Ah Da and Ah Er to defend him. Ah Da slashed the old man, but his armor was too tough, and Ah Da's weapon itself almost flew away. Ah Er's wind also did nothing besides lightly scratching the old man's body.

"You are out of moves, brat! Become my Shambler!" The old man cackled as he neared Han Wu.

Han Wu had no choice but to throw his Explosive Locust Blade at the old man. The old man didn't fear regular attacks, but explosions were a different story. Even if the armor protected him, it couldn't stop the impact from the explosion.

The old man was blown back, causing him to spit blood. Though outwardly unharmed, he had actually suffered internal damage.

"Why do you still have it?" the old man questioned, voice raspy as he endured the pain.

The Explosive Locust Blade had already been used. A Divine Weapon that was destroyed needed time to reform. How had it reformed so fast?

Han Wu didn't answer and threw another.

The blade couldn't stab the old man, but the chain explosions wounded him greatly. He was soon kneeling as he begged for his life, "Please, let me go. I'm sorry for offending you. Please let me go for the sake of the Profound Netherworld Cult."

The old man's long life could largely be attributed to his adaptability. Since he had been defeated, he didn't hesitate to name-drop the Profound Netherworld Cult to intimidate Han Wu.

Something the old man hadn't factored in, however, was Han Wu being an outsider.

"The Profound Netherworld Cult? What's that? Never heard of it." Han Wu tossed another Explosive Locust Blade.

The old man died in the explosion.

The Shamblers crumpled to the ground, becoming actual inanimate corpses once more. Having nearly been tricked once before, Han Wu carefully used his near-broken Small Locust Blade to cut off the head of the old man from afar before finally approaching.

The old man's Divine Weapons were still there. The armor, the Nether Ghost Hands, and the Talisman Nail were on the ground. Although high-grade, Han Wu couldn't use them. The Locust Soul Orb was also at max capacity, meaning he couldn't summon the soul of the old man.

In the end, Han Wu decided to absorb them. The Small Locust Blade absorbed the armor. The massive gap in their ranks allowed the blade to shoot up from rank 35 to rank 77 in an instant, becoming harder and more durable.

The Explosive Locust Blade was compatible with the Talisman Nail. After absorbing it, it gained a new skill called Tenfold, which allowed the Explosive Locust Blade to turn into ten blades, each with 70% of its original power. Though its explosive strength went down, its overall damage went up. It was a big improvement.

As for the Locust Soul Orb, it absorbed the Nether Ghost Hands and obtained a new skill called Ghostfire. This allowed Han Wu to use the power of souls within the orb to launch ghostly fireballs. The damage was average, but it did have a multiplying strength against ghosts, spirits, souls, demons, monsters, and the like.

Han Wu had killed the old man and upgraded his three Divine Weapons. The encounter had been worth it. With that done, he checked the black coffin, absentmindedly wondering if it technically counted as the old man's bed.

Peeking in to check for anything precious, he was irritated to find nothing. As he was about to smash it to pieces, he noticed something scrawled on the coffin's interior.

He picked up a lantern and shone it in. The inner walls of the coffin were filled with words. It was a cultivation manual called the Black Mountain Scripture!

Chapter 695 - Guan Nan of the Guan family

The Black Mountain Scripture wasn't very long. Deciphering it revealed that the scripture was based on absorbing Spiritual Energy to increase one's own strength.

Coincidentally, Han Wu could apply it to absorb the Spiritual Energy from the Locust Soul Orb. Practicing this daily would allow him to quickly grow stronger.

"Might as well train it. No harm in becoming more powerful." Han Wu smiled.

He checked the coffin again and found nothing useful. As he was about to leave, a group of people ran out from inside the city, carrying sacks of their belongings as if fleeing a disaster.

They all stopped when they saw the old man's coffin blocking their path. Some ran back the way they came in terror, while the rest slumped to the ground and begged for mercy.

Only one of them was alert enough to notice the corpses in front of the coffin. Seeing the assorted clothes of the corpses, this person correctly deduced that they were the old man's Shamblers.

Gathering his courage, Guan Nan bravely asked, "I am Guan Nan of the Guan family in Qixia Town. May I ask if you were the one who killed the person from the Profound Netherworld Cult?"

"Finally found some living people," Han Wu said, stepping out of the coffin. "You're right, I've killed him."

Guan Nan took a deep breath. It was extremely rare for anyone to go against the Profound Netherworld Cult in this day and age. The Guan family had actually offended the Profound Netherworld Cult, and that elder of said cult had announced that he would slaughter the entire family tonight.

No one dared to help Qixia Town. Many in the town itself shut their doors tight, fearing they would be dragged into the mess. Threat looming over their heads, the Guan family chose to abandon their home and escape during the night, only to encounter Han Wu on their way out.

Scanning the scene before him, Guan Nan got a rough idea of what had likely occurred. It seemed the elder from the Profound Netherworld Cult had accidentally offended someone stronger and was killed for his arrogance.

It was a fitting end. The old man's many evil atrocities deserved a thousand lightning strikes. For him to die in the streets like this was a mercy.

Guan Nan couldn't help but be impressed at the young man's strength despite his tender age. "Young man, you killed that wretch from the Profound Netherworld Cult. You are truly the benefactor of my house. May I know your name?"

Han Wu nodded. "You can call me Han Wu."

"Benefactor Han Wu, I believe my gratitude alone won't be enough to repay this. It's already late. If you don't mind, I would like to invite you to rest in my home for the night."

Han Wu had been trying to find a place to rest, so he graciously accepted the offer. The mess on the streets was now the Guan family's problem to deal with.

Once inside the Guan estate, Han Wu only chatted briefly before claiming exhaustion and retiring to his room. After Han Wu departed, the Guan family members convened for a meeting.

Guan Nan's younger brother, Guan Feng, had his doubts about Han Wu. "Big brother, I think he's an outsider. His mannerisms are simply too different from ours."

Naturally, Guan Nan had already considered this possibility, well aware that it was about time for an Armament Spirit to appear. Even so, the only reason their family hadn't been wiped out today was because of Han Wu. They owed him a debt. How could they harm him in such a situation?

"Outsider or not, he's still our benefactor." Guan Nan stood firm. "We have to treat him well. Don't do anything to offend him. Those who go against this will be punished accordingly."

"Yes, brother."

The night passed calmly.

Han Wu woke up the next morning listless, having spent the night using the Spiritual Energy in the Locust Soul Orb to cultivate the Black Mountain Scripture while also keeping his guard up.

He had been prepared to attack at a moment's notice, but thankfully, the Guan family was true to their word and didn't do anything to him. Not long after he rose, someone called him for breakfast.

Packing up his stuff, he went to the hall of the Guan family. The two brothers were waiting patiently for him there. Neither had even so much as touched their cutlery.

Guan Nan welcomed him warmly and passed a big bowl of soup for him. "Benefactor, I've instructed my men to prepare ginseng chicken soup especially for you. I hope it suits your taste."

Both he and his brother Guan Feng immediately drank their own bowls of soup in front of Han Wu, a silent gesture to show that they hadn't poisoned the soup.

Han Wu smiled and drank the soup. It was far more delicious than chewing on jerky.

"Benefactor, may I know why you've visited Qixia Town?" Guan Nan asked earnestly. "I have a bit of a reputation here, so I might be able to help."

While Han Wu wanted to accept it, he didn't want to cause trouble for them, so he openly admitted, "I'll be frank. I'm an outsider, and I'm here to get the Armament Spirit. I'm just passing through and will leave soon. You're probably well aware that helping me would just invite trouble for yourselves."

Guan Nan never expected him to be that honest. Outsiders were regarded poorly in the Divine Weapon Civilization because many of them pillaged, plundered, and did as they pleased, not bothering to abide by the rules here.

Han Wu's willingness to disclose his identity only cemented Guan Nan's belief that he was different, someone worth befriending.

"Come now, benefactor. It's no trouble at all. No one will learn of your identity as long as we don't make the fact that you're an outsider known. We can do that much at least. That said, it can be quite inconvenient for an outsider like you to move around here. Do you already have a recommendation?"

"Are you referring to this?" Han Wu asked, fishing out the wooden plate he had obtained from the village chief.

Guan Nan picked it up and examined it before nodding. "Benefactor, this is indeed a recommendation that proves you are a regular citizen here. As long as you keep a low profile, it'll be easy to fool others."

It seems that the village chief was telling the truth and gave me the real deal, Han Wu thought, putting the wooden plate away.

Breakfast passed with an air of amiability.

Curious about Han Wu's goal to get the Armament Spirit, Guan Feng pestered him with endless questions about the topic. In return, he also volunteered information and past news about this event. Han Wu also learned a lot about the local culture from him.

After breakfast, Han Wu asked Guan Nan about places nearby that sold ores. He wanted to purchase as much as possible to upgrade his Divine Weapons while he still had funds.

Not wanting Han Wu to go alone, Guan Nan made use of his connections as one of the larger families in Qixia Town and called some contacts working in the mines or the ore industry. Guan Nan then proposed that he personally lead Han Wu to browse the ores. He was determined to repay the favor.

Han Wu tried to reject him, but he was no match for Guan Nan's hospitality. Eventually, he had no choice but to reluctantly agree.

Guan Nan then insisted on paying for all the ores Han Wu purchased today, and suddenly, the company didn't seem so bad. Han Wu was glad he had killed the old man. This was worth it!

Chapter 696 - I Shall Pay for Master Han Wu!

At Qixia Town's ore plaza, the sound of the crowd was incessant. People gathered there every day to purchase ores. Some were warriors who bought them for personal use. Others were servants who purchased them on behalf of their masters. This scene was common in this civilization, and everyone had grown accustomed to it.

Today, however, was special. The crowd saw someone who shouldn't have been there: Guan Nan.

He brought Han Wu to the plaza and greeted everyone he knew there. Those who saw him turned ghastly pale and quickly avoided his gaze.

Guan Nan understood the reason. They had been certain that the Profound Netherworld Cult would eradicate the Guan family, so none of them had offered help. Now that his family had survived, they felt too ashamed to even look at him. They were probably wondering why the Profound Netherworld Cult had failed to destroy them.

Guan Nan knew the answer, but he kept it to himself. Because of the Profound Netherworld Cult, his relationship with the townspeople was on thin ice. He had no desire to create further trouble for them.

He led Han Wu into the spacious plaza, where more than 200 wooden display tables filled the open area. Each table displayed different ores, and the customers could check them with their senses and pay on the spot if they wished to take them. Several special rooms also stood nearby, where customers could bring their ores to cultivate.

Han Wu spotted numerous ores that could help him upgrade his Small Locust Blade.

“Benefactor, these ores can be found almost anywhere,” Guan Nan explained. “They work well for Common Divine Weapons. However, once you possess Faith Divine Weapons, you have to choose your ores carefully to unlock even greater potential.”

Han Wu had only been here for a few days and didn’t understand the reasoning, so he asked for further clarification.

Guan Nan was patient and explained in detail. “Nurturing a Divine Weapon is like raising a child. They can survive on wild vegetables and roots, on buns and pickled vegetables, or on fish and meat.

“However, the environment in which the child grows will drastically influence what they become. Divine Weapons follow the same principle. You can technically use any ore to upgrade and nurture your Common Divine Weapon.

“That changes for Faith Divine Weapons. Their skills, effects, or possible upgrade paths demand more careful choices. You need to select one upgrade path and gather the necessary supporting materials. Only then can you upgrade and guide it closer to the form you envision.”

Han Wu learned a great deal from the explanation. For example, his Explosive Locust Blade was a Faith Divine Weapon. He could strengthen its explosive power, or he could follow the Small Locust Blade’s path and upgrade its durability.

If he actually did it, however, the Explosive Locust Blade would become useless. He felt relieved that he hadn’t allowed it to absorb random ores or Divine Weapons without a plan. Instead, he had carefully selected materials that would enhance its long-term potential.

While he was focused on the lesson, a mocking voice sounded behind them. “And here I thought I recognized someone. Guan Nan, you are still alive?”

Guan Nan turned and saw a familiar figure. The town wasn’t large, but it wasn’t small enough for a single family to dominate it. Three other families possessed power and

wealth comparable to the Guan family. Among them, the Cao family was their strongest rival.

Guan Nan even suspected that the Cao family had provided information to the Profound Netherworld Cult, which had triggered the entire crisis.

Guan Nan abandoned all courtesy and responded with open hostility. “Cao bastard, isn’t it normal for me to still be alive? You haven’t even died before me yet.”

“Don’t get cocky. The old ghost of black mountain probably has something more important to deal with, so he didn’t have the time to visit you. Cherish what little time you have.” Cao Xing chuckled mockingly, which made it clear that he had no idea what had happened the previous day.

He then turned to Han Wu. “Who are you? Since when do you have the right to visit the plaza at the same time as me?”

Han Wu smiled warmly, his expression as bright as sunlight. He looked at Cao Xing with a kindly gaze, as though greeting a long-lost friend.

“You are a simpleton too. What a misfortune.” Cao Xing waved his hand in disgust and walked away.

Han Wu looked at Cao Xing leaving and asked casually, “Just a thought. Do you think it would affect you if I killed him?”

Han Wu had no intention of interfering in the Guan family’s affairs, but Cao Xing had insulted him for no reason. Han Wu hadn’t done anything to provoke it, and the sudden insult irritated him. Besides, as an outsider, he could act as he pleased. This civilization’s rules wouldn’t hold him responsible.

Guan Nan had never seen Han Wu fight before, but he knew Han Wu was strong from the way he had killed the old ghost of black mountain alone. He was more than happy to use Han Wu to remove the Guan family’s enemy. “Benefactor, as you wish.”

“Don’t worry. I will make sure it looks like an accident so no one will find out that we did it,” Han Wu said nonchalantly. He then examined the ores and chose more than ten.

Guan Nan was so pleased that he announced that he would cover the full cost for Master Han Wu. The ores he purchased were sent to a room reserved for customers to cultivate.

Han Wu entered the room and started upgrading his first Divine Weapon, the Small Locust Blade. He let it absorb all the ores until it reached rank 100, the limit of a Common Divine Weapon.

It couldn't absorb any more, so he decided to use one of his daily questions for the Divine Weapon Civilization. "How do I upgrade my Small Locust Blade further?"

[You can use a whetstone to upgrade it to a Faith Divine Weapon. (Today question quota: 2)]

Han Wu didn't ask where to find one. He had a feeling that Guan Nan would know about this. He went out and asked, and as he expected Guan Nan knew where to find one.

Whetstones were common here and served as the standard method for upgrading Common Divine Weapons into Faith Divine Weapons. The auction on the plaza occasionally sold them, and by coincidence, one was available today.

Han Wu intended to upgrade his Small Locust Blade further and asked Guan Nan to attend the auction with him. Guan Nan agreed. Han Wu had saved his family and was about to deal with his enemy. He was more than willing to spend more money to help him.

Not long after they arrived, the auction started. The auction house was filled with slaves, families, and warriors, all seated and waiting eagerly for the items they hoped to obtain.

Han Wu and Guan Nan sat in a private booth. Han Wu looked around and saw many native warriors gathered below. He then spotted three suspicious figures dressed in robes. The trio moved differently than the others. They stood out the way huskies would if they accidentally entered a pack of wolves.

At that moment, Han Wu understood why the natives had always been able to identify him as an outsider. Like the trio below, he had been too obvious.

"It seems disguises require real skill." He watched them with growing curiosity, wondering who they were and whether he would recognize them.

: Chapter 697

Chapter 697 - Triplicate

Everyone sat and waited for the rare ores to appear on stage. Each person hoped to secure what they wanted.

Han Wu waited patiently for the whetstone while observing the three outsiders. They sat together and whispered to each other from time to time. Because his physique was ordinary right now, he couldn't hear what they were discussing.

The auction moved quickly. A whetstone soon appeared, and Guan Nan placed a bid. Cao Xing maliciously raised the price several times to provoke him, but the latter didn't care. Cao Xing would soon die anyway, so he treated the extra cost as money to send him to hell. In the end, Guan Nan bought the whetstone for a price one-third higher than the market rate.

Han Wu accepted it with satisfaction and used it on his Small Locust Blade.

Guan Nan was surprised when he saw the weapon. Its quality, shape, and other parameters represented the quintessential model of a Common Divine Weapon.

Did Han Wu use it to kill the old man? Maybe it has a powerful effect? He tried to reassure himself, yet doubts crept in about whether Han Wu could kill Cao Xing.

Han Wu had no idea what Guan Nan was thinking. He had just upgraded the Small Locust Blade into a Faith Divine Weapon. The upgrade reset its rank to zero and allowed him to select one of three effects.

[1: Sharp (Faith): Makes Divine Weapon Sharper]

[2: Durable (Faith): Doubles Divine Weapon's Durability]

[3: Triplicate (Faith): Makes Two Copies of Divine Weapon]

Han Wu carefully inspected each one. The first was average, and most bladed Divine Weapons possessed that effect. The second could solve the low durability issue. It would allow him to keep the weapon active longer during battles.

Then he saw the third option and made his decision. The moment he selected it, Triplicate infused into the Small Locust Blade, and the weapon split into three Small Locust Blades. Each one showed a durability of 108/108 and retained the Tough and Telekinesis effects.

With three Small Locust Blades, he could control them simultaneously and attack from three different angles. It was a lethal combination. The new effect turned his Small Locust Blade into the strongest Divine Weapon he possessed.

While he was still admiring his newly upgraded Divine Weapon, the crowd suddenly fell silent.

Han Wu looked up in curiosity and saw the auctioneer carefully carry an irregularly-shaped crystal onto the stage. The crystal shimmered with a strange glow.

He looked closer and vaguely saw the figure of a tiger rolling, pouncing, and jumping within it.

Everyone stared at it.

Guan Nan looked over and gasped in astonishment. “To think that they would be selling an Armament Spirit today!”

“Armament Spirit?” Han Wu asked. That was the very reason he had come to this civilization!

“Benefactor Han Wu, don’t worry,” Guan Nan said. “The one on the stage is just a Common Armament Spirit. It's far weaker than the one that you are competing for.”

“But what use does a Common Armament Spirit have?”

Guan Nan explained, “Once a Divine Weapon absorbs an Armament Spirit, the weapon gains sentience and intelligence. With some training, it can shift between its Divine Weapon and Armament Spirit forms.

“Take the tiger-shaped Armament Spirit being auctioned today. Once absorbed into a Divine Weapon and properly trained, the weapon can switch forms between the form of a tiger and the weapon.”

Han Wu nodded as he learned about the Armament Spirit’s special characteristics. He even considered finding one shaped like a horse so he could always have one at his side.

He was still entertaining that thought when the situation changed. The three outsiders sprang into action and stole the Armament Spirit. They took off their robes and hats and summoned their Divine Weapons.

Three wands appeared in their hands. Each wand measured roughly thirty to fifty centimeters in length. They looked so short that the surrounding natives didn’t feel intimidated. Several natives even rushed onto the stage to capture the trio.

“Mors Instantia!” One outsider chanted a strange spell. A green orb shot from their wand and struck one of the natives.

The native died on the spot without any signs of struggle.

“Suspendo!” The second outsider levitated the Armament Spirit into their hands.

The third outsider used a spell to disarm the nearest native. “Arma Expellio!”

Han Wu immediately recognized where they came from. The Divine Weapon Civilization actually invited those from the Magic Civilization? To think it would be so generous.

Han Wu had once visited that place with the Transmigrate Helmet, so he knew about some of their techniques. The trio was clearly using spells from the Magic Civilization, and one of them even cast a taboo spell.

The surrounding natives grew fearful of their spells, and none of them dared to move forward. The trio then summoned their second Divine Weapons: magic brooms. Under the crowd's stunned gazes, they flew out of the auction hall.

"Don't let them escape!" the auction manager shouted.

Everyone snapped out of their shock and chased after them.

One of the auction guards was an archer. He grabbed an arrow, drew his bow, and shot it in one swift motion. The arrow struck the outsider carrying the Armament Spirit.

The outsider proved tough. Even after the arrow hit them, they didn't drop the Armament Spirit. The other two grew furious and turned back to deal with the archer.

A disarming spell and that green death curse followed, and the archer died. Now that no one could threaten them from the ground, the outsiders stopped fleeing. From the air, they began raining spells down on the locals below.

Han Wu had no intention of getting involved until one of them shot a Magic Missile at him. He was still physically weak, but his mind remained sharp. He used a Small Locust Blade to block the attack and remained unscathed.

The trio didn't notice what Han Wu had done as they continued casting spells at the crowd below. Han Wu was pissed. Now he understood why the natives hated outsiders. Their cruelty ran rampant.

"Well, since you attacked me, I will take that as a declaration of war." Han Wu sent out the three Small Locust Blades. They shot upward at extreme speed toward the trio in the air.

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

: Chapter 698

Chapter 698 - Upright Senior

The Small Locust Blades easily pierced through the hearts of the trio from the Magic Civilization. They fell from the sky, splatting into a mess of blood and flesh upon hitting the ground.

Their Divine Weapons appeared beside their corpses, and some of the greedy locals ran over to loot them. Both the magic wand and magic broom were rare Divine Weapons, and claiming them could change their lives.

However, the three outsiders were Han Wu's prey, and he wasn't about to let others steal his spoils. He stood unmoving, using his will to control the Small Locust Blades to levitate next to the three corpses and killing anyone who got too close.

In just three minutes, more than twenty Divine Weapons had fallen to the ground. Nobody approached after that. Han Wu's message had been received.

Nevertheless, the Armament Spirit still lay by the corpses of the three outsiders. The auctioneer couldn't imagine what would happen to him if he lost it.

Trembling violently, he called out, "May I have the name of the expert helping us?"

Han Wu ignored him, continuing to control the three Small Locust Blades above the corpses to deter any others from getting closer.

"I am the manager of the auction. The Armament Spirit is our asset. These despicable outsiders tried to plunder it. I thank the expert for bringing it back to us," the auctioneer said, facing the Small Locust Blades.

The Small Locust Blades continued to levitate, not reacting to his words.

"Mighty expert," the auctioneer continued. "Thank you for taking back the important Armament Spirit for us. The auction house will thank you later. If there's nothing else, I would like to take it back, please."

The Small Locust Blades remained motionless.

The auctioneer smiled. "Since you've agreed, I'll be taking it now."

With that, he stepped toward the Armament Spirit, and one of the Small Locust Blades sliced off his head.

The other locals took several steps back. The Small Locust Blades seemed fragile yet could slice through flesh with ease. Many feared they would become the next victim if they lingered and backed up as far as they could, but some were greedy enough not to leave. Cao Xing was one of them.

A covetous gleam shone in Cao Xing's eyes as he stared at the high-quality Divine Weapons and the Armament Spirit before him. It all amounted to a huge sum of money. If he could get his hands on it, his family would be strengthened further!

Deciding to call in reinforcements, he ordered his guards, “Assist me in breaking those three little knives!”

The guards were terrified. The three Small Locust Blades were bizarre and deadly, floating like ghosts, exuding a threatening aura.

“Why aren’t you listening to me? If you die today, my family will protect yours, but if you don’t listen to me, I will kill you and your family as punishment. It’ll just be a matter of how soon your family is reunited with you down there!” Cao Xing threatened.

With their families’ lives on the line, the guards had no choice but to force themselves forward. The three Small Locust Blades weaved through the guards, and in just a breath, all were killed.

Unbeknownst to everybody but Han Wu, the durability of the Small Locust Blades was actually down to the single digits after so many attacks.

When Cao Xing saw his guards fall, he panicked. The Small Locust Blades were too fast for his eyes to track. Trying to claim the loot would just result in him meeting the same fate as his guards. He took a step back, then another, putting some distance between him and the three Small Locust Blades.

Unfortunately for him, Han Wu was never going to let him go. He had already promised Guan Nan to kill him.

The three Small Locust Blades moved at eccentric angles to stab him. Cao Xing was strong enough to block one, but he couldn’t block all three at the same time. Especially not when all came at him from completely different angles.

In the end, one of the Small Locust Blades pierced his chest and through his heart. Cao Xing collapsed, crashing to the ground so hard his final breath was forced out of him.

The Small Locust Blades were on the verge of breaking, but thankfully, the locals were already frightened into submission.

Han Wu gestured at Guan Nan to head down there.

Guan Nan immediately understood. Han Wu was giving him a chance to show off his courage in front of the warriors of Qixia Town. There was no reason for him to reject such an opportunity.

Stepping out of the booth, he put on a courageous front as he addressed the hovering blades. “Senior, I am Guan Nan of the Guan family in Qixia Town. I understand that you’ve attacked the outsiders to ensure our safety, and I deeply respect your justice. You’ve already killed the greedy ones eyeing your treasures. The rest of them are too afraid to try and even look at it. Please let them live.”

Deciding to make a proper performance of it, Han Wu directed the Small Locust Blades toward Guan Nan's neck. Aware that it was an act, Guan Nan trusted that Han Wu wouldn't kill him and didn't avoid the Small Locust Blades, playing the role of a hero willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of others.

The Small Locust Blade stopped just before his neck. It then spiralled twice in the air to indicate that the rest could live.

"Thank you, senior, for your mercy and upright justice." Guan Nan dipped his head in gratitude. "I will never forget this."

He then gestured for the rest to escape.

The remaining locals had wanted to leave badly from the beginning, but stayed out of fear that they would provoke the Small Locust Blades.

With Guan Nan having pleaded for their mercy, the survivors desperately ran out of the door. Guan Nan confirmed that no one was left behind before he departed as well, giving Han Wu the time and space to collect his spoils.

After double-checking that no one remained, Han Wu went down to collect the Divine Weapons. He had killed more than thirty powerful natives, and he made sure to absorb their essence for his Divine Weapon Atlas. This brought him close to unlocking his fourth Divine Weapon.

He then sorted the Divine Weapons, allowing his three Divine Weapons to absorb those that complemented them, bringing them a large increase in rank.

The remaining Divine Weapons that he couldn't absorb, including the three outsiders' Divine Weapons, were wrapped in a robe alongside the Armament Spirit. Gathering up his haul, he escaped the scene.

Guan Nan was waiting for him outside and had taken measures to ensure that no one suspected him. Once they were safely back in the Guan family home, Han Wu retrieved the Divine Weapons from the robes to inspect them. After some thought, he decided to set those that didn't complement his Divine Weapons aside to give to the Guan family.

Han Wu then moved on to the three outsiders' Divine Weapons. Upon touching them, he could distinctly sense they were structurally different. Their Divine Weapons were a product of the Magic Civilization and the Divine Weapon Civilization. In theory, this meant Han Wu could extract the power of the Magic Civilization and infuse it into his own Divine Weapons.

He decided to ask the Will of the Divine Weapon Civilization, and it confirmed his speculations.

Chapter 699 - Wedding in a Small Village

Han Wu extracted six slivers of power belonging to the Magic Civilization from the three magic wands and three magic brooms.

From the wands came three spells: Mors Instantia, a curse of instant death; Arma Expellio, the spell that disarmed weapons; and Suspendo, a spell that levitated objects. Meanwhile, from the brooms came Flight Speed, Accelerate, and Extra Capacity.

Han Wu infused the powers into his Divine Weapons based on suitability.

The Small Locust Blade was given Mors Instantia, Flight Speed, Extra Capacity, and Accelerate. Mors Instantia granted it a 1% chance of instantly killing its target, Flight Speed allowed it to fly faster, Extra Capacity increased the impact of its blows, and Accelerate gave it instantaneous bursts of speed to catch its targets off guard.

The other two powers were given to his Explosive Locust Blade. With Arma Expello, the explosion it caused would disarm one of the Divine Weapons of its target. Suspendo gave Han Wu the control he needed in case he missed his target. It also allowed him to recall the blade and manually detonate it on its return.

With that done, Han Wu checked the Armament Spirit. Within it crouched a tiger that yearned for freedom. Unfortunately, neither the Small Locust Blade nor the Explosive Locust Blade was a fitting vessel for it.

Luckily, Han Wu also had the Locust Soul Orb. The two were compatible, and they merged seamlessly. A tiger composed of ghostly fire manifested before him. It looked intimidating, but it bowed to Han Wu in a show of loyalty. In response, Han Wu requested it to demonstrate its power.

The tiger swiped its claws and tore through a table made of solid wood with ease. Ghostly embers also ignited the debris that remained. Han Wu nodded with satisfaction. The tiger was stronger than Zhang Mazi. He had gained another powerful follower.

After calming himself down from the thrill of the upgrades, he ordered it back into the form of the Locust Soul Orb. He then used the Spiritual Energy within the orb to continue his cultivation of the Black Mountain Scripture.

Having become more proficient with the scripture, he could already tell that his ten Divine Essence avatar was becoming stronger, by roughly 10% to be exact.

The Black Mountain Scripture was truly fascinating. A mere two days of cultivation had granted him such an increase in power. Meanwhile, the old man had cultivated it for years and had still been so weak.

Am I a cultivation genius? Han Wu wondered smugly to himself.

In reality, Han Wu was overestimating himself. The reason for his fast cultivation could be attributed to the Locust Soul Orb, which could not only absorb Spiritual Energy but also refine it. In other words, he was essentially absorbing pure Spiritual Energy. It was a given that his cultivation would rise swiftly.

Han Wu quietly cultivated for the night. The next day, his body seemed stronger, and his spirit was well rested.

Having stayed in Qixia Town for two days, he wanted to leave for Divine Weapon City as soon as possible. Before he left, he gave the Divine Weapons that he couldn't use to a grateful Guan Nan.

As a local, Guan Nan was naturally aware of the distance between their town and Divine Weapon City, so he made sure to provide Han Wu with many provisions and a horse. Han Wu happily accepted them.

The two brothers of the Guan family sent Han Wu off with a discomforting unease at the pit of their stomachs.

"Big brother, now that he's left, what do we do if the Profound Netherworld Cult comes knocking on our door?" asked Guan Feng.

Guan Nan was similarly anxious. "We can't stay here after what happened last time. Let's bring our family away from Qixia Town and head for another town or city. With our talent, I don't think it'll be an issue for us to survive, though we probably won't be rich anymore."

"I'm more than willing to follow your lead, but where should we go?"

Guan Nan already thought of a place. "To the town of my father-in-law, Wushuang City."

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Han Wu followed the directions on the map that Guan Nan had given him. Despite riding for an entire day, he still failed to reach the next big settlement before the sun set.

With night falling, he decided to find a place to spend the night. He checked his map and was surprised to find that there was actually a small village nearby, so he switched destinations and headed there instead.

The village was easy to spot because of how brightly lit it was. Colorful lights and lanterns dotted the streets like a festival. Han Wu urged the horse into a gallop and soon reached the village.

The sounds of festive cymbals and gongs filled the air with a sense of liveliness. Dismounting from the horse, Han Wu made to enter the village when the horse suddenly gained the temperament of a donkey. No matter how hard he urged or pulled it, it refused to enter.

Han Wu eventually relented and tied the horse to a tree outside the village before entering alone. Children wore masks as they ran around and played. Life appeared to be vibrant and happening in this village.

Smiling, Han Wu continued down the path until he found a brightly lit estate. The sound of instruments and firecrackers echoed from within. Two servants stood at the entrance, greeting the guests.

“Lady Hu Shiliu, welcome!”

“Sir Liu Baiyan! Your arrival is a blessing indeed.”

“Gu Yuanwai. You’re finally here! Please, come in.”

Guest after guest was welcomed into the estate.

Han Wu approached one of the servants. “Is there a wedding here?”

The two servants checked him out and grinned ominously. “Our Master Huang Si is marrying his eighteenth wife. Dear guest, it seems fate has brought you here on this auspicious day. Would you care to come in and have a toast?”

“It seems that I’ll have to trouble you two for this.” Han Wu flashed a warm smile.

The two servants beamed back at him before showing him the way. They took small steps but moved fast. They soon arrived at the grand hall.

“Esteemed guest, please rest here for a moment. We will have to excuse ourselves to welcome the other guests.” Bowing slightly, the two servants left.

Han Wu sat down. The table before him had a jug of wine, two appetizers, and a plate of roasted chicken. There were many guests in the hall with him as well. Some had even glanced his way as he had entered.

The lady named Hu Shiliu even winked and sent him flying kisses. Grinning, Han Wu raised his wine glass in return. Hu Shiliu happily draped herself over the table, clearly dying to dart over to Han Wu’s side.

Her actions drew the ire of Liu Baiyan beside her. “Lady Hu Shiliu, cease those vulgar actions at once. This is Master Huang’s territory.”

His words did little to deter Hu Shiliu as she purposely lifted her skirt slightly to reveal her long, white legs to Han Wu. Liu Baiyan scoffed but said nothing else.

Han Wu was about to flaunt his charm and converse with the other guests around him when a gong sounded.

“Master Huang has arrived!”

: Chapter 700

Chapter 700 - I Object!

The crash of cymbals and gongs welcomed a middle-aged man in golden robes as he entered the grand hall with his entourage of servants. His face was ruddy, and he moved like an elegant noble.

He was the master of this estate, Huang Si. As a sign of respect, all the guests stood as he entered—all except for Han Wu. He was munching on the roasted chicken leg with glee. Huang Si smiled indulgently at him, as if generously willing to tolerate his behavior.

Sitting at his seat, Huang Si raised his cup high to toast the guests. “Everyone, I am officially marrying my eighteenth wife on this auspicious day. I hope everyone enjoys the ceremony.”

“No, no, it is my honor to attend your wedding,” Hu Shiliu said earnestly, eyes bewitching enough to hook the soul of anyone she looked at.

Liu Baiyan raised his cup with two hands. “A toast to celebrate Master Huang’s happy day!”

Gu Yuanwai, seated beside Han Wu, raised his two short hands and chimed in, “It would be our loss to not attend your grand wedding.”

The guests took turns congratulating and flattering Huang Si.

Soon, it came time for the gifts. Each guest had meticulously prepared treasures for this wedding.

The first to present his gift was Liu Baiyan, displaying a wooden box that held a fist-sized pearl.

“This is the Ape Core that I obtained from killing a mutated White Ape in the past. Today is your auspicious day, so I shall give it to Master Huang.”

The guests clamored with surprise. Liu Baiyan’s name originated from his single-handed hunting of a White Ape in the past. That hunt was of such pride to him that he had changed his name to brag[1].

For him to give away that precious Ape Core was near unbelievable. This was a truly valuable gift indeed.

“Brother Liu, thank you for giving me this gift,” Master Huang said, touched. “Please call me if you ever need any help, no matter what it is.”

Liu Baiyan was also moved. He had given the precious Ape Core because he wanted to befriend Master Huang, and he had succeeded.

Hu Shiliu stood and opened the sack she had brought with her. “I’m afraid my gift will lose its shine when compared to Sir Liu’s wonderful gift.”

With that, she pulled a golden fox-fur robe out of the sack. It shimmered strangely. It was clear that this was a Divine Weapon of high quality, likely Divine grade.

“The hide of a thousand sheep is inferior to a pinch of fur from a fox’s armpit. This robe is made from the fur of a thousand foxes’ armpits. It's the only thing that could show my admiration for you,” she flattered.

The robe wasn’t as powerful as the Ape Core, but its rarity far exceeded it.

“Thank you, Lady Shiliu. I will wear it after this.” Huang Si smiled.

Then it was Gu Yuanwai’s turn.

“This is my gift,” he said, taking out an urn the size of his palm. “This urn contains 500 kilograms of wine made from five grains of the highest quality. I hope Master Huang will appreciate it.”

While the wine brewed from using five grains wasn't rare, there were still 500 kilograms of it. The merit of this gift came from the sheer quantity. Moreover, the wine only constituted one-half of the gift. The second half was the urn that contained it. The fact that a palm-sized urn could store 500 kilograms worth of wine implied that it was also a Divine Weapon, and most likely at the Faith grade.

The other guests also presented their gifts one at a time. While their gifts weren't as precious as the first three, Master Huang accepted them without discrimination.

Finally, it was Han Wu's turn. Everyone stared at him, a silent indication for him to present his gift.

Han Wu rose, scraping his teeth with a chicken bone. "I came here today to join in on the fun since I was passing by, and didn't prepare a gift. I do have some provisions with me. Just some common gold and silver, if you don't mind. I have some Divine Weapons, but I don't want to give them away. How about this? I have a horse tied outside the village. You can have it."

In Han Wu's eyes, he was being generous. He had only eaten a chicken and drunk some wine, but had given his horse in return. Master Huang had made a fortune from him.

"You're giving me a horse?" Master Huang frowned. Though it didn't seem particularly auspicious, he let it go. The fact that Han Wu joined in on the ceremony could be considered a gift in itself.

With the gifting session done, the guests became eager for the ceremony to begin. They were all curious about the bride. Master Huang waved his arm, and the servants started serving the main dish.

Numerous roasted humans oozing with fat were carried in.

Everyone except Han Wu revealed their true forms.

Hu Shiliu's alluring body remained the same, but her head had morphed into that of a fox. Liu Baiyan's snake tongue flicked in and out. Gu Yuanwai revealed his two sharp front teeth and gray rat form. Even Master Huang revealed himself as a weasel.

This wasn't a wedding of humans. They were monsters!

Everyone turned to stare at Han Wu after revealing themselves, hoping to witness his terrified reaction. Disappointingly, Han Wu's expression remained unchanged.

"Outsider, are you not afraid?" Gu Yuanwai asked, unable to hold back his curiosity.

"Why should I be afraid? I'm an outsider, and I've seen many things. This is just a minor thing to me."

Gu Yuanwai grinned menacingly. "I hope you can still say that when the banquet is over."

The gong sounded again once the main dishes were served, and the servants shouted in unison, "Presenting the bride!"

Two strong servants carried a wooden cross into the hall, with the bride in red robes chained to it. Han Wu scoffed. This was the most bizarre wedding he had ever seen.

Even a wedding meant for the dead was dull compared to this. Though chained, the bride stubbornly continued to struggle, which caused her veil to fall, revealing her exquisite face.

The guests were all stunned. The meat in their hands paled in comparison to her beauty.

Han Wu jumped up and shouted angrily, “I object to this wedding!”

The one tied to the cross was none other than his beloved, Qin Shuang!

1. Baiyan refers to White Ape ☜

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter